

# Annual Report



**2025-2026**

 **First Universalist**  
CHURCH OF MINNEAPOLIS

# Agenda

## 167th Annual Meeting of the Members First Universalist Church of Minneapolis Sunday, June 14, 2026, 11:30 a.m.

**Call to Order** | Marc Gorelick, President

**Chalice Lighting and Opening Words** | Rev. Jen Crow

**Appointment of Parliamentarian** | Marc Gorelick

**Authorization of Board of Trustees to Approve the Minutes of this Meeting**

**Senior Minister's Report** | Rev. Jen Crow

**President's Report** | Marc Gorelick

**Financial Report & Presentation of Recommended Budget for 2026–27** | Cameron Smither, Treasurer;  
Rev. Jen Crow

**Consideration and Vote on Annual Budget**

**Special Recognitions**

*Outgoing Nominating Committee Members* | Ray Dillon, Chair

*Outgoing Foundation Directors* | Isabel Quast, Chair

*Outgoing Church Trustees* | Marc Gorelick, President

**Report of the Nominating Committee and Election of |**

Ray Dillon, Chair

*Trustees and Officers, First Universalist Church*

*Directors, First Universalist Foundation*

*Members, Nominating Committee*

*Delegates to the 2026 General Assembly of the UUA*

**Motion to allow Board to appoint additional delegates to General Assembly**

**Closing Words** | Rev. Jen Crow

### 2025-2026 Board of Trustees

Marc Gorelick, *President*

Emily Wallace, *Vice President*

Cameron Smither, *Treasurer*

Matt Keller, *Secretary*

Ada Hendrickson, *Youth Member*

Zoe Olson, *Youth member*

Emily Bijnagte

Jeanne Guignon

Katherine Harrell

Lou Quast

Drew Rosielle

### Ministers & Staff

Jay Albright, *Accompanist*

Aimee K. Bryant, *Artist in Residence*

Allison Connelly-Vetter, *Director of Children, Youth, & Family Ministry*

Rev. Jen Crow, *Senior Minister*

Paolo Debuque, *Director of Music*

Olu Famule, *Livestream Tech*

Hirut Hedge, *Children, Youth, & Families Program Specialist*

Jim Poulter, *Facilities & Events Manager*

Rachel Rott, *Programs &*

*Communications Specialist*

Brad Schmidt, *Finance Manager*

Rev. Laura Smidzik, *Assistant Minister*

John Steitz, *Sound Engineer*

Richard Thomas, *Custodian*

Claire Tralle, *OWL Program*

*Coordinator*

Nico Van Ostrand, *Cummins*

*Ministerial Intern*

Tracy Van Epps, *Facilities Manager*

Jie Wronski-Riley, *Bookkeeper*

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## **Annual Report of the Senior Minister (2025-2026)**

***Rev. Jen Crow, Senior Minister***

In the midst of rising tides of authoritarianism, climate change, political violence, and oppression, the role of First Universalist Church is especially clear. The enduring work of the church is to create a space of imagination, love and hope where we can find our center and practice Beloved Community amidst the oftentimes chaos of our world. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. put the question simply in his final text, will we lean into chaos, or community? For us the answer is clear.

It is in religious community that we can work together to create and sustain a moral life. It is in religious community that we can experience the embodied love of our Universalist tradition, a love that takes both practical and spiritual form through care of our neighbors, ourselves, and the greater world of which we are a part. It is through religious community that we can join together to insist that the values of justice, equity, transformation, pluralism, interdependence, and generosity, with love at the center, shape not only the lives of us as individuals, but our church and our neighborhoods, cities, and country, too. We trust that multi-racial, multi-cultural, intergenerational communities are not only possible but essential to the joy and transformation and mutual thriving that our faith requires.

This year, we chose three central themes to shore up the grounding that we knew would sustain us:

- **Developing spiritual resilience for the long haul,**
- **Fostering experiences of Beloved Community.**
- **Growing in humility.**

Together, we've woven these themes throughout our worship, learning, and practice as another unprecedented year unfolded.

This church year has been marked by profound external and internal challenges. We experienced the continued rise of political and gun violence, notably the assassination of Speaker Melissa Hortmann and the Annunciation School shooting. Our community was directly impacted by the largest-ever ICE occupation of a metro area by government forces, which included intensive racial profiling, the detention and disappearance of thousands of our neighbors, the murder of two rapid responders by government agents, and violent attacks on non-violent protesters. We also witnessed increasing violence and the roll-back of civil rights across the country rooted in racism, transphobia, islamophobia, and anti-semitism.

