

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
Board of Trustees Meeting
March 19, 2026
6:30 - 9:00 pm
First Universalist Church
Cummins Room & [Zoom](#) (multiplatform)

Start	Duration	Topic	Lead
6:30 PM	5	Call to Order	Marc
		<i>Lighting the Chalice</i> <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	Marc
6:40 PM	50	Executive Session Somatic Grounding Spiritual Community Building - Repair and Amends	Jeanne Ashley/Jen
7:30 PM	10	Status of 2025-26 Board goals and next steps Themes from belonging conversations	Marc/All
7:40 PM	15	Stewardship Committee Report 2026-27 Pledge Drive Update	Emily W
7:55 PM	5	Consent Agenda Approval of February 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	Marc
8:00 PM	10	Break	Katherine to bring snacks
8:10 PM	15	Finance Committee Report Preliminary 2026-27 budget discussion	Cameron
8:25 PM	5	Governance Committee Report	Lou
8:30 PM	5	Executive Committee Report	Marc
8:35 PM	15	Thank you notes	All
8:50 PM	10	Meeting review and Gratitudes Covenant IDI	All
9:00 PM		Adjourn	

DRIVE model for decision making:

D: Who is the decision-maker? If not an individual, how will the decision be reached (e.g., consensus, majority vote, etc.)

R: Will there be a recommendation sought, and if so, from whom?

I: What input will be solicited? How? From whom?

V: Does the decision need to be vetted with anyone before it is finalized?

E: Who is responsible for executing the decision?

Helpful questions to consider, given our intercultural orientation of minimization, to promote equity and inclusion in moving our goals forward:

- What is our role in obtaining this goal?
- What are our values we need to consider as we think about our approach, particularly concerning equity, diversity, and inclusion?
- How have we structured our approach to ensure we are considering all points of view?
- How conscious, intentional, and transparent are we about our guidelines for interaction in our meetings? How might we be reinforcing a “go along to get along” approach?
- What do we think we already know about this topic? What assumptions are we making? What is the data to support what we think we know?
- What else do we need to learn? How are we going to get this information? From whom?

Roles, Responsibilities, and Resources for Board Members

[2025-26 Board Handbook](#)

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Board of Trustees Meeting
February 19, 2026
6:30 - 9:00 pm
First Universalist Church
Cummins Room & [Zoom](#) (multiplatform)

Start	Duration	Topic	Lead
6:30 PM	5	Call to Order. Absent: Zoe	Marc
		<i>Lighting the Chalice</i>	All
6:35 PM	5	Agenda Approval. Approved	Marc
6:40 PM	20	Executive Session Somatic Grounding Spiritual Community Building	Matt Ashley/Jen
7:00 PM	15	Guest Speaker on applying for a sabbatical grant Ralph Wyman Eli Lilly Grant discussion. Next steps will be a proposal from Marc and Jen for the Board to review. Marc will also look into who makes the final decision to move forward.	Jen
7:15 PM	20	Stewardship Committee Report 2026-27 Pledge Drive Update \$623,000 in pledges. Youth fundraiser on March 14. Get a report back from Ada on the results. Discussion of the youth being able to also pledge and/or participate in their household fundraising. What are we hearing in our conversations. How do we route information to the appropriate person in the stories we are hearing from congregants? Pastoral care would be sent to ministers. Discussion about participation goals as well.	Emily W
7:35 PM	10	Discussion and approval of updated Board Job description Comment by Feb. 24	Matt
7:45 PM	5	Status of 2025-26 Board goals and next steps. On schedule. Still need to connect with congregant cohorts i.e. Bipoc	Marc
7:50 PM	5	Consent Agenda Approved 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	Marc
7:55 PM	10	Break	Matt to bring snacks
8:05 PM	20	Finance Committee Report: See Finance report. Good shape half way through the year. The stability of the church is in contrast to the instability of the World. Received \$60,000 from many churches/sources for the Sanctuary fund. Finance committee can make recommendations to Jen for how the funds are used. Discussion on including a link to the mid year meeting in appropriate places on the website. Begin the planning for the possibility of a capital campaign.	Cameron
8:25 PM	5	Governance Committee Report Ongoing review of the GPH. Will be ready for board consideration at the May board meeting.	Lou
8:30 PM	5	Executive Committee Report. Nothing to report of note.	Marc
8:35 PM	15	Thank you notes session put on hold. Jen reviewed the staff workplan. Discussion of how we are addressing environmental justice in light of the other demands on the church at this time. Katherine and Cameron will meet with the Environmental Justice Committee to best communicate where we are and next steps. A discussion about the Board making a formal apology to Dr. Glen Thomas. For discussion at the next Exec Session. A draft of an apology to help the discussion of how to move forward. Cameron and Matt to draft.	All

8:50 PM	10	Meeting Review and Gratitudes Covenant IDI	All
9:00 PM		Adjourn	
		DRIVE model for decision making:	
<u>Roles, Responsibilities, and Resources for Board Members</u> <u>2025-26 Board Handbook</u>			

**Senior Minister Board Report
Prepared by Rev. Jen Crow
March 13, 2026**

Spiritual Grounding

Our shared learning and growth in intercultural competency will be our shared spiritual practice this month.

Monitoring Items

Attendance and Membership Trends

Please see attached information.

Staff and Volunteer Transitions:

We look forward to welcoming Allison Connelly-Vetter back from parental leave on Tuesday, March 17th. Allison will return in a graduated way, working her way back up to full-time beginning on April 12. We are incredibly grateful to Rev. Laura, Claire Tralle, Hirut Hedge, Sarah Heuser, Tami Eschult, Katherine Harrell and the entire Children, Youth and Families Advisory Team for supporting the congregation and the CYFM ministry in Allison's absence. This was truly a time of shared ministry, and will continue to be even Allison returns.

