

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FEBRUARY 20, 2025 TABLE OF CONTENTS

Agenda	2
Senior Minister's Report	3-4
Digging into The Data on First U	5-7
January Board Meeting Minutes	8
Statistical Report for January	9
January Attendance	10
Non-Sunday Morning CYFM Attendance	11
Finance Cmte Minutes	12-13
December Income Statement Summary	14
December Balance Sheet	15
Year-to-Date Waterfall Chart (Dec. '24)	16
Year-End Projection Waterfall	17
Climate Conversations Flyer	18

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
Board of Trustees Meeting
February 20, 2025
6:30 - 9:00 pm
First Universalist Church
Cummins Room & [Zoom](#) (multiplatform)

Start	Duration	Topic	Lead
6:30 PM	5	Call to Order	Sarah
		Lighting the Chalice <i>May this flame that burns before us light our way, informed by the wisdom of leaders gone before, and inspired by the trust that we have been given as stewards of this Church. May we have vision, compassion, and courage as we serve this congregation now and for the generations to come.</i>	All
6:35 PM	5	Agenda Approval	Sarah
6:40 PM	20	Executive Session Somatic Grounding Spiritual Community Building (IDI Session)	
7:00 PM	5	Consent Agenda - Approval of January meeting minutes - Monitoring: Acceptance of attendance and membership numbers & trends - Monitoring: Acceptance of staff and significant volunteer changes - Monitoring: Congregant grievances - Monitoring: Staff & Volunteer grievances - Monitoring: Exit interviews - Monitoring: Staff compensation/benefits. --Approval of ministerial internship for 2025/2026 Church Year	All
7:05 PM	15	Finance Committee Report - Second Quarter financials - 2024-25 Budget - Preliminary Budget Expense Outlook - Budget Assumptions/Guardrails	Marc
7:20 PM	10	Stewardship Committee Report	Emily
7:30 PM	5	Governance Committee Report - 23/24 Minister Evaluation Status - 24/25/Minister Evaluation Plans - Governance Review	Lou, Sarah
7:35 PM	10	Climate Conversations Initiative	Cathy
7:45 PM	5	Break	
7:50 PM	60	Congregational Health Assessment. Take the assessment and discussion of results. Themes, what do you notice, areas for growth. Next steps.	Emily B
8:50 PM	5	Gratitudes	All
8:55 PM		Adjourn	All

Roles, responsibilities, and resources for Board Members

[JOB DESCRIPTION: First Universalist Board of Trustees](#)

[Church Bylaws](#)

[Governing Policies Handbook](#)


[2023-24 Monitoring Schedule](#)

Senior Minister Report
Prepared by Rev. Jen Crow
February 17, 2025

Spiritual Grounding and IDI Learning



Invitation to refresh ourselves on the BOT job description. To remember and reground in the goals and role of the board, and of individual trustees, in our shared leadership.

[First Universalist Board of Trustees Job Description](#)

 [Minimization Watcher - Beth Zemsky.pdf](#)

Information Items

Digging Into Data

I recently attended the annual Senior Ministers of Large UU Congregations conference, where we explored data from UU congregations over the past decade. You can see the full data set here:  [SMOLUUC Congregational Cert Data PPT.pdf](#) , and you can read my summary and key questions here:  [2025 Digging into Data: Putting First U in Context](#) . As we engage in a conversation about congregational health and as we chart the course of First Universalist together, I highly encourage you to read the summary and ponder the questions about the moment we are in and who and what our church is called to be.

[UUA Joins Lawsuit](#) The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) is proud to announce that we are a plaintiff in this lawsuit. We join this multifaith coalition to challenge the ending of ICE's sensitive locations policy, and oppose any interpretation of law which would allow immigration raids in houses of worship and religious ceremonies. The suit asserts that subjecting places of worship to ICE enforcement actions without a judicial warrant substantially burdens our religious exercise in violation of the First Amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). These enforcement actions at our places of worship interfere with our religious activities and our ability to fulfill our religious mandate to welcome and serve immigrants.