Internally, we navigated significant staff transitions with the departures of Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout in the fall and Rev. Ashley Harness this spring. Their legacy remains with us, as we continue to be a more embodied, joyful, reflective, and liberatory congregation because of

their gifts. Cummins Ministerial Intern, Nico Van Ostrand, led the renewal of the BIPOC group and led us in transformative, multi-layered worship throughout the year and we've been grateful to continue to live into the congregation's commitment to UUism as a teaching congregation through the legacy of Rev. John and Drusilla Cummins. This year we also restructured our music and arts staffing to welcome Music Director, Paolo Debuque, and Worship and Choir Accompanist, Jay Albright, who joined long-time Artist in Residence, Aimee K. Bryant.

Through it all, we kept our focus on our shared Visionary Goals, which invite us to practice Beloved Community within and beyond the walls of the church in specific ways.

### **(Goal 1) Honor the richness of our Unitarian Universalist faith**

We continued the steady rhythm of worship, singing, meditation, prayer, and collective ritual that grounds us in our Unitarian Universalist faith. Through membership classes and preaching on topics including the spiritual practices of covenant, democracy, and Beloved Community we strengthened our shared understanding of core dimensions of Unitarian Universalism. Connection and collaboration with sibling UU congregations in the Twin Cities increased through our shared sanctuary and resistance work, monthly conversations between the senior clergy of local large UU congregations, and the creation of a Ministerial Internship & Supervisor Cohort learning group. In February, First Universalist offered housing and hospitality to more than 200 UU religious professionals who traveled to Minneapolis to support the MARCH clergy call. Through Side with Love's monthly program, The Gathering, and the UUA's National Congregational Leaders Conversation, church staff shared resources and experiences on how to strategically block authoritarianism and utilize music and worship in the service of liberation.

### **(Goal 2) Foster our connection with, care for, and action on behalf of Earth's environment**

Themes of following the wisdom of the earth, interconnection, wonder, and collective care were woven into worship throughout the year, with a special focus on Earth Day. "Start with the medicine" became a meaningful instruction - inviting us to follow the wisdom of indigenous communities by beginning with spiritual practice and deepening relationships in all of our healing efforts. This learning led to the gift of a monthly practice of smudging open to all, led by an indigenous member of the church community. Building on the Climate Conversations project from the prior year, the Environmental Justice Team continued to support congregational engagement through an intergenerational plant-based potluck and movie screening, and through partnerships with Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light (MNIPL) and Unidos MN.

### **(Goal 3) Pursue our individual and collective work for justice**

First Universalist became a beacon of love and hope, attracting national attention for living out our faith during the ICE occupation. The collective efforts of Minnesota UUs were recognized by the 2026 UUA President's Volunteer Service award, emphasizing not only the public resistance, but the "countless, untold, and unseen actions of UUs. Much of this resistance was anonymous by design; its successes known only to those who directly benefited from the harm that was prevented."

Thanks to worship and learning opportunities grounded in the concept of the Social Change Ecosystem, where each person is encouraged to find the role that best fits their gifts - as storytellers, healers, disrupters, visionaries, and more - First Universalist was ready to meet the moment. We expanded our Sanctuary and Resistance Team, grounded in the spiritual practice of accompaniment of trans and immigrant refugees. This included visible and intentionally invisible care for neighbors and church members impacted by the ICE occupation and attacks on LGBTQ+ lives. Church members, staff, and ministers brought the voice of Unitarian Universalism into the public square through visible activism and protest of racial profiling, harassment, and illegal detainment of our neighbors. Church members, staff, and ministers represented Unitarian Universalist values through local, national, and international news interviews and public organizing events, and First Universalist joined two significant Amicus briefs: one challenging the federal government's refusal to allow pastoral care to detained individuals at the Whipple building (filed March 7, 2026), and another challenging the recision of the sensitive locations policy.

Through the Ministers Emergency Fund, the Sanctuary and Resistance Fund, a benefit concert with Emma's Revolution, and community partnerships, First Universalist organized and shared mutual aid within and beyond our walls. New relationships began this year with the South Uptown Neighborhood Association and the South Uptown Mutual Aid group, and we deepened relationships with organizations like MARCH and Unidos MN, while continuing partnerships with Habitat for Humanity, Augsburg Fairview Academy, Joyce Uptown Food Shelf, and MNIPL. Comprehensive sexuality education has always been a core part of our ministry, and this year saw an expansion of that ministry with an OWL pilot that included 8th graders from a number of different congregations and faith traditions and the creation of a 30+ member Twin Cities wide group for OWL advisors/education directors from UU, UCC, Lutheran, and Jewish organizations.