During Allison's parental leave, Rev. Laura Smidzik's position as Assistant Minister increased from 20hr/wk to 30hrs/wk. Looking carefully at our budget for the remainder of this year, we are able to keep this position at 30hrs/wk, which better meets our needs for Pastoral Care and Membership.

After posting the position of part-time worship and choir accompanist, we received several excellent applications and have been in the process of interviewing applicants this past week. We expect to make an offer and hire someone for this position in early April once the interview process is complete. Our Music Director, Paolo Debuque, has been leading this process with guidance from Rev. Jen Crow and with choir member, Maria Heath, joining him for interviews.

Congregant Grievances

There have been no congregant grievances.

Staff & Volunteer Grievances

There have been no staff or volunteer grievances.

Information Items

Facilitating Cultural Change (FCC) Workshop, June 1-5, 2026

In June 2024, several leaders from First Universalist attended the FCC workshop and together brought our learnings back to the congregation. Revs. Arif, Ashley, and Jen participated in the training along with Martha Moriarty, Chris Tanita, and Laura Johansson. Nico Van Ostrand, who later joined us as Cummins Ministerial Intern, also participated in the training. By attending together, we were able to learn a common language and approach to leading cultural change and embodying our congregational commitment to building Beloved Community. I highly recommend that several board members consider attending as a cohort, along with other lay leaders in the congregation. The cost of the training is \$3000, and offers an excellent professional development opportunity and learning opportunity for church leadership. We have a

total of \$5000 available to offer financial support to church leaders who would like to take this training. Please let me know if that is you! You can find out more [here](#).

Ministerial Internship 2026-28

As we look ahead to the 2026-27 church year, First Universalist will have the funds available to support a 2-year half-time ministerial internship. This opportunity has been posted [here](#) and we look forward to reviewing applications asap. Funding for this ministerial internship will be supported primarily by the Cummins Ministerial Internship Fund. Rev. John and Dru Cummins served as leaders at First Universalist from 1963 to 1986, encouraging countless students in their ministry. The Cummins Internship Fund honors their legacy of leadership, service, and care, and continues their work tending the future of Unitarian Universalism now and for times we shall never see.

Upcoming Congregational Budget Meetings

Sunday, April 19th at 1pm

Sunday, May 17th at 1pm

Building Use

In addition to our own programming, we have become the regular host for the South Uptown Neighborhood Mutual Aid group which meets several times a month and we recently hosted a 3-day training for Monarca that utilized the majority of the building. We have also hosted recurring Non-Cooperation Training opportunities.

Amicus Briefs

After consultation with Board President, Marc Gorelick, and in alignment with the authority I have to speak on behalf of the church in matters that have been authorized by congregational vote, I recently signed myself and the congregation on to two Amicus briefs.

The first was filed on March 7, 2026 and is in regard to the refusal of the federal government to allow pastoral care to individuals detained at the Whipple building. This is the case of MINNEAPOLIS AREA SYNOD OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA, MINNESOTA CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, and FATHER CHRISTOPHER COLLINS, SJ, Plaintiffs,

v.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY; KRISTI NOEM, in her official capacity as Secretary of Homeland Security; U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT; TODD LYONS, in his official capacity as Acting Director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement; MARCOS CHARLES, in his official capacity as the Acting Executive Director for Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Enforcement and Removal Operations; DAVID EASTERWOOD, in his official capacity as Acting Field Office Director for Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Enforcement and Removal Operations St. Paul Field Office; U.S. FEDERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE; and FARON K. PARAMORE, in his official capacity as Director of the Federal Protective Service, Defendants.

Summary: Amici represent a diverse coalition of faith traditions. Each of those faith traditions calls on its leaders to provide in-person pastoral care to detained immigrants as a core

expression of religious observance. For faith leaders serving in and around Minneapolis, Minnesota, one of the primary locations to provide such service is at Whipple—the facility that has housed the majority of the immigrants detained during Operation Metro Surge. As plaintiffs’ lawsuit makes clear, however, the federal government has categorically barred spiritual leaders, including amici, from entering Whipple to minister to those detained inside. No matter how dire the spiritual needs of the individual might be, and no matter how religiously compelled the faith leader is to minister to them, pastoral figures will no longer be admitted to the building. The irony of this prohibition is profound: As the current Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota notes, the building was named for the first man to hold his title, Henry Benjamin Whipple, who advocated for, among other things, “the safety of Native Americans and other vulnerable people who were then under threat from the federal government.” Loya Decl. at 11.

By denying clergy access to Whipple, the government prevents amici from fulfilling their core religious duties as spiritual leaders. Just as the government’s categorical policy violates plaintiffs’ rights under the First Amendment and statutory rights under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (“RFRA”), this policy violates amici’s rights, too, to practice their faiths without government interference. The relief plaintiffs seek is therefore essential, not only to their own religious exercise, but also to that of numerous other faith leaders and congregations across Minnesota who are called to minister to this detained population. The Court should therefore grant the requested preliminary injunction and permit faith leaders and organizations of diverse traditions to fulfill their religious obligations.

The second was filed on March 11, 2026 and is in regard to the change in immigration enforcement known as the recision of sensitive locations. With this change immigration enforcement officials may now enter hospitals, schools, and congregations - places they formerly avoided. This is the case of

FRIDLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 14,
DULUTH PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709, and
EDUCATION MINNESOTA,

Plaintiffs,

v.

KRISTI NOEM, in her official capacity as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT, TODD LYONS, in his official capacity as Acting Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, MARCOS CHARLES, in his official capacity as Acting Executive Associate Director, Enforcement and Removal Operations, DAVID EASTERWOOD, in his official capacity as Acting Director, Saint Paul Field Office, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION, RODNEY SCOTT, in his official capacity as Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, GREGORY BOVINO, or his successor, in his official capacity as Commander of the

U.S. Border Patrol, THOMAS HOMAN, in his official capacity as White House Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations,

Defendants.