[Mid-America Monthly Congregational Lay Leaders Convenings](#): Join fellow Lay Leaders from large and program-size congregations across the MidAmerica Region for monthly gatherings focused on learning and mutual support. Hosted by Congregational Life staff, Sharon Dittmar and Lauren Wyeth, these sessions are designed to enhance your leadership within your congregation.

Cummins Ministerial Internship, 2025-26

Rev. Crow is currently in the midst of selecting a full-time ministerial intern to learn and serve with the congregation from September 2025-June of 2026. A full description of the internship can be found [here](#). Funds to support the internship will come solely from the Cummins

Ministerial Internship fund, and there will be no unfunded expenses to the operating budget. I am seeking board approval to authorize use of the Cummins Fund to support this internship.

Monitoring Items

Attendance and Membership Numbers and Trends

Please see attached documentation.

Staff & Volunteer Changes

Liz Farmer, Membership Coordinator, had her last day on staff on Sunday, 2/16/25. You can read more about her departure and transition from staff member to church member [here](#). We do not anticipate filling this staff position this fiscal year.

Staff & Volunteer Grievances

No staff or volunteer grievances have been submitted.

Exit Interviews

An exit interview with Liz Farmer has been offered

Staff Compensation/Benefits Review

Staff benefits, as outlined in the Employee Handbook, have been compared against UUA recommendations. <https://www.uua.org/leaderlab/benefit-recommendations> First Universalist meets or exceeds all recommendations except for a few variations.

- Health Insurance: First Universalist provides health insurance to all employees working 30hrs/week or more. Premiums are paid at 100% for full-time employees and are pro-rated for those working less than 40hrs/week. First Universalist pays no portion of health insurance premiums for spouses or dependents. The UUA recommends that all employees who work 750 hrs/year or more be eligible for health insurance coverage, with the congregation paying 80% of premiums for full-time staff, and 50% of premiums for enrolled spouses and dependents.
- Professional Expenses: The UUA recommends for professional staff, the greater of \$8,000 (ministers)/\$5,000 (non-ministers), prorated for part-time, OR 10% of salary (S+H for ministers). Appropriate continuing education and business-related expense funds for other staff. To meet the guideline of \$8000/\$5000, First Universalist would need to increase the amount set aside for professional expenses for ministers by \$8,000. To meet the guideline of 10% of salary and housing for ministers, First U would need to increase the amount set aside for professional expenses for ministers by \$13,000.

Staff Survey

The Senior Minister typically conducts a staff survey in May, using the same questions year over year to monitor key indicators of health in the staff culture. A summary of staff responses will be shared at the May board meeting.

Digging into the Data: Putting First Universalist Church in Context
Prepared by Rev. Jen Crow
2/17/25

Full information can be found here: [SMOLUUC Congregational Cert Data PPT.pdf](#)

Membership

- There are 1081 communities served by the UUA.
- 31 of those congregations are larger than 500 members
- 22 of those congregations have more than 550 members.
- Overall, membership was flat last year for large congregations. Over the last 10 years, membership in large congregations is down 13% compared to down 16% nationally.
- Membership at First U in 2014 was 1046, in 2024 it was 1051.

Religious Education

- From 2023-2024, Religious Education enrollment in UU congregations increased for the first time in a decade. The increase was 2.4%.
- Overall, enrollment in RE in large UU congregations is down 66% since 2014.
- First U RE enrollment in 2014 was 498, in 2025 it is 325, for a decrease of 35%. In 2024, RE enrollment at First U was 365, in 2025 it is 325, for a decrease of 11%.
- First U has the highest RE enrollment in the country (325) in 2025, with First Unitarian Church of Dallas, (1365 members, budget of \$4,127,301) having 315 children and youth enrolled in Religious Education.