This year, our church building expanded its role as a neighborhood hub, becoming even more widely experienced as a place of learning and connection, and a place of sanctuary and resistance. Non-cooperation trainings, Know Your Rights trainings, Rapid Responder trainings, Trans(plant) Host trainings, and meeting space for neighborhood mutual aid groups were regular occurrences throughout the year. Events that lifted our spirits and supported the wider community included the Trans Family Pancake Breakfast, hosting the Augsburg Fairview Academy (AFA) Prom, and concerts by Emma's Revolution and the premiere of the We the People Concert.

#### **(Goal 4) Widen the opportunities for leadership participation and engagement**

A key focus for the year was increasing shared ministry. We relaunched key groups, including the Choir, the BIPOC group, the Governance Team, and Care Companions. We instituted a new Building Hosts team, sharing responsibility for collective safety and welcome. The Stewardship Team led us through a hope-filled annual pledge drive and the CYFM Advisory Team took on even more responsibility, supporting the ministry during Allison Connelly-Vetter's parental leave and analyzing registration and attendance data to make key decisions. A sense of collective responsibility for the ministries of the church grew this year, with shared ministry at the heart of so many teams, including but not limited to:

- Worship Associates, Ushers and Greeters, the Musical Ensemble, Choir, Solstice and Christmas Pageant participants and guides
- The Board of Trustees, the Finance and Governance Teams, the Nominating Committee, and the Stewardship Team
- The Memorial Reception Team, Care Companions, Meal Train volunteers, and the Congregational Care Team
- Religious Education teachers and guides and Middle and High School Youth Advisors
- The Visual Arts Team, SPIFF, and Garden and Grounds teams
- The Environmental Justice Team, Habitat for Humanity Volunteers, and the Sanctuary and Resistance Team
- Countless behind the scenes gifts of time, talent, and treasure that make our church what it is and that extend our shared values into the world.

In all of this, the congregation lived into its mission—to give, receive, and grow—daring to dream in the middle of despair, and creating a space of possibility where we can live with integrity, practicing Beloved Community in the midst of it all.

In gratitude,  
Rev. Jen Crow

## **President's Report**

### **Marc Gorelick, President**

*"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others."* – Cicero

As I reflect on the church year now coming to a close – our 166<sup>th</sup> as a congregation – gratitude is one of the first things that enters my mind. Gratitude for my colleagues on the Board, for our wonderful ministers and staff, for the many people engaged in various types of shared ministry, and for all of you who come together to build and practice Beloved Community here. Gratitude for the resilience of this church and this community in the face of massive challenges both within and beyond our walls. Gratitude for a faith that shows us love is stronger than hate, that diversity is a blessing, and that solidarity eventually overcomes division.

I am grateful, and I am also proud. I am proud of how we have showed up in the face of an assault by our own government, in the face of threats to our values and our lives. As individuals and as a church, we have pushed back, we have let our voices be heard, we have given our time and energy and money in support of each other and our neighbors. We can all be proud of the leading role we have played in meeting the moment.

This is a moment when our Beloved Community, and our UU faith with its message of love at the center, are as relevant and necessary as ever. We see this in the increase in Sunday worship attendance, in the 36 new members (including many early adults) who have joined the church this year, in our vigorous shared ministries, and in the robust financial support we have given, exceeding our pledged income for this year and meeting our goal for the coming year. These are all signs of the value we see in First Universalist.

### **The Year in Review**

One of my mentors used to say, "We can do *anything*. But we can't do *everything*." As you can see from the Senior Minister's Report, we have made great strides on several of our visionary goals. As circumstances in the community changed, we adapted accordingly, leaning even more into our desperately needed sanctuary and resistance work, and our lay pastoral care program. But with only so much time, energy, and resources, it means we didn't make as much progress on some other areas, like "fostering our connection with, care for, and action on behalf of Earth's environment and all of life." Keeping in mind that these are five-year goals, the Board is committed to ensuring that over that time we advance our practice of Beloved Community in *all* the ways we aspire to.

Similarly, as we set goals for ourselves as a Board this year, building on the work we started last year on congregational health, we prioritized a few high impact things. Based on a survey of the congregation last summer, we chose a few goals related to improving Trust and Belonging. I am pleased to report that we accomplished or made progress on the large majority of these.