Summary: For decades, the government's sensitive locations policy respected the fundamental right to religious freedom by strictly limiting immigration enforcement actions in and around places of worship. The sensitive locations policy enabled religious adherents all across the country to attend in-person services without fear and allowed religious organizations to exercise their beliefs by ministering to immigrant communities. The policy also permitted the government to "accomplish [its] enforcement mission without denying . . . people of faith access to their places of worship." Memorandum from Alejandro N. Mayorkas, Secretary, DHS, Guidelines for Enforcement Actions in or Near Protected Areas, at 2–3 (Oct. 27, 2021). In short, the policy—which stretches back to at least 1993, see Memorandum from James A. Puleo, Acting Assoc. Comm'r, INS, Enforcement Activities at Schools, Places of Worship, or at Funerals or Other Religious Ceremonies, HQ 807-P, at 1 (May 17, 1993), and which endured for 32 years and through five different presidential administrations—struck a vital balance and ensured sufficient protection for constitutionally enshrined religious liberties.

In 2025, however, the government rescinded the sensitive locations policy and replaced it with a discretionary regime (the "2025 Policy") that permits individual ICE agents to engage in enforcement activities in or near religious spaces as they deem appropriate, based solely on case-by-case judgment and "common sense."

As plaintiffs argue, the government's rescission of the sensitive locations policy was arbitrary and capricious, in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act, because (among other reasons) the government "ignored important aspects of the problem[s]" arising from immigration enforcement on school premises when it rescinded the longstanding policy. Dkt. 27 at 23. Plaintiffs demonstrate with compelling force the devastating consequences that the rescission of the policy has had on schools, teachers, students and communities. And that alone is sufficient to justify the relief plaintiffs seek.

But there is an entirely separate and independent reason to grant the relief the plaintiffs seek—namely, that the government failed to consider the foreseeable and unacceptable infringements on the freedom of religion that would result from the policy change. In wiping out its longstanding policy, the government ignored the First Amendment and RFRA violations that would result from substantially burdening the rights to religious freedom and association. See *Phila. Yearly Meeting of Religious Soc'y of Friends v. DHS*, 767 F. Supp. 3d 293, 336 (D. Md. 2025) (preliminarily enjoining warrantless immigration enforcement actions at or near places of worship); *New England Synod v. DHS*, 2026 WL 412329, at *31 (D. Mass. Feb. 13, 2026) (same).

Amici's experiences attest to how the 2025 policy has significantly burdened religious rights. Attendance at amici's religious events has dropped precipitously, as staff, members, and

congregants—immigrants and nonimmigrants alike—have been forced to stay away from places of worship to avoid the risk of harassment, interrogation, violence, or arrest. Places of worship have had to adopt screening and security measures designed to protect their members—measures that are antithetical to religious tenets compelling amici and similar organizations to minister and serve all comers. Religious organizations that believe that their mission includes serving immigrants have been precluded from doing so. And religious organizations’ coffers have suffered, with decreased attendance causing fewer donations and acute community need requiring additional expenditures. As one court that enjoined the 2025 Policy has explained, “[t]he prospect that a street-level law-enforcement agent—acting without a judicial warrant and with little or no supervisory control—could conduct a raid during a church service, or lie in wait to interrogate or seize congregants as they seek to enter a church, is profoundly troubling.” *New England Synod*, 2026 WL 412329, at *1, *8. The government failed to consider these all-too-predictable effects of its policy change when rescinding the sensitive locations policy. And so, for this reason too, this Court should grant plaintiffs’ motion to stay or enjoin DHS from implementing it. *DHS v. Regents of the Univ. of Cal.*, 591 U.S. 1, 30–31 (2020).

In both cases, Amici include:

- **Bishop Kevin Kenney.** Bishop Kenney serves as auxiliary bishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis and its Vicar for Latino Ministry.
- **First Universalist Church of Minneapolis and Reverend Jen Crow.**
- **Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul.**
- **Minnesota Council of Churches.**
- **Rabbi Harold J. Kravitz.** Rabbi Kravitz is the Rabbi Emeritus of Adath Jeshurun Congregation in Minnetonka, Minnesota, where he served the community for over 35 years.
- **Reverend Ben Connelly.** Reverend Connelly is a Soto Zen Buddhist teacher and Dharma heir in the Katagiri lineage.
- **The Right Reverend Craig Loya.** Bishop Loya serves as the tenth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota.

February Attendance											
											2026
Adults		Date:	SUN 9 AM In-Person	SUN 11 AM In-Person	SUN 10 AM In-Person	SUN Livestream	Youtube Views	Date Youtube Views Counted	Weekly In-Person Worship Total	Weekly Worship Total	
1st week		02/01/2026	131	159		82	168	02/10/2026	290	540	
2nd week		02/08/2026	121	109		NA	100	02/10/2026	230	330	
3rd week		02/15/2026	78	177		49	85	02/17/2026	255	389	
4th week		02/22/2026	101	151		58	No video up		252	310	
5th week											
			SUN 9 AM In-Person	SUN 11 AM In-Person	SUN 10 AM In-Person	SUN Livestream	Youtube Views		Monthly In-Person Worship Total	Monthly Worship Total	
Monthly Total		Monthly Total	431	596	0	189	353		1027	1569	
Average for February		Monthly Average	107.75	149		63	117.67		256.75	392.25	
RE		Date:	SUN 9 AM & 11 AM		SUN 10 AM	Non-Sunday RE	Date of Non-SUN RE/s		Weekly Sunday RE Total	Weekly RE Total	
1st week		02/01/2026	94			14	2/4/26		94	108	
2nd week		02/08/2026	92			41	2/11/26		92	133	
3rd week		02/15/2026	29			7	2/14/26		29	36	
4th week		02/22/2026				24	2/25/26		0	24	
5th week											
			SUN 9 AM & 11 AM		SUN 10 AM	Non-Sunday RE			Monthly Sunday RE Total	Monthly RE Total	
Monthly Total		Monthly RE Total	215		0	86			215	301	
Average for February		Monthly RE Average	71.67			21.5			71.67	75.25	
			SUN 9AM & 11 AM		SUN 10AM				Total Sunday In- Person Combined	Total Combined	
Combined Average		Combined Total	1242		0				1242	1870	
		Combined Average	112.91						155.25	233.75	