Budget and Finance

- Over the last 10 years, the overall number of pledge units in all congregations is down 24%. In large congregations, the overall number of pledge units since 2014 is down 28%.
- Question - how many pledging units did First Universalist have in 2014, how many in 2024?
- The average pledge in all UU congregations since 2014 is up 43%, total pledge income is up 8%. This does not account for inflation.
- The average pledge in large UU congregations since 2014 is up 40% (from \$1388 to \$1941) and total pledge income is essentially flat. This does not account for inflation.
- The average pledge at large UU congregations is about 7% lower than the national average.
- Question - What was the average pledge at First Universalist in 2014? What is it now?
- Question - What is the impact of inflation? What is the comparison of total budget/pledging now vs. total budget/pledging 10 years ago?
- Overall, endowments and reserves for large UU congregations have grown 27% since 2016. Overall, long-term debt for large UU congregations has decreased 49% since 2014.
- Question: What was the long-term debt for First U in 2014? What is it now?

- Operating expenses for large congregations have decreased by 4% in the last year, and have grown by 15% since 2017. This does not account for inflation.

Congregational Demographics and Diversity

In all UU congregations

- 8,272-14,890 (5-9%) member & non-member friends identify as BIPOC.
- 16,525-39,660 (10-24%) member & non-member friends identify as LGBTQ+
- Of staff: 697 (16.42%) identify as BIPOC. This includes 264 (6.22%) religious professionals and 433 (10.2%) administrative/facilities staff.
- Of boards/standing committee positions: 366 (6.24%) identify as BIPOC.

In large UU congregations

- Between 2 – 5% of member & non-member friends in large UU churches identify as BIPOC.
- Between 7 – 16% of member & non-member friends identify as LGBTQ+
- Of 438 full and part time staff in large UU congregations, 126 identify as BIPOC (29%). This includes 53 religious professionals and 73 administrative/ facilities staff.
- Of 250 board/standing committee positions in our large UU churches, 42 of those are held by people who identify as BIPOC (17%).

At First Universalist

- We do not have data that identifies BIPOC or LGBTQ+ identities in our membership
- Of 18 staff positions (ranging from 5 hrs/wk to full-time), 7 First U staff identify as BIPOC (39%). This includes 3 religious professionals and 4 support/administrative staff.
- Of 9 board positions and 4 Finance Committee positions, 0 of those positions are held by people who identify as BIPOC.

There are 3 Key Questions that our UUA is holding right now. These 3 questions will guide our shared work at General Assembly this year. I'll include below just a few initial thoughts/responses from 22 senior ministers of large UU congregations. What would you add?

What is the moment we are in for large UU congregations?

- We are seeing increasing numbers of visitors/new members from marginalized communities
- We are a hub of resistance and resources in our cities
- There is a gap between the vision of who we want to be, and our capacity. Folks are exhausted.
- Our congregations have experienced a lot of ministerial transition and a lot of conflict.
- Large churches are often less nimble.
- We are leading in a transitional time.
- We have inherited a 1950s structure of how we do things around here (culture).
- Membership is declining, these are times of transition and confusion, we are still emerging into a new post/late stage pandemic reality.

What are the most urgent and important needs of this moment for large UU congregations?

- We must respond to this time. To challenges to democracy.
- Protect our trans siblings.
- Adapting church structure to meet this moment.
- Support for membership processes and structure
- Help people hold onto their values
- Financial support/\$\$\$
- Protect those being scapegoated

What are large UU congregations called to do and be in the context of this moment?

- Leadership in justice work. Courage in speaking out.
- Regional leadership.
- Grateful that the UUA is providing a legal buffer in their lawsuit against ICE policies, is there anything like this that large congregations can do together regionally?
- Help our congregations feel a part of the UUA, a part of a larger faith community and movement.
- Support red state congregations
- Mutual support and aid across congregations
- Be prepared to build relationships and share leadership across congregations

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
Board of Trustees Meeting
January 16, 2025
6:30 - 9:00 pm
First Universalist Church
Cummins Room & Zoom (multiplatform)

Start Duration Topic Lead 6:30 PM 5 Call to Order Jeff (Absent: Ilo Leppik)

Lighting the Chalice

May this flame that burns before us light our way, informed by the wisdom of leaders gone before, and inspired by the trust that we have been given as stewards of this Church. May we have vision, compassion, and courage as we serve this congregation now and for the generations to come.

