

Beloveds,

I want to invite you into a moment of dreaming. Welcome your imagination, some playfulness and joy. Bring to mind whatever memory or conjuring connects you to joy. Now let your spirit land at church. **What do you dream about for our church community?** How might we multiply the possibilities and the impact that our faith can create in our own and each other's lives, in Minneapolis, in the world?

I dream about **weekly Community Dinners** that begin with singing and spread out after we eat into every room of the building. Dinners just like the ones we hosted for visiting ministers last week who will now bring stories of our city and our hope to every corner of this nation.

I dream about **weeknight OWL** for our children, youth, and adults open to the whole of Minneapolis.

I dream about **music multiplying here**—from Sunday morning to Wednesday evening choir rehearsals to our children and youth and out into the community. I dream about our Steinway piano being used for community recitals for people who would otherwise never have access to an instrument like that. I dream about us singing songs we learned at church beside the bedside of a beloved. I dream about connections that hold us long past when we leave the building.

I dream about all of us discovering and re-discovering **our strengths and our needs** and of offering and meeting them together.

I dream about what we say on Sunday mornings—*We trust that when we all share what we have, we can all have what we need*—becoming real.

This year, as we move into our annual practice of discerning and offering the financial gifts that each of us can offer to this community of faith, I ask you to move beyond the bare minimum and move with me into the space of dreaming.

At a bare minimum, we need to raise \$1.5 million in pledges to meet an operating budget that keeps our building and our ministries supported and growing. If we can move into a space of abundance, of dreaming, of building—we can do so much more.

That instinct to take care of each other is the best of us...We are defined by how we love each other... We don't follow hope. Hope follows us. -Sam Ames, LGBTQ+ Advocate, UU

We are generating hope right now. For ourselves, our neighbors, and our nation. Invest in hope. Build the future we dream about right here and now. *Be a part of what we are creating together and give of your time, your treasure, your talent, your tender heart and your persistence in new and expansive ways.* Together we can make our words true: that when we all share what we have, we can all have what we need.

In gratitude,
Rev. Jen Crow

Fill out your pledge form:
bit.ly/firstupledge

Visit our website:
firstuniversalistchurch.org



Dear Members and Friends of First Universalist Church of Minneapolis,

If you were in church—or on Zoom—on January 18, you heard a story about the difference a simple question can make. **The middle of January seems like a lifetime ago—before Rev. Jen Crow and over 100 other ministers were arrested for protesting ICE, before Alex Petti was gunned down by federal agents.** But on that Sunday Jen told us that just a few days earlier she'd been in immigration court, accompanying a family on what was certainly a scary day. While waiting for their hearing, Jen noticed a group of nervous young men also waiting. Most of us would probably have scrolled on our phones or turned to a book—anything to avoid eye contact. But Jen walked over and asked if they needed support. She attended their immigration hearing, and after some rushed calls, perhaps to some of you, she found a pro bono attorney and introduced the young man to some new friends from church. *All because Jen asked the question.*

Just a day earlier, Rev. Jen and I were in her office, ostensibly talking about next year's budget and the upcoming pledge campaign. Renee Good had been killed just over a week before, and I knew that Jen and the other ministers were stretched as tight as the head on a snare drum.

I already knew the basics of the proposed budget. We've been paying our construction loan from a pool of money held over from pre-pandemic capital campaign gifts. That pool will run dry this fall, meaning that we need \$86,000 to cover the gap. An additional \$90,000 in expenses is needed to cover everything else—a half-time membership coordinator, music support, extra hours for some of our part-time staff, and the inevitable inflation and increase in health insurance costs. Altogether that comes to a 15% increase over this year's budget. But would that really get us where we want to be?

This time it was my turn to ask a question. "Jen," I asked, "what do you REALLY need? What would you do if we all doubled our pledges, if we had an extra million dollars?"

Immediately her energy shifted as *she allowed herself to dream*. Quickly she imagined having **membership staff** who could connect us all, help us all find a sense of belonging tailored to our needs. And **a music program so big that we'd have multiple choirs**, literally giving voice to our faith and providing untold ways for us to connect with each other. "Honestly," she told me, "I'd also hire **an office assistant**. I think people would be shocked if they knew what sorts of things the ministers do that takes time away from the things that only the ministers can do."

From there, she got down to nuts and bolts—literally. "We need **more support for our building**. We are getting so many calls from groups requesting our space. They know we're safe. They know we're welcoming. We want to help, but the building doesn't take care of itself." After a moment Jen added, "Of course I'd use some of the million dollars to **pay down our construction loan**."

I love First Universalist and all that it stands for and have been especially appreciative of its role during this particularly challenging time for our community. But I also know that it can be so much more. This is why I and the rest of the Stewardship Committee are asking you to join us in "**Investing in Hope.**" **Imagine what we could be if we all doubled our pledge.** If that's not possible for you, please take the time to determine what is doable for you and your circumstances.

There are many ways to submit your confidential pledge. If paper is your bag (!), you can bring your pledge to church and place it in the box our Visual Arts Team has created for that purpose. Or you can mail it to the office. Of course, you can also submit your pledge online. The important thing is to do it! The sooner the better, but **we'd like to have everyone's pledges in by Saturday, March 6** so that we can celebrate on March 7.

Thank you!

Lynn Broaddus, Chair, Stewardship Committee
LBroaddus@BroadviewCollaborative.com

p.s. The following page has more information about the why, what and how of pledging.