					2025							2024
Adults	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	114	188	60	177	539		108		175	47	115	445
2nd week	121	130	52	81	384		118		129	35	113	395
3rd week	105	147		65	317			152		38	122	312
4th week	125	170		112	407		123		139	40	75	377
5th week												
Monthly Total	465	635	112	435	1647		349		443	160	425	1529
Average for February	155	211.6666667	28	108.75	411.75		116.3333333	152	147.6666667	40	106.25	382.25
RE					9 & 11 RE							9 & 11 RE
1st week					123							131
2nd week					121							125
3rd week					4							8
4th week					130							110
5th week												
Monthly Total					378							374
Average for February					94.5							93.5
Combined Average					506.25							475.75
							YouTube views recorded 3/6/24 at 9 a.m.					

Statistical Report for February 2026

Board Meeting March 19, 2026

MEMBER MEMORIAL SERVICES: Jen led a memorial service but I don't know if it was for a member

MEMBER MARRIAGES/SERVICES OF COMMITMENT:

MEMBERS FOR APPROVAL: 3

MEMBERS REINSTATED:

MEMBERS FOR REMOVAL:

CHILDREN DEDICATED:

Total members as of the last meeting: 1,013?

To be added:

To be removed: 0

TOTAL MEMBERS: 1,013?

First Universalist Board of Trustees
2025-26 Annual Goals
Approved 10/16/25

Board Goal	Congregational Health Survey Theme/Desired outcomes	Visionary Goal(s)	Annual theological theme(s)
1. Strengthen Board governance practices to enhance trust	Trust, Governance		
1a. Develop and practice a Board covenant	• By November meeting, approve a board covenant • Incorporate covenant review into monthly meetings • Share our process with the congregation in a SmorgasBoard column in the spring	• Practice Beloved Community among us • Widen the opportunities for leadership participation and engagement	• Experiences of Beloved Community • Humility (truly knowing ourselves) • Building resilience for the long term
1b. Review and update Governing Policy Handbook	• By December board meeting, Governance Committee to share a plan for comprehensive review and update	• Widen the opportunities for leadership participation and engagement	• Building resilience for the long term • Humility

	• Monthly progress report at board meetings • Approve revised handbook by the May meeting		
1c. Expand communications with the congregation through a regular Board column in the Liberal	• Begin semi-monthly column in September • Solicit feedback from members on communications by the mid-year meeting	• Practice Beloved Community among us • Widen the opportunities for leadership participation and engagement • Provide meaningful presence to one another in times of joy, grief, and change	• Experiences of Beloved Community
1d. Implement and model a decision-making framework (DRIVE*) for key Board decisions	• Incorporate DRIVE into monthly agendas • Describe the framework for the congregation in a SmorgasBoard column and at least one small group meeting (e.g., after Community Supper) by end of December	• Widen the opportunities for leadership participation and engagement	• Building resilience for the long term

2. Deepen the sense and practice of belonging among members of First Universalist	Welcoming and Belonging		
2a. Follow up on survey results through individual follow up to respondents	• All respondents to survey will receive follow-up email from a board member by the end of October	• Practice Beloved Community among us • Provide meaningful presence to one another in times of joy, grief, and change	• Experiences of Beloved Community • Humility (truly knowing ourselves)
2b. Learn more about the state of belonging in the church and about who we are through individual conversations and focus groups with broad representation, and share the insights gained with the congregation	• At least 3 small group meetings by the end of January • Describe the process in a fall newsletter column • Share initial insights in a winter newsletter column and at mid-year meeting	• Practice Beloved Community among us • Provide meaningful presence to one another in times of joy, grief, and change	• Experiences of Beloved Community • Humility (truly knowing ourselves)
2c. Collaborate with staff to develop tactics to increase participation in shared ministry	• Create at least one opportunity for staff/board interaction by end of December • Expand Nominating Committee charge to include	• Widen the opportunities for leadership participation and engagement • Practice Beloved Community among us	• Experiences of Beloved Community • Humility (truly knowing ourselves) • Building resilience for the long term

	identification of lay leaders for shared ministry activities • Board members to collaborate with staff to invite identified individuals into lay leadership roles		
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*DRIVE framework for Board decisions:

D: Who is the *decision*-maker? If not an individual, how will the decision be reached (e.g., consensus, majority vote, etc.)

R: Will there be a *recommendation* sought, and if so, from whom?

I: What *input* will be solicited? How? From whom?

V: Does the decision need to be *vetted* with anyone before it is finalized?

E: Who is responsible for *executing* the decision?

Helpful questions to consider, given our intercultural orientation of minimization, to promote equity and inclusion in moving our goals forward:

- What is our role in obtaining this goal?
- What are our values we need to consider as we think about our approach, particularly concerning equity, diversity, and inclusion?
- How have we structured our approach to ensure we are considering all points of view?
- How conscious, intentional, and transparent are we about our guidelines for interaction in our meetings? How might we be reinforcing a “go along to get along” approach?
- What do we think we already know about this topic? What assumptions are we making? What is the data to support what we think we know?
- What else do we need to learn? How are we going to get this information? From whom?

JOB DESCRIPTION: First Universalist Board of Trustees

I. OVERVIEW

The Board of Trustees ("Board") at First Universalist has 2 primary responsibilities. The first is the fiduciary and legal responsibility to oversee the activities of the church, ensuring that the church operates in compliance with applicable laws, regulations and accounting procedures. In its fiduciary role the Board has full authority to direct the activities of the church except for matters specifically reserved to the membership, such as calling ministers, amending the Bylaws and approving the annual budget.