All

6:35 PM 5 Agenda Approval Jeff 6:40 PM 20 Executive Session

Somatic Grounding
Spiritual Community Building

Jeff Jen

7:00 PM 30 IDI Discussion Ashley

Discussed how to give in times of scarcity

7:30 PM 5 Consent Agenda (Approved)

Approval of December meeting minutes
Monitoring: Acceptance of attendance and membership numbers & trends
Monitoring: Acceptance of staff and significant volunteer changes
Monitoring: Congregant grievances
Monitoring: Staff & Volunteer grievances
Monitoring: Exit Interviews

All

7:35 PM 5 Finance Committee Report Marc

Timing on Revenue and Expenses will come closer together this Spring
See Finance Committee Report
From December, 2021 the Foundation Board recommended to move the Foundation Fund to UUA
Motion: Decline the recommendation of the Foundation Board to move funds to UUA—Approved

7:40 PM 10 Stewardship Committee Report

- what board assistance is required in pledge drive discussion

Emily, Emily Ashley

7:50 PM 5 Break All

7:55 PM 45 Congregational Winter Meeting All

8:40 PM 10 Congregational Health - Discussion All Will take the Congregation Health Assessment at next Board meeting and discuss

8:50 PM 10 Gratitudes All

9:00 PM Adjourn

Roles, Responsibilities, and Resources for Board Members

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[2023-24 Monitoring Schedule](#)

[First Universalist Church Web Site](#)

Statistical Report for January 2025

Board Meeting February 20, 2025

MEMBER MEMORIAL SERVICES:

January 17- Tommy Williams (Stepfather of member Bryana French)

MEMBER MARRIAGES/SERVICES OF COMMITMENT: 0

MEMBERS FOR APPROVAL: 0

MEMBERS REINSTATED: 0

MEMBERS FOR REMOVAL: 0

CHILDREN DEDICATED: 0

Total members as of the last meeting: 999

To be added: 0

To be removed: 0

TOTAL MEMBERS: 999

January Attendance

	2025					2024					
Worship	Sun. 9a Sanctuary	Sun. 11a* Sanctuary	Sun. 11a Webinar	YouTube Views	Totals	Sun. 9a Sanctuary	Sun. 10a Sanctuary	Sun. 11a* Sanctuary	Sun. 11a Webinar	YouTube Views	Totals
1st week	115	115	25	121	376		187		47	108	342
2nd week	89	116	37	118	360		129		60	112	301
3rd week	93	95	50	128	366	89		166	41	81	377
4th week	114	129	45	134	422	119		166	34	65	384
5th week											
Monthly Total	411	455	157	501	1524	208	316	332	182	366	1404
Average for January	103	114	39	125	381	104	158	166	46	92	351
RE					9 & 11 RE						9 & 11 RE
1st week					115						24
2nd week					116						12
3rd week					0						113
4th week					112						121
5th week											
Monthly RE Total					343						270
Average for January					89						68
Combined Average					467						419

Non-Sunday Morning CYFM Attendance

Month	Saturday Sprouts	Overnights	Community Dinner Programming	Other
September	n/a	11 adults + 27 kids/youth	25 kids/youth	
October	10 adults + 15 kids	35 adults + 29 youth	10 adults (in parent group) + ~30 kids/youth	
November	10 adults + 13 kids	n/a	13 (in parent group + feedback session) + 27 kids/youth	
December	n/a	n/a	46 (regular + Pageant) + 10 adults (in parent group)	Family Holiday Potluck: 100
January	7 adults + 11 kids	na	25 kids/youth + 10 adults (in parenting as spiritual practice group + "how do i talk to my kids about" group)	
February		27 + Mini Youth Con	25 kids/youth + 9 adults	