1. Strengthen Board governance practices to enhance trust
  - 1a. Develop and practice a Board covenant
    - By November meeting, approve a board covenant - DONE
    - Incorporate covenant review into monthly meetings - DONE

- Share our process with the congregation in a SmorgasBoard column in the spring - DONE
- 1b. Review and update Governing Policy Handbook
    - By December board meeting, Governance Committee to share a plan for comprehensive review and update - DONE
    - Monthly progress report at board meetings - DONE
    - Approve revised handbook by the May meeting – INITIAL REVIEW AT MAY MEETING, FINAL REVIEW AT JUNE MEETING
  - 1c. Expand communications with the congregation through a regular Board column in the Liberal
    - Begin semi-monthly column (SmorgasBoard) in September - DONE
    - Solicit feedback from members on communications by the mid-year meeting – NOT DONE
  - 1d. Implement and model a decision-making framework (DRIVE\*) for key Board decisions
    - Incorporate DRIVE into monthly agendas - DONE
    - 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 - DONE
2. Deepen the sense and practice of belonging among members of First Universalist
    - 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 - DONE
    - 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 - DONE
      - Describe the process in a fall newsletter column - DONE
      - Share initial insights in a winter newsletter column and at mid-year meeting - DONE
    - 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 – DONE (Board member attends staff lunch monthly)
      - Expand Nominating Committee charge to include identification of lay leaders for shared ministry activities – NOT DONE
      - Board members to collaborate with staff to invite identified individuals into lay leadership roles – PARTLY DONE

We also continued our work of deepening our knowledge of who we are as a congregation. We know that we are culturally diverse, embodying differences in race/ethnicity, age/generation, gender, sexuality, class, geographic origin, education, religious background, and more. Using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) as a tool, we sought to understand how we approach cultural difference. All of the Board members and staff, and nearly 200 members, have completed the IDI. As individuals we bring a variety of orientations, but as a congregation – and as a Board – we have a minimization orientation. (In my experience, this is not at all an unusual group orientation.) This means that in the face of difference, we tend to focus on what we have in common and minimize the differences.

This is not inherently bad. We do have a lot we share across cultural differences, and acknowledging this can be an important basis for building relationships. It is perhaps not

surprising to see that orientation particularly in a UU church; after all, our Unitarian forebears emphasized our common origin, while the Universalists taught we all have a common destiny in universal salvation. But this focus on what we share can undervalue or even miss what we do not. Some effects include:

- Unintentionally invalidating lived experiences and cultural norms of non-majority individuals
- Failing to recognize how cultural differences affect how people communicate and behave in groups
- Marginalizing non-majority individuals in groups
- Ignorance of how one's own culture affects our ideas and behaviors and assuming our approach is the default "normal"

As a Board, and as a congregation, we seek to move beyond minimization to acceptance of cultural difference, and ultimately adaptation to accommodate those differences in a truly multi- and cross-cultural community.

### **Looking Ahead**

We look forward to welcoming one new Board member in the coming year. Together we will build on the work we have done this year on congregational health, continuing to enhance trust and deepen the feeling of belonging, and to grow our understanding of who we are. Two key themes that emerged from our congregational listening this year were that people's feeling of belonging is based not only on connection with the church as an institution, but on individual interpersonal relationships; and that people are seeking more ways to engage in shared ministry. In that context, I am excited that in the coming months we will be recruiting for a full-time staff program position to coordinate membership/congregational engagement/leadership development/small group ministries. Over the summer we will lay out specific Board goals for the coming year around those themes.

I will close my report by circling back to the theme of gratitude. I am grateful to have been entrusted by all of you with this opportunity to engage in shared ministry and leadership. It has been a privilege and a joy.

## **First Universalist Stewardship Committee Report**

### **Committee Membership:**

Lynn Broaddus (Chair)  
Rev. Ashley Harness (Staff)  
Unique Jacobo  
Ginny McAninch  
Tom Saterstrom (Heritage Circle/Legacy Society lead)  
Velma Wagner  
Emily Wallace (Board liaison)

### **Overview:**

The Stewardship Committee's charge, as outlined in the church's Governing Policies, focuses on encouraging a spirit of generosity, overseeing major fundraising activities, and encouraging volunteerism. During the 2025-2026 fiscal year, we focused on fundraising, doing so in the context of encouraging generosity. An overview of our specific activities, with thoughts about the coming year, is summarized below.