The second responsibility of the Board is governance. Under First Universalist's current form of governance, often referred to as "policy governance," the Board is responsible for developing and articulating the church's mission and visionary goals. Although the professional staff is responsible for developing and implementing programs and practices to achieve the mission and visionary goals, the Board is also responsible for developing policies and monitoring practices that ensure staff accountability in achieving those ends.

II. TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Prepare for and attend monthly Board meetings (currently the third Thursday of every month), the annual meeting of the congregation, the mid year congregational meeting, and a fall and/or spring retreat.
2. Adhere to the Board members' code of conduct contained in the Board's Governing Policy Handbook (GPH), including disclosing conflicts of interest and abiding by the Board's covenant.
3. Serve on one or more Board Standing Committees/Teams (currently Finance, Governance, and Stewardship) or as the Board appointed member of the Nominating Committee. Serving on a committee often requires an additional meeting and responsibilities each month.
4. Be willing to serve on ad hoc teams or act as a Board liaison to other church committees or groups.
5. Model generosity as a church leader by being willing to assist with fundraising activities, and by making an annual pledge that is personally meaningful and feels like a stretch.
6. Participate in activities which link the Board with and strengthen its relationship with its stakeholders. Activities could include listening and asking questions; being visible, approachable, and accessible, and using tools such as congregational surveys or focus groups. Stakeholders are defined as current and potential members and friends of First Universalist; professional staff; programs and committees of the church; the UUA and the district; and the neighborhood and wider community.
7. Ensure that the church is governed effectively in a manner consistent with policy governance and the GPH. (The GPH contains, in addition to the mission and visionary goals of the church, policies which are designed to delegate authority to and establish constraints on the Senior Minister's authority, provide for monitoring of achievement of visionary goals, and address, in general terms, how the board and Senior Minister will work together.)

III. KEY SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Effective Board leadership under policy governance requires an emphasis on strategic leadership as opposed to management or administrative skills, comfort with a clear distinction between Board and

professional staff roles, and a willingness to be proactive rather than reactive. As set forth in the GPH, the Board will direct and inspire the organization through the creation of visionary goals, ongoing discernment with the staff and congregation about those goals, and the establishment and monitoring of policies that create accountability and clarity about the achievement of those goals. To that end, the following skills and abilities are helpful to being an effective Trustee:

1. Strong creative and “big picture” thinking, combined with the ability to focus on detail when needed.
2. Ability to wrestle with ambiguity/shades of gray.
3. Sound judgment and strong critical thinking and analysis skills.
4. Ability to contribute to the constructive resolution of challenging and complex issues.
5. Willingness to express minority opinions and take an independent stand if necessary.
6. Ability to work collaboratively and to contribute to team building and teamwork.
7. Ability and willingness to listen to the needs, concerns and perspectives of stakeholders.
8. Excellent written and verbal communication skills.

IV. QUALIFICATIONS

1. Nominees for a Trustee position must be a member of the congregation in good standing.
2. Prior leadership experience at First Universalist, another UU church, as a volunteer or professional; or prior Board experience, especially non-profit, is recommended but not required.
3. An understanding of policy governance is recommended but not required. (Board orientation will be provided on policy governance.)
4. An understanding of the content of First Universalist’s intercultural competency is recommended. If not already done within the prior 2 years, new Board members will be asked to complete the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI).

V. TERMS

1. Trustees serve 3-year terms, commencing July 1 following the annual meeting. Terms are staggered so that, ideally, not more than 3 Board members join the Board every year.
2. Trustees are limited to two consecutive terms, meaning no trustee (other than those filling mid-term vacancies) can serve more than 6 consecutive years. If a Trustee serves a term of less than three (3) years to finish another Trustee’s unexpired term, that Trustee may be elected to a third term of one (1) or two (2) years, to allow a total of six (6) years of consecutive service. A Trustee who has served six (6) consecutive years may not be nominated to serve an additional term until that Trustee has been off the Board of Trustees for at least three (3) years after completion of their last term.

Adopted December 2012 by Board consensus; revised February 2013 by Board consensus; modified March 2016 by Board consensus.

Updated March 2026 by Board consensus

Participants:

*General (following 1/14/26 Community Dinner):~9 people

*Newcomers/Daytime Connections: (combined group, 1/18/26)~7 attendees

Ages: (guess)-30's to 80's

Membership: one non-member who's been attending a few months; one new member ~6 months; many ranging from 3-yrs-18 yrs; a few decades-long members

General impressions of these circles:

Appreciation for

*opportunity to be heard

*chance to meet some BOT members

*BOT members' asking for input and listening; overall good impression of current Board's accessibility (eg, presence at church activities) and sharing of information (eg, The Smorgasbord)

Responses (in no particular order) to "What helps you feel like you belong at First Universalist?"

Overwhelmingly, the responses had to do with 'being in meaningful relationships'!

Also:

*RE programs(participating as parents/caregivers, or as volunteers)

*Sunday services- spiritually relevant, inclusive and welcoming, meaningful topics, relevant to the times, group singing, greeting each other, invitations to participate and contribute)

*Welcoming and warm behaviors from ministers, staff, lay leaders and members

*Small groups/circles

*Newcomers and New Member groups

* Daytime Connections

* Small minister-led circles for older members

*Being invited to lead or volunteer

*Joining/volunteering on our own (RE, social justice activities, Welcoming team, S&R and EJ team, Memorial team, etc)

Things that can be barriers or lessen the 'sense of belonging':

*recognition that the feeling of belonging changes over one's lifespan, and also as the congregation's leadership and membership changes (due to death, aging, moving, leaving for personal reasons, etc)

*large congregation can be harder to feel 'belonging ', especially for an introvert

*some miss the Circle Suppers as a way to get to know people

*some older and long-term members find it challenging to know 'how do I belong'- they felt more a part of the congregation in the past when they were able to be more involved, when more of their friends were here, when they could DO more

