

Commitment/Pledge 2025-2026



Together, we are building the church the world needs.

Commit to what you believe in and help make it so—Beloved Community within and beyond our walls:

- Community free of poverty, racism, and violence.
- Community grounded in a love so powerful that it transforms us individually and collectively.
- Community that is ever-expanding in its protection and care of those named the least among us by the powers that seek to separate and divide us.

This is who we are, and this is what we will be in the years ahead.

This is the work of the church. Will you help make it possible?

Please return your completed form by January 20, 2025.

**Complete and return the enclosed paper pledge form or use the online pledge form:
<https://bit.ly/firstupledge2526>**



December 19, 2024

Dear Congregation,

In this holiday season I am more grateful than ever for this church and for each of you. Together, we lift up the power of love and hope in the world. We believe in each other and the new ways we can create together. We do not turn away from the world's troubles; instead, we create the spaces to hold them together and imagine something better.

This is what I need your help to do now, in a very specific and concrete form. **Could you make your pledge to support the annual operating budget of the church for the 2025-26 church year that begins in July of 2025 now, before inauguration day on January 20th?**

Why so early, and why now? Well, the answer is simple. We don't want our church leaders spending the upcoming months fundraising for our own institutional operating costs or worrying about possible reductions in programming and staffing when there is so much at stake. When there are lives at stake.

We want our church leaders and our church community to be able to be present to the needs of those within and beyond our walls.

As the year turns and we move into 2025, we know that so much is about to change. We can't know exactly what will happen next, but we do know that the shifts in the political landscape that have been taking place over the last several years are intensifying. We know that people with marginalized identities including immigrants, people of color, women, LGBTQ+ people, Indigenous people and disabled people are living with increasing fear and decreasing protections that would guarantee their basic human rights.

We know that we will need the presence and care we can offer each other, and we know that we must be prepared to offer sanctuary and safety to those at risk within and beyond our walls.

Over the last month our Sanctuary and Resistance Team has been re-forming, grounded in the same spirit of yes that animated our Minister Emeritus, The Reverend John Cummins, when he

answered the call from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to come to Selma in 1965. We are saying yes to what King called the "fierce urgency of now." We are saying yes to the priorities that communities at risk are naming: yes to providing sanctuary to immigrants at risk of deportation, yes to becoming a welcoming village to our trans and gender-expansive siblings

making the move to Minnesota seeking safety, health care and community, yes to being a congregation that provides information and support in accessing reproductive health care for all.

We are saying yes to new ways of supporting each other within our congregation as we strengthen our practices of caring for each other.

We are getting ready: grounding ourselves spiritually through our learning and growth in intercultural competency, spiritual practice, and deepening relationships with each other and across faith communities—and we are already saying yes and meaning it. In the new year, our sanctuary apartment at church will again be full. You'll see additional resources and supplies added to the boxes in the bathrooms to ensure that everyone who enters our building has access to reproductive health care, as well as new opportunities to volunteer in emerging partnerships. You'll be invited to join us as we build out resources for housing, systems navigation, caring accompaniment, and support for daily needs for those seeking sanctuary—from immigrants to trans and gender-expansive folks to those traveling for reproductive health care—so that everyone has what they need to thrive.

You've often heard me say that *among us, we have what we need*. Rev. John Cummins used to say that our church had all the money it needed, the problem was that it was still in peoples' pockets. He also said that if you wanted to know what any of us believed just look at our check books.

As we enter this new year, I invite you to help us wrap up our fundraising efforts for the 2025-26 church year early. Make your pledge by January 20, 2025. Commit to what you believe in and help make it so—Beloved Community within and beyond our walls:

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This is who we are, and this is what we will be in the years ahead. **This is the work of the church. Will you join me in making it possible?**

Complete and return the enclosed pledge form or make your pledge online at <https://bit.ly/firstupledge2526>.

In gratitude,
Rev. Jen



December 19, 2024

Dear Members & Friends of First Universalist,

In our recent quarterly congregational financial update (in person and in *The Liberal*), I reported that revenue was doing very well. Pledges were being paid early, fundraising was on track, and we are forecasting to at least meet, and perhaps slightly exceed, our budgeted revenue for the year. And here we are, asking for money again. What the....?!

Reasonable question. I've noted before that because the church fiscal year goes from July-June, it can be a little confusing when we even talk about the year. Which year do you mean? To add to that this year (by which I mean the current church year, planning for the next church year – oh, good grief!), we are trying something different.