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
5:30-7:00 pm

Members present: Dan Berg, Marc Gorelick, Julie Most, Dick Niemiec

Staff present: Jen Crow

Stewardship liaison present: Tom Saterstrom

Meeting convened at 5:30 pm

1. Chalice Lighting
2. Minutes from the prior meeting were approved
3. YTD financial results through Q2 were reviewed.
 - a. Income continues to run ahead of budget; expenses continue over budget with same primary variances as before (health benefits, increased pay for childcare, security costs)
 - b. Revised YE projection shows deficit of \$20,000. This incorporates some mitigation measures previously identified (deferring ministerial sabbatical fund accrual, no backfill of membership coordinator), but not others (e.g., eliminating meals and snacks for events). Including those additional identified savings should lead to balanced budget by the end of the year under current projections.
 - c. Some additional cost savings going forward are being explored: stormwater fee credit, legacy computer system sunset
 - d. First checks for the long-awaited employee retention credit program have finally been received, totaling approx. \$98,000! This is earmarked to replenish the reserve.
4. Stewardship update.
 - a. New system for acknowledging donations is in place and has been well received
 - b. January concert with Peter Mayer and JD Stillwater raised a net \$7,000, more than expected. A spring concert fundraiser is also being planned.
 - c. Stewardship team is continuing 1:1 conversations with members to stimulate generosity, with a focus on RE families and Daytime Connections participants.
 - d. Work is being done to revive the Heritage Circle for planned giving
 - e. We received word of an expected bequest from Gayle Hanson estate of \$38,000
5. Preliminary 2025-26 discussions. Jen shared current scenarios for 2025-26 budget. "Expected" scenario assumes flat revenue from current year. All scenarios involve some program/staffing changes. Congregation budget input sessions will be held in April.
6. Audit policy. Dick Niemiec reported on his research into audit and internal control practices at other churches, and the history at First Universalist was reviewed.
 - a. We currently have internal controls, including policies and multiple staff involved, that provide protections against fraud or error
 - b. There was a consensus that we do not need an external audit annually, but that having one every 3-4 years would provide additional assurances to the congregation about financial integrity, combined with regular additional internal monitoring by treasurer of finance committee members

- c. Dick will draft a policy with those recommendations, and will work with Jen to find out how other churches pay for audits and which firms they use

Meeting adjourned at 6:34 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Marc Gorelick, Treasurer