*recognition that CHANGE and LOSS are inevitable, and that there is some sadness and grief with that...and there can also be good things! (ministers and leaders leaving; loss/change in choir; changes in the service and governance model, etc)

*request from some, especially longer term members, to be invited-in for input on congregational problem-solving

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

March 12, 2026

6:00-7:30 pm | Online

Members present: Cameron Smither, Amelia Marquez, Dan Berg, Marc Gorelick

Staff present: Brad Schmidt, Jen Crow

Stewardship liaison present: Ginny McAninch

Members not in attendance: Dick Niemiec

Guests: Clyde Derrick

Meeting convened at 6:00 pm

1. Chalice lighting and grounding led by Cameron and Jen

2. Welcome and Introductions for guest Clyde Derrick led by Cameron

3. Pledge Updates led by Brad and Ginny

- Brad walked the committee through the data: 357 pledging units have pledged thus far, with historical data suggesting we should expect another 50-60 pledges. Current pledged amount totals approx. \$1.2MM; estimates (based on known parties that haven't yet pledged) suggest we can expect to land somewhere near \$1.4MM. This feels like a great position to be in at this moment and is an especially welcome contrast from more recent years' cycles.
- Ginny provided an update and coordination on stewardship outreach efforts, and many committee members shared appreciation for this year's testimonials during Sunday services (special kudos to Rev. Ashley for helping organize and support those!).

4. ACS/Breeze Transition led by Ginny

- Ginny shared that 58% of the initial 62 pledging units transitioned to Breeze! The remaining 26 account for just under \$11k in annual giving; Ginny will continue to reach out to these folks but is being especially sensitive to not overlapping or duplicating efforts with other existing outreach from stewardship committee folks. This is progress very much worth celebrating! Many thanks were given to Ginny for her dedication and hard work on this project!
- Re: impact on the budget, Brad clarified this fiscal year's budget originally accounted for approx. \$45K in unfulfilled pledges (part of regular budgeting), and that when we revised the budget mid-year he incorporated another \$10-15K to be unfulfilled as a result of this ACS-to-Breeze transition. We will also have some savings from no longer paying for ACS for the latter half of the FY; this may be a good example of storytelling re: being good stewards of the congregation's funds.

5. Preliminary Budget Discussion led by Jen

- Jen grounded the committee in her approach to developing the church's operational budget – namely, that it is both a functional document and a moral document; the operating budget is a tangible expression of our values, vision, and mission, and how we spend our money is one of the most important tools we have as we strive to align our institutional practices, resources, and outcomes with our visionary goals. As such, she starts each budgeting exercise with the following commitments:
 - We will present a balanced budget, with realistic income and expense #s based on pledged gifts, past performance and planned fundraising efforts.
 - We will plan for inflation and expected cost increases.
 - We will keep staff salaries within UUA minimum salary recommendations and provide at least a 3% cost of living increase for all staff.
 - Increase giving to the UUA annual fund as possible.
 - If staffing needs to be reduced, this will be done by eliminating whole positions rather than making across the board or piece meal reductions.
 - We will keep staff benefits in alignment with recommendation by the UUA, without changes.
- Specific numbers are still being gathered but some important contours of the budget discussion at the moment included:
 - Expected scenario thoughts: 3% cost of living increases for staff; additional funds to maintain benefits at current level; continue with half-time Director of Music role, continue with artist in residence role, hire an accompaniment, increase pastoral care (Rev. Laura) time from half- to three-quarters-time, and additional funds to support a half-time ministerial intern (not just every other year); additional security funds for all large gatherings.
 - Best case scenario thoughts: additional half-time administrative staff support, additional childcare support, growing formal and informal “buffer” budget lines to accommodate unexpected expenses, additional sabbatical funds
 - Building and capital (B&C) expenses: were expecting to end this FY without enough in the B&C reserve to cover next FY's related expenses – one-time gifts have come in specific to that purpose that may defray some of those expenses temporarily; this is an evolving conversation but may provide some breathing room.
 - Meaningful opportunities: similar to public radio, these past few months have been a powerful reminder of the needs the church fills and there's recognition of the importance of what we do; how do we build on that and make it a lasting strength instead of a blip? Some of this is financial, but some is also recognition and relational. First U is many people's anchor for processing and making sense of the most impactful events of the day, finding ways into action and support, and maintaining some senses of peace and joy through hard times; many in the congregation have stepped up this year to support the work of the church, sharing their resources – financially, yes, but also their time, attention, and energy. This is shared ministry!
 - Some cautions: as ongoing expenses, establishing permanent positions should always be approached very thoughtfully; this is especially true knowing some expenses related to the B&C may not be felt for another FY.
- Cameron shared that the board is scheduling opportunities to share and gather input on the budget and that the Finance Committee, while not required to attend, is highly encouraged to

join and help speak to the considerations that will eventually end up in the budget draft presented to the congregation. Key dates for congregational meetings were shared:

- April 19 – informally previewing a draft budget and requesting feedback
 - May 17 – formally presenting the recommended budget to the congregation
 - June 14 – formal congregation meeting to vote on the budget
- The Sanctuary and Resistance Fund was discussed briefly, clarifying that those funds are separate from the church's operating budget so not directly relevant here. Nevertheless, there was good news to share: the church now has a brand new washer and dryer in the kitchen! Thank you to Clint Groebel for amazing plumbing work to make this possible!