As you may have seen in recent communications from Rev. Jen and Emily Wallace, co-chair of the Stewardship Team, the pledge drive for the 2025-26 church year is being done a little differently this time around. For one thing, we are starting early—now, in fact! **With a due date of January 20th (aka, Inauguration)**. We are also encouraging people to consider multi-year pledges. So yes, we are asking you to contemplate, in December of 2024, your giving to First Universalist for 2026, 2027, and perhaps even 2028.

Why are we doing this? Another reasonable question. I would say at least two reasons, both tied to the fact that we are entering increasingly uncertain times. Each year as we build the annual budget, we don't know how much money will be available from congregational giving—which, as I have said many times, is nearly all the money we have available to carry on the work of the church—until almost the beginning of the fiscal year. At best, this is really stressful to Rev. Jen and the rest of the staff, and at worst, may force difficult choices about what we can and cannot do as a church based on incomplete information about the resources available. It also means the staff need to spend additional time and effort working out different scenarios depending on where the annual giving eventually lands. And I know they have better ways to direct their efforts.

This is particularly true now. Many of the things we value as a faith community are at risk in the coming months and years. First Universalist and the many others who seek to promote justice, equity, and environmental sustainability will have an uphill battle. Speaking for myself, I have felt deflated and demoralized in recent weeks. I can't even read the newspaper beyond the crossword puzzle! I know I will come around, but I need to be able to focus my energy on fighting the good fight. And focus my giving to places like our church that are fighting that same good fight.

Being able to secure adequate funding for the 2025-26 year in the next 4-6 weeks will allow us to put the next year's (2025-26) budget to bed and use our time and talent on the issues that matter. And if people are willing to make commitments beyond that, we can redirect even more of our effort to building the beloved community within and beyond our walls.

That's why Lynn and I have made a multi-year financial commitment to First Universalist, in an amount that is meaningful to us. In fact, the church is the biggest beneficiary of our giving for the next few years. It's one of the things that's giving me hope and allowing me to move from grief to hope, from apathy to action. I hope you will also consider making a commitment early, and considering how your giving can propel the church forward not just in 2025 and 2026, but beyond that. This is the time for us to consider what the church means to us, and to the community, and how we can stretch to turn hope into reality.

Complete and return the enclosed pledge form or make your pledge online at <https://bit.ly/firstupledge2526>.

Sincerely,

Marc Gorelick
Treasurer, First Universalist Board of Trustees

2025-2026 Commitment/Pledge Form

First Name

Last Name

If this is a household pledge, please list the full names of other adults included in this pledge:

Street Address

City / State / Zip

Phone number

E-mail address

Your Financial Commitment

I/We wish to contribute:

- Monthly Every two weeks
 Weekly Annually

In the amount of:

For a total annual contribution of:

Starting on [note that the church year will begin on July 1, 2025]:

\$

\$

\$

How You'll Give

Method:

- Bank Account Cash/Check
 Credit Card Other:

Bank Account or Credit Card

If you selected Bank Account or Credit Card above, and would like to set up a recurring electronic gift, please fill out the applicable section below:

Bank Account

Please debit my gift from my:

- Checking Account
 Savings Account

Routing Number:

Account Number:

Billing address, if different from above:

Credit Card

Please charge my gift to my:

- Visa American Express
 Mastercard Discover

Name on card:	Card number:	Exp. date:	CVC:
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Signature

By signing this form, I authorize First Universalist Church to process debit/credit entries to my account/card on the date selected above or on or after July 1, 2025. If I checked recurring donations above, I understand this authority will remain in effect until I provide reasonable notification to terminate the authorization.

Signature	Today's Date
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Expand Your Generosity

In addition to my support of the annual budget, please contact me separately about other giving options:

- Sponsorship of Religious Education
 Employer Matching Options
 Capital Campaign
 Heritage Circle
 Volunteering my time and abilities (Volunteer Hub coming soon—let me know when it's available!)
 Commit to a multi-year gift that helps us forecast our capacity for the next few years

Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Assessment

You can sign up to take a short online assessment that will help us to have a picture of our congregational culture. The aggregated information we get from this will help us to identify the specific work that is ours: to be more radically welcoming, safer, and better accomplices to marginalized folks in our church community and beyond.

- I would like to receive a link to take the IDI Assessment.

Please provide the e-mail address to which we should send your IDI information:

Please return your completed form to:

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis, 3400 Dupont Ave. S, Minneapolis, MN 55408