### **Pledge Campaign:**

The annual pledge campaign consumed the bulk of the Committee's energy during the church year. Though work on the campaign started in the fall, the public portion of the pledge drive launched on Sunday, February 1<sup>st</sup> and closed on Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup> with the theme "Investing in Hope".

Campaign materials, distributed in printed form both print form and online, included a letter from Rev. Jen Crow introducing her dreams and providing a spiritual framework for giving, a letter from Stewardship Committee chair Lynn Broaddus focused on the pledge process, as well as a UUA giving guide, a frequently-asked-questions document, and the pledge form. The form also asked if they would consider giving a one-time gift above and beyond their pledge and were also asked to share their dreams for what the church could do with an extra million dollars.

Personal testimonials were included in each Sunday service during pledge season. These were particularly impactful this year in part because of the diversity of perspectives and the training that Rev. Ashley provided in advance. Weekly updates and reminders, usually including video clips from the Sunday testimonials, were included in The Weekly Liberal, and a separate weekly email on Tuesdays, as well as occasional text messages.

Board and Committee members – after training from Rev. Ashley - supplemented the standard communications by arranging for one-on-one meetings with dozens of congregants from a pool of 89 households who had previously pledged between \$2,000 and \$5,000. During these conversations we asked people to consider doubling their pledge. Many said "yes", while others stretched further than they were previously planning to. With Board help, we also made reminder "sweep" phone calls to several households who hadn't yet pledged.

We closed the pledge season on March 15<sup>th</sup> with an upbeat Sunday service that included a word cloud assembled from the dreams that people had shared on their pledge forms, and cake in the social hall after service.

As of the end of April we'd received \$1,429,129.47 in pledges, inclusive of approximately \$80K in one-time gifts. Those who'd been involved in the previous year's pledge process felt that commitments came in more easily this year, resulting in less angst on the part of staff and Committee members.

It should be noted that pledge season coincided with the federal government's Operation Metro Surge, creating untold stress for our ministers, staff, and Committee members. The disruption impacted the work of the Stewardship Committee in that people were pulled in many directions, were exhausted both physically and emotionally, and in at least one occasion couldn't participate because they were recovering from tear gas exposure. Yet, we rose to the occasion and the congregation responded. For this, we are grateful.

#### **Other fundraising:**

- *Give to the Max Day*: Knowing that people respond best to targeted requests, we focused this year's Give to the Max campaign on garnering support for the church's operating costs that go toward our sanctuary and resistance efforts (e.g. building expenses, ministerial time, etc.) We started communications on November 9th, well before the actual day, and raised \$13,860.
- *Concerts*: The Church hosted two concerts, one by Emma's Revolution which netted \$9,000 for our Sanctuary and Resistance team's partner, the Longfellow Neighborhood Partnership, which supports immigrant families associated with Hiawatha Community School. A few weeks later we again hosted a concert by Lori Dokken and friends which netted approximately \$1,400 for church operations.
- *Scrap metal*: We partnered with the Environmental Justice Committee to collect broken holiday lights which raised \$67 and kept roughly 200 pounds of waste from incineration.

#### **Other activities:**

- Tom Saterstrom and Velma Wagner undertook a review of the church's Legacy Circle, what was formerly known as the Heritage Circle. They've updated the Legacy Giving web page, as well as the forms used for informing the church of a planned gift or bequest. In the coming year they plan to begin reaching out to existing members of the Legacy Circle to learn of any updates and begin cultivating new commitments.
- Drew Rosielle and Karen Heegard led a course titled "Beyond Donating: What does sharing look like?"
- Committee members attended the last day of each round of new member classes to share information about pledging.

## Treasurer's report

**Cameron Smither, Treasurer**

### Finances in the Church Context

In my opinion, navigating finances can be one of the most illuminating spiritual practices we do. It's ongoing, emergent, regularly requires tradeoffs, rarely has clear answers, and always pulls on threads of the past, present, and future. When I considered finances in the context of church this past year, I challenged myself to articulate what our philosophies around money are, or should be, and referred to the (draft!) list below regularly. For those who are open wade deeper, I'd love to hear what edits or additions you might suggest (e.g., what does the UU practice of covenanting mean in this context? Complex stuff).

*Draft philosophies toward finances in the context of church:*

- *Financial resources are one kind of tool in our toolbox to pursue our visionary goals, like time and attention.*
- *How we spend our resources is a direct reflection of our values.*
- *Life often pushes us to not talk about money openly; doing so is counter-cultural.*
- *Contributing our resources to a cause deepens our connection and sense of belonging with it.*

I start with philosophy because it's easy to skip right to the tactical level and risk forgetting the "spiritual practice" of it all. Giving, receiving, spending, saving... these decisions make for a rich journey, not just a destination. With all that in mind, I believe the financial journey of our church over the past year can be an inspiration for us all (see the financial year in review section).