6. Sabbatical Grant Application led by Jen

- Jen shared she, with the help of several others at church (esp. Ralph Wyman and Marc Gorelick) and the board, is applying for a Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program grant. This program is focused on successful long-term ministries and is for ministers and congregations alike – both the minister and congregation have projects they work toward, so it's renewal on both ends, and each side can receive financial support to pursue those projects.
 - For Jen, this would look like taking two 3-month sabbaticals, one in Spring '27 and another in Spring '28, with her family focused on understanding her culture and heritage, connecting to the immigration work of the church.
 - On congregational end, these efforts would likely be focused on learning to identify our own culture, notice and name how our individual cultures and those of the congregation show up, and consider how we become more welcoming as a result.
- Financially, if secured, the grant would provide up to \$60K total, with approximately \$40K supporting Jen's activities and \$20K supporting the congregation and their activities. Specific potential costs will be clearer once the application is done and the sabbatical time is closer (esp. for the congregational side, to allow for gathering input and suggestions). The grant application is due March 18th, and determinations are expected to go out in August.

7. Review Year-to-Date Finances led by Brad

- Members were presented core financial statements reflecting July through January 31, 2026. No significant flags present in the finance data. Major topics of discussion included:
 - Revenues: overall, in solid position at approx. \$58,500 positive variance to-date.
 - Annual pledges continue to be ahead of budget, now by approx. \$36,000; those, alongside lower-than-expected unpaid gifts (good!) means annual giving has a positive variance of approx. \$62K
 - Donations/Fundraising variance continues to be negative overall (bad), reflecting a mix of higher-than-expected donations for Programs and the Offering Plate, among others, but lower-than-expected general Donations and the postponed Boston trip registration fees (offset with avoided expenses). With the Trivia and Talent Show cancelled (which was budgeted to bring in approx.. \$8K), there are not many fundraising events left in the year; watch this going forward. Overall, Donations/Fundraising has a negative variance of approx. \$12K.
 - Earned Revenues continue at largely expected levels.
 - Expenses: overall, also in a solid position at approx. \$24,000 positive variance to-date.
 - Personnel and Fundraising expenses are very close to budget.

- Administrative expenses show a large positive variance (reminder: much of that reflects expenses avoided from the Boston trip and are offset in revenues). Overall, positive variance of approx. \$23K.
 - Program expenses have a positive variance overall, reflecting a mix of shifted expenses from religious education (e.g., fewer supplies, more spent on venue rental for key offsite events), additional expenses to adjust to Dr. Rideout's departure (e.g., musicians), etc. Overall, positive variance of approx. \$6K.
 - Buildings and Grounds continues to be a pressure point, with meaningful negative variance driven by higher-than-expected property taxes, unanticipated security costs, and higher gas expenses from a colder-than-average winter. Brad expects property tax amounts to remain unchanged for this CY but to reduce in CY27 after supporting Grace School in being recognized as a nonprofit (See January's notes for more details). Overall, negative of approx. \$8K.
- All up, we currently have a budget surplus (good) of approx. \$86,000 and continue to be in a healthy financial position to date.

8. Looking Ahead/Next Steps

- The next committee meeting will continue the budget discussion and review staff compensation and benefits.
- Concrete next steps included:
 - From this meeting:
 - Jen will update the committee with the determination of the sabbatical grant.
 - From prior meetings:
 - Brad will work with Grace School to cement their nonprofit status (to lower the church's property tax liability for next CY).
 - Brad will update the Legacy Investment Policy document on the website.
 - Cameron will start hand-written Thank You cards and bring them for committee members to sign on Sunday.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30pm

Next meeting scheduled for April 9, 2026, online from 6:00-7:30pm

Respectfully submitted,

Cameron Smither, Treasurer

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

Balance Sheet

	Actual As of 01/31/2026
Assets	
Current Assets	
Cash	\$100,948.10
Investments	\$3,600,801.23
Accounts Receivable	\$5,472.39
Other Current Assets	\$68,123.66
Total Current Assets	\$3,775,345.38
Non-Current Assets	
Fixed Assets	\$5,213,340.19
Total Non- Current Assets	\$5,213,340.19
Total Assets	\$8,988,685.57
Liabilities and Fund Balance	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$64,992.05
Benefits Payable	\$40,509.91
Other Current Liabilities	\$21,618.30
Total Current Liabilities	\$127,120.26
Long Term Liabilities	
Loan Payable	\$1,385,201.86
Interfund Transfer	\$0.00
Total Long Term Liabilities	\$1,385,201.86
Total Liabilities	\$1,512,322.12
Fund Balance	
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$4,880,380.42
Donor Restricted Net Assets	\$2,595,983.03
Total Fund Balance	\$7,476,363.45
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	\$8,988,685.57

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

Income Statement

Operating Budget

	Actual 07/01/2025 to 01/31/2026	Budget 07/01/2025 to 01/31/2026	Variance	Annual Budget 07/01/2025 to 06/30/2026
Revenues				
Support				
Annual Giving	\$903,977.84	\$841,863.00	\$62,114.84	\$1,275,550.00
Donations & Fundraising	\$150,740.88	\$162,897.00	(\$12,156.12)	\$236,500.00
Total Support	\$1,054,718.72	\$1,004,760.00	\$49,958.72	\$1,512,050.00
Earned Revenue				
Services & Rentals	\$63,864.73	\$61,906.65	\$1,958.08	\$109,000.00
Investment	\$24.25	\$0.00	\$24.25	\$0.00
Other Income	\$6,606.68	\$0.00	\$6,606.68	\$2,000.00
Total Earned Revenue	\$70,495.66	\$61,906.65	\$8,589.01	\$111,000.00
Total Revenues	\$1,125,214.38	\$1,066,666.65	\$58,547.73	\$1,623,050.00
Expenses				
Personnel & Professional	\$726,085.92	\$728,344.38	\$2,258.46	\$1,243,000.00
Administrative	\$69,757.26	\$93,270.73	\$23,513.47	\$148,001.00
Fundraising	\$10,569.09	\$10,825.00	\$255.91	\$19,500.00
Program	\$40,928.45	\$47,094.95	\$6,166.50	\$67,500.00
Building & Grounds	\$88,771.02	\$80,758.30	(\$8,012.72)	\$140,300.00
Other	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,500.00
Total Expenses	\$936,111.74	\$960,293.36	\$24,181.62	\$1,622,801.00
Investment Activity	\$3,625.54	\$0.00	\$3,625.54	\$0.00
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	\$192,728.18	\$106,373.29	\$86,354.89	\$249.00