Fill out your pledge form:
bit.ly/firstupledge

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Giving Guide

How much should I give?

We can't tell you that. Giving levels vary from household to household. The important thing is that you make a gift that is significant for you personally. For most of us, our donations to the church are—by far—the largest charitable gifts we make each year.

Last year we received 406 pledges (which support the current year's operating budget) ranging from \$15 to \$62,000, with the average pledge landing at \$3,140. To meet the coming year's basic needs, we are looking to each of us to increase our pledge by at least 15%, and to invite new households to join us. But to grow into our vision, we are asking you to go well beyond that basic adjustment and to consider doubling your pledge or at least get as close to that as you can manage.

We can also look beyond our walls to see what others have to say. The Unitarian Universalist Association provides the following giving guide with four commitment levels:

Supporter

The congregation is a significant part of my spiritual and intellectual life that I want to support.

Upholder

The congregation is my central community, and I am committed to sustaining the programs and ministries of my congregation.

Visionary

My commitment is a clear demonstration of the unique importance of this congregation and of my spiritual principles.

Transformer

I am deeply committed to the congregation; my contribution provides fuel for transformation and is part of my spiritual practices in living out the UU principles.

		Supporter 2-6% of Income		Sustainer 3-7% of Income		Visionary 5-9% of Income		Transformer 10% of Income	
Adjusted Monthly Income	Approx. Adjusted Annual Income	Suggested % of Income	Monthly Pledge	Suggested % of Income	Monthly Pledge	Suggested % of Income	Monthly Pledge	Suggested % of Income	Monthly Pledge
\$1,000	\$12,000	2%	\$20	3%	\$30	5%	\$50	10%	\$100
\$1,500	\$18,000	2%	\$30	3%	\$45	5%	\$75	10%	\$150
\$2,000	\$25,000	2%	\$40	3%	\$60	5%	\$100	10%	\$200
\$3,000	\$36,000	2%	\$60	3%	\$90	5%	\$150	10%	\$300
\$4,000	\$50,000	3%	\$120	4%	\$160	5%	\$200	10%	\$400
\$6,500	\$80,000	3%	\$195	4%	\$260	6%	\$390	10%	\$650
\$8,500	\$100,000	3%	\$255	5%	\$425	6%	\$510	10%	\$850
\$10,000	\$120,000	3%	\$300	5%	\$500	6%	\$600	10%	\$1,000
\$12,500	\$150,000	4%	\$500	5%	\$625	6%	\$750	10%	\$1,250
\$17,000	\$200,000	4%	\$680	6%	\$1,020	7%	\$1,190	10%	\$1,700
\$25,000	\$300,000	5%	\$1,250	6%	\$1,500	8%	\$2,000	10%	\$2,500
\$40,000	\$500,000	6%	\$2,400	7%	\$2,800	9%	\$3,600	10%	\$4,000

Pledging 101

What's a pledge?

A “pledge” is a commitment of financial support to the church that is made for a defined period, usually one year. A pledge can be paid all at once, can be spread out in weekly or monthly increments, or anything in between. Many people pay their pledges through automatic debit from their checking account, or automatic charge to their credit card. Others pay with cash or check (just make sure we know it's for your pledge or the “annual fund”), while others pay with stock transfer or gifts from an IRA or other retirement account, or a donor advised fund.

Do I need to complete a pledge form if I already give on autopay?

Yes, please. It helps us plan for the coming year.

I give on Sundays in the offering basket. Does that count?

It depends. Each Sunday the offering is shared with a specific cause, usually one of the church's community partners. If you want your Sunday contribution to count toward your pledge (and for 100% of the gift to support the church instead of the 40% we get on Sundays) simply write “annual giving” in the memo line of your check. If you are giving through our web link, be sure to select “annual giving” on the dropdown menu.

I can't give much. Does it really matter that I pledge?

Yes, for many reasons. First, all gifts matter. Second, pledging is one way that we show that the church is important enough to us that we are willing to share our resources in a way that works for our circumstances. Third, it feels good to know that we're each doing our part. Finally, our bylaws require an annual pledge from all voting members. There is always an exception for those with extreme financial hardship. Please speak with one of the ministers if you think this applies to you.

How much should I give?

Only you can answer that, but we suggest that you look to our Giving Guide.

I don't understand “this fiscal year”, “next fiscal year” and all that. Help!

It is confusing! By “fiscal year” we're talking about the one-year period of time that the church's budget is built for. There are many reasons why a church (or business, or nonprofit) would want to use a fiscal year different from a calendar year. First Universalist Church of Minneapolis, like many churches, uses a fiscal year that ends and begins in the summer for two basic reasons. First, it aligns with the annual church planning cycle. Secondly, it means that year-end accounting falls over the summer rather than the busy winter holiday season. Specifically, the First Universalist Church fiscal year runs from July 1 of one year to June 30 of the next year. This year, our fiscal year started on July 1, 2025, and will end on June 30, 2026. The current pledge drive is to help us know how much money we'll have to support the church's operations during the year that starts on July 1, 2026.

Do you have a question we didn't answer?

Ask us! Come find any minister, Board member, Finance Committee member, or Stewardship Committee member during coffee hour, or send an email to Lynn Broaddus, Stewardship Committee chair at LBroaddus@BroadviewCollaborative.com.

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