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

Income Statement

Operating Budget

	Actual	Budget	Annual Budget		Fiscal Year End Projection		
	07/01/2024 to 12/31/2024	07/01/2024 to 12/31/2024	Variance	to 06/30/2025	Best	Expected	Worst
Revenues							
Support							
Annual Giving	\$819,873.55	\$708,434.63	\$111,438.92	\$1,314,350.00	\$1,345,180.00	\$1,306,000.00	\$1,273,350.00
Donations/Fundraising	\$88,508.60	\$54,181.66	\$34,326.94	\$206,000.00	\$255,108.28	\$232,758.28	\$180,848.28
Total Support	\$908,382.15	\$762,616.29	\$145,765.86	\$1,520,350.00	\$1,600,288.28	\$1,538,758.28	\$1,454,198.28
Earned Revenue							
Service/Rental Income	\$51,345.59	\$56,999.92	(\$5,654.33)	\$114,000.00	\$115,500.00	\$106,000.00	\$102,457.50
Investment Income	\$1.35	\$0.00	\$1.35	\$0.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00
Other Income	\$7,722.56	\$0.00	\$7,722.56	\$2,000.00	\$8,455.00	\$8,455.00	\$8,455.00
Total Earned Revenue	\$59,069.50	\$56,999.92	\$2,069.58	\$116,000.00	\$123,960.00	\$114,460.00	\$110,917.50
Total Revenues	\$967,451.65	\$819,616.21	\$147,835.44	\$1,636,350.00	\$1,724,248.28	\$1,653,218.28	\$1,565,115.78
Expenses							
Personnel Expenses	\$650,441.97	\$640,166.25	(\$10,275.72)	\$1,285,898.00	\$1,298,113.64	\$1,299,288.64	\$1,302,288.64