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

Income Statement

Building & Capital Reserve Budget

	Actual 07/01/2025 to 01/31/2026	Budget 07/01/2025 to 01/31/2026	Variance	Annual Budget 07/01/2025 to 06/30/2026
Revenues				
Support				
Donations & Fundraising				
Capital Campaign	\$27,220.00	\$90,708.31	(\$63,488.31)	\$155,500.00
Total Donations/Fundraising	\$27,220.00	\$90,708.31	(\$63,488.31)	\$155,500.00
Total Support	\$27,220.00	\$90,708.31	(\$63,488.31)	\$155,500.00
Total Revenues	\$27,220.00	\$90,708.31	(\$63,488.31)	\$155,500.00
Expenses				
Administrative				
Professional Fees	\$734.81	\$0.00	(\$734.81)	\$0.00
Total Administrative Expenses	\$734.81	\$0.00	(\$734.81)	\$0.00
Building & Grounds				
Equipment (Non-Capitalized)	\$0.00	\$291.65	\$291.65	\$500.00
Equipment Repair & Maintenance	\$366.08	\$291.65	(\$74.43)	\$500.00
Repairs & Maintenance	\$543.09	\$4,666.65	\$4,123.56	\$8,000.00
HVAC	\$4,232.00	\$3,500.00	(\$732.00)	\$6,000.00
Elevator	\$3,511.86	\$2,041.65	(\$1,470.21)	\$3,500.00
Grounds Maintenance	\$2,750.00	\$2,333.31	(\$416.69)	\$4,000.00
Capital Campaign Expenditure	\$0.00	\$77,583.31	\$77,583.31	\$133,000.00
Interest Expense	\$31,197.04	\$0.00	(\$31,197.04)	\$0.00
Total Building & Grounds	\$42,600.07	\$90,708.22	\$48,108.15	\$155,500.00
Total Expenses	\$43,334.88	\$90,708.22	\$47,373.34	\$155,500.00
Investment Activity	\$13,226.56	\$0.00	\$13,226.56	\$0.00

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
Income Statement

Building & Capital Reserve Budget

	Actual 07/01/2025 to 01/31/2026	Budget 07/01/2025 to 01/31/2026	Variance	Annual Budget 07/01/2025 to 06/30/2026
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(\$2,888.32)	\$0.09	(\$2,888.41)	\$0.00

MINUTES

First Universalist Stewardship Committee

Wednesday, 25 February 2026, 6:00 pm | Zoom

Attendees

Lynn Broaddus (chair), Unique Jacobo, Ginny McAninch, Velma Wagner, Emily Wallace

Notes

Pledge Campaign Status

- As of Tuesday afternoon, \$755,207 had been pledged (inclusive of recurring gifts), with an additional \$78,850 in one-time gifts which will go toward operating expenses unless specifically designated otherwise. Though we don't have data from recent pledge campaigns, Emily felt that this year's pledge drive appears to be receiving contributions more consistently than last year's campaign. Ginny suggested that schedule a Breeze tutorial later this summer so that we can all better understand how pledge changes are processed.

Close of campaign:

- We agreed that we'll move the end of pledge to March 15th, a date when Rev. Jen is in the pulpit (which seems important). Next year we'd love to have a bigger celebration at the end of the campaign. For this year, given how small our group is and that only two of us (Ginny and Unique) will be present on March 15th, we will stick with the tried-and-true sheet cake after service. Ginny and Unique will take the lead on making arrangements (ensuring that there are options for people on restricted diets), and finding volunteers to help serve the cake.
- The theme of the service on March 15th will be "gratitude". Drew is giving the testimonial on that Sunday, so Lynn will ask him to integrate that into his remarks.
- We looked at a test-run of the word cloud we plan to use during the church service on March 15th. Though the template could use tweaking on colors and fonts, the general idea works well. Lynn will do some modest editing to people's input to ensure that

similar terminology is being used (e.g. “pay off mortgage” and “pay down construction load” use different words but mean the same thing).

Follow up for people who haven’t yet pledged:

- We will aim to make “sweep” calls starting the week of March 8th, contacting those who haven’t yet pledged. Lynn will pull together a meeting with relevant staff (Rev. Jen, Rev. Ashley, Brad, Rachel) and Cameron to ensure that we are all coordinating on communications, etc. going into the end of pledge.

Action items:

- Lynn: Organize a follow-up meeting with key staff as well as Cameron, and Emily to coordinate on final pledge campaign follow-up, data sharing, and last appeal strategies.
- Emily: Check in with Martha (Visual Arts Team) about the status and timeline for the pledge campaign visual (tree) in the social hall.
- Unique: Research options for gluten-free and vegan cake alternatives for the March 15th celebration and coordinate with Jim as needed.
- Emily: Send a message to the board to request help with serving cake and cleanup on March 15th.
- Lynn: Reply to the recent email thread with Ashley, Drew, and Ada to suggest that the testimonial for March 15th integrate gratitude into the remarks.
- Lynn: Reschedule the April Stewardship Committee meeting from the 23rd to the 22nd and confirm with all participants.
- Lynn: Coordinate with relevant teams (stewardship, finance, board) to plan and execute follow-up calls/contacts to members who have not yet pledged, starting the week before the close if possible.
- Lynn: Look into alternative word cloud apps or programs (potentially in consultation with Shelly Desolais) to improve the visual energy and clarity of the word cloud for campaign feedback.
- Lynn: Edit and standardize the word cloud input data (e.g., correcting typos, combining similar concepts) before generating the final word cloud.
- Lynn: Add to the summer to-do list: schedule a tutorial/session for the team to better understand how Breeze (pledge management system) works.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm

Next meeting – March 25th at 6:00 pm