Administrative Expenses	\$93,551.72	\$87,191.35	(\$6,360.37)	\$149,009.00	\$153,986.38	\$158,338.49	\$175,420.50
Program Expenses	\$69,279.22	\$40,586.57	(\$28,692.65)	\$78,063.00	\$91,153.23	\$103,347.67	\$121,421.34
Building & Grounds	\$61,264.01	\$54,534.96	(\$6,729.05)	\$116,800.00	\$99,495.60	\$116,995.60	\$141,495.60
Other Expenses	\$653.99	\$0.00	(\$653.99)	\$6,500.00	\$653.99	\$653.99	\$7,153.99
Total Expenses	\$875,190.91	\$822,479.13	(\$52,711.78)	\$1,636,270.00	\$1,643,402.84	\$1,678,624.39	\$1,747,780.07
Investment Activity							
Realized Losses	(\$459.76)	\$0.00	(\$459.76)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Unrealized Losses	(\$1,071.69)	\$0.00	(\$1,071.69)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Dividends & Interest	\$1,350.10	\$0.00	\$1,350.10	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Realized Gains	\$341.33	\$0.00	\$341.33	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Unrealized Gains	\$5,750.20	\$0.00	\$5,750.20	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
Total Investment Activity	\$5,910.18	\$0.00	\$5,910.18	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	\$98,170.92	(\$2,862.92)	\$101,033.84	\$80.00	\$85,845.44	(\$20,406.11)	(\$177,664.29)

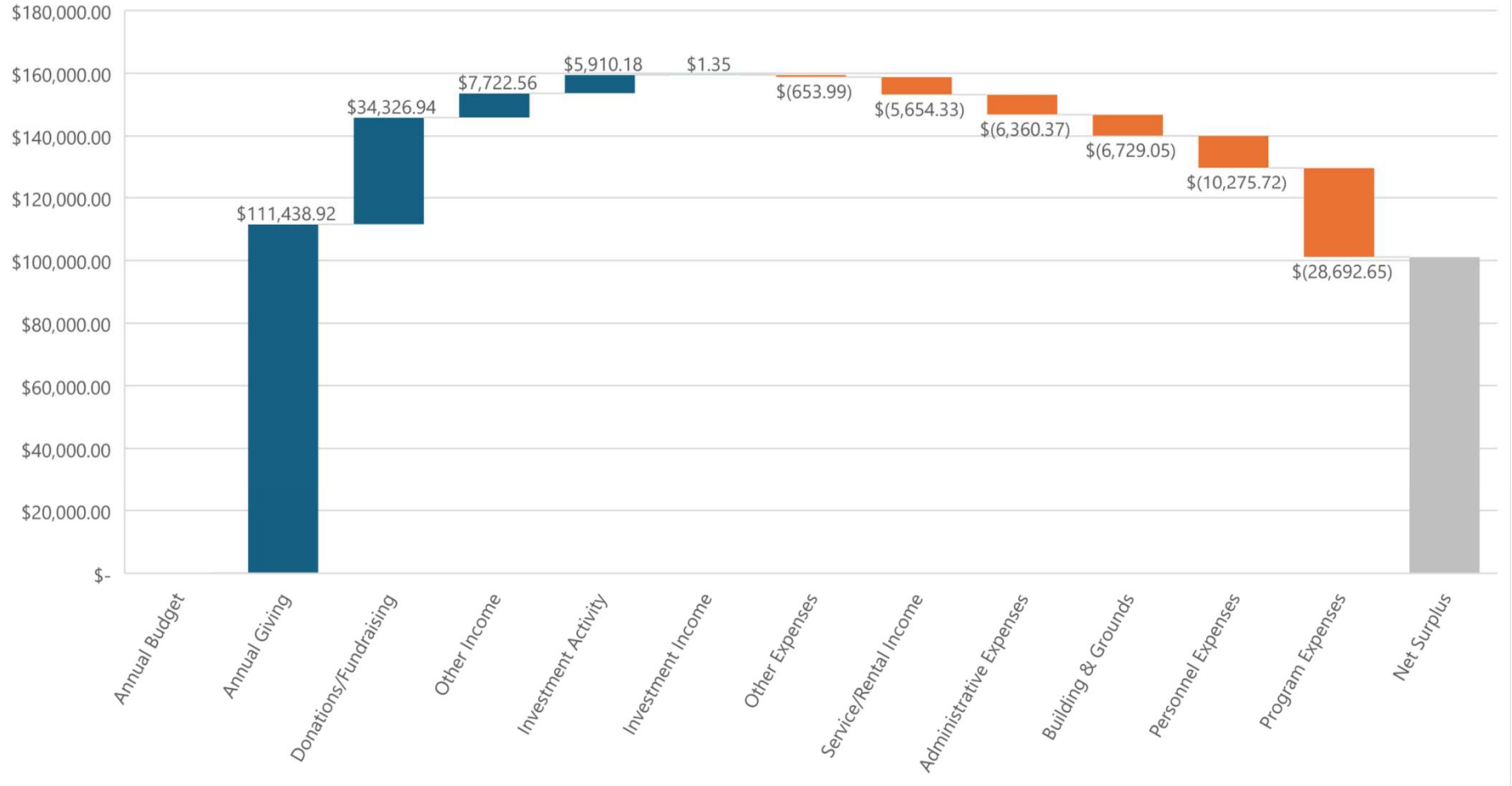
First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

Balance Sheet

	Actual As of <u>12/31/2024</u>
Assets	
Current Assets	
Cash	\$71,562.77
Investments	\$3,205,402.45
Accounts Receivable	\$241.72
Other Current Assets	\$41,178.53
Total Current Assets	<u>\$3,318,385.47</u>
Non-Current Assets	
Fixed Assets	\$5,475,295.39
Total Non- Current Assets	<u>\$5,475,295.39</u>
Total Assets	<u><u>\$8,793,680.86</u></u>
 Liabilities and Fund Balance	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$81,138.69
Benefits Payable	\$22,080.61
Other Current Liabilities	\$31,426.53
Total Current Liabilities	<u>\$134,645.83</u>
Long Term Liabilities	
Loan Payable	\$1,470,870.62
Interfund Transfer	\$0.00
Total Long Term Liabilities	<u>\$1,470,870.62</u>
Total Liabilities	<u>\$1,605,516.45</u>
 Fund Balance	
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$3,948,460.50
Donor Restricted Net Assets	\$3,239,703.91
Total Fund Balance	<u>\$7,188,164.41</u>
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	<u><u>\$8,793,680.86</u></u>

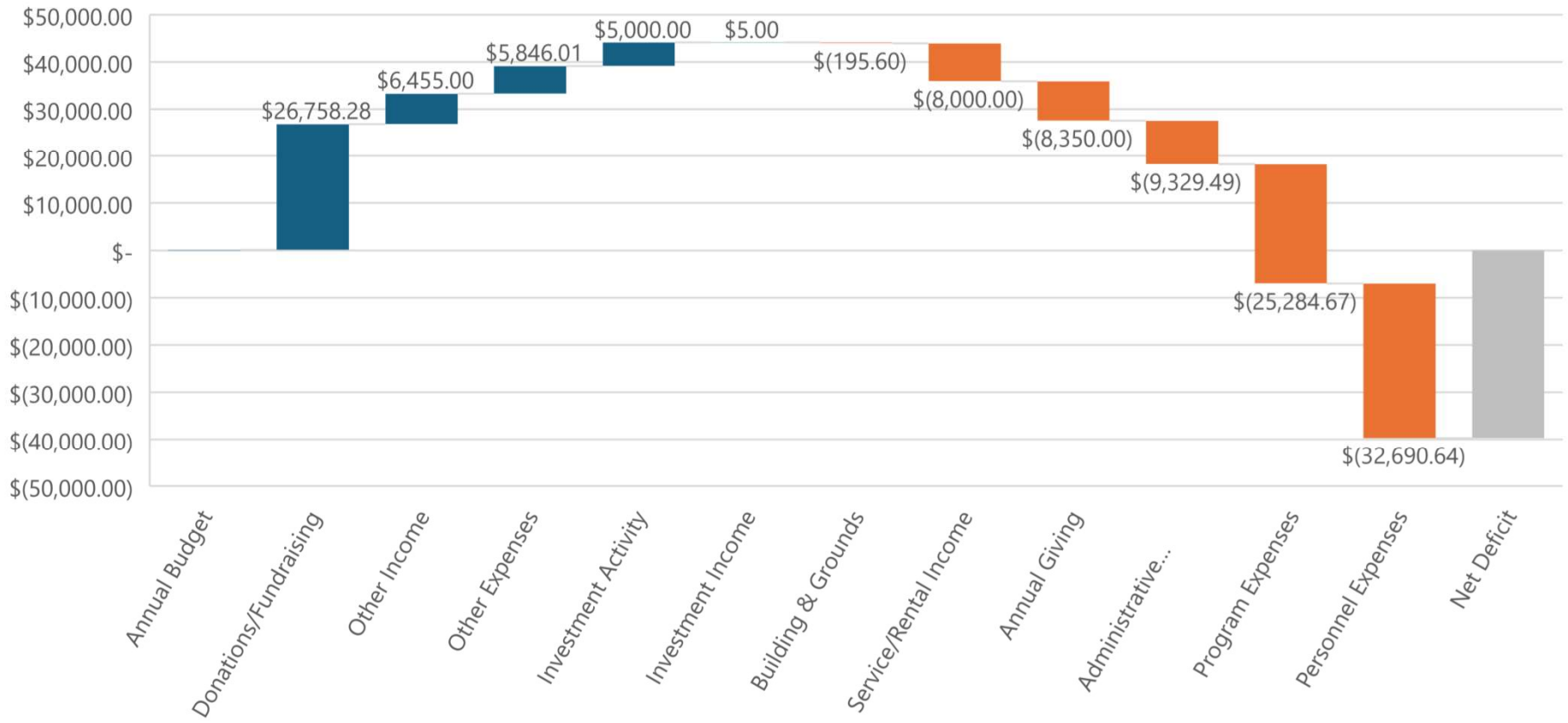
December 2024 Year-to-Date Net Income vs Annual Budget

■ Increase ■ Decrease ■ Total



2024-2025 Projected Year-End Net Income vs Annual Budget

■ Increase
 ■ Decrease
 ■ Total





First U Electric Saturday, June 4, 2022

Climate Conversations Kick-Off
March 9, 1-2:30pm, Cummins Room
with Liz Loeb, MNIPL community builder
A special training in organizing climate conversations

Join in learning about our First U EJ Climate initiative 2025:
Engaging congregants in one-to-one or small group climate change conversations

We enter this work embracing our Church's visionary Goal:
**Foster our connection with, care for, and action on behalf
of Earth's environment and all of life.**

The First Universalist Church community is invited to participate in learning about and practicing one-on-one conversations focused on shared environmental goals and strategies for the church. With the leadership of MNIPL, this workshop will set in motion one-to-one conversations within the congregation throughout March and April that will inform the Church's plans for climate actions.

Participant will:

- Expand skills in guided climate conversations
- Be given the opportunity to organize 1 to 1 climate conversations this spring at church

A compilation of ideas from the climate conversations will be shared in the social hall in our Earth Day Celebration, Sunday April 20

RSVP: bit.ly/FirstUcc