My heartfelt thanks go out to the many, many folks who made all of this possible. Thank you—to the members and friends of the church who made pledges before this year arrived, to those who made gifts of resistance during the terror of operation metro surge, and to those who will support the financial needs of the church in the years to come. Thank you to the amazing group of staff and lay leaders who build the church we love every week. And, to the Finance Committee members who help hold these finances-as-values-as-spiritual-practice discussions in real time, thank you Dan Berg, Marc Gorelick, Amelia Marquez, Dick Niemiec, Ginny McAninch, Rev. Jen Crow, Brad Schmidt, and Nico Van Ostrand.

## **Financial Year in Review (2025-2026 Fiscal Year Performance)**

The fiscal year that preceded this one had more than its fair share of financial uncertainty and my sense was that the congregation was tired of the need for “heroic efforts” to balance the budget. The church carried these lessons forward and (in many ways an incredible counterpoint to the broader national climate) moved out of a period of financial uncertainty and into stability.

We won't know how all the details of the budgeted activities of the church (that is, the activities represented by our annual Operating Budget) shake out until ~August but all signs indicate we will end the year with a modest surplus. Our Operating Budget reflects most of our expenses (like staffing, programming, and building and grounds) and marquee activities like worship, religious education, and community dinners while keeping the building open and lights on.

But of course the church also faced significant “unplanned” expenses, from the mundane (higher than expected property taxes) to the existential (expanding security amid rising national violence, resisting the terror campaign of operation metro surge). “Unplanned” activities like these can make giving financially to church feel both more difficult *and* more important than ever before.

All told, thanks to the planned and unplanned financial support of our congregation and countless others in our faith, region, state, national, and international communities, our church had the resources necessary to be an anchor for our communities.

## **The Financial Year Ahead (2026-2027 Proposed Budget)**

I believe we can carry this stability forward into next fiscal year and use it as a steady foundation for wherever our financial journey leads us next.

Some aspects of next year's budget will be meaningfully different from this past year. A few of the most significant examples are that Rev. Laura's time will increase; a new full-time program position focused on supporting the congregation will be added; the church will begin contributing to the Mni Sota Makoce Honor Tax; the operating budget must absorb the share of building and grounds expenses left over when the Building & Capital reserve funds spend down.

These are expenses we are prepared for. We know what it costs to support the staff at the recommended guidelines. We know the current Building & Capital reserve fund will be spent down (as scheduled). We anticipate one-time expenses when Rev. Jen goes on sabbatical, and are prepared to pay property taxes higher than our peers.

And it's worth noting that, for expenses that might shift, we're preparing where we can for those shifts to be in our favor. We've budgeted enough to cover the one-time sabbatical expenses but have also applied for grant funding to offset them. We've budgeted to fully cover property taxes at their current amount but have identified why they were higher than expected and are working to formally lower them going forward. As Rev. Jen said in her budget narrative, the budget has been prepared knowing there are several significant

opportunities for increased income and decreased expenses that may occur this year, but counting on none of them.

What we can't know are the unplanned parts of next year's financial story. I'm confident in where we're starting and hopeful that most of the unplanned developments might actually be in our favor. Regardless, the spiritual practice of navigating next year will be illuminating and I'd love your help on the journey.

**Proposed Operating Budget, 2026-2027**

Type	Description	Budgeted \$, FY2026-2027
<b>Revenues</b>		
Support	Annual Giving	\$1,421,000
	Donations/Fundraising	\$255,000
	Building/Capital Fund	\$40,000
	Revenue Released from Restrictions	\$5,000
	<b>Total, Support</b>	<b>\$1,721,000</b>
Earned Revenue	Service/Rental Income	\$111,000
	Investment/Other Income	\$2,000
	<b>Total, Earned Revenue</b>	<b>\$113,000</b>
<b>Total Revenues</b>		<b>\$1,834,000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
	Personnel & Professional	\$1,251,150
	Administrative	\$162,821
	Programming	\$106,450
	Building & Grounds	\$183,050
	Construction Loan	\$127,000
	Other Expenses	\$3,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>\$1,833,471</b>
<b>Investment Activity</b>		
<b>Total, Investment Activity</b>		<b>\$0</b>
<b>Net Surplus/(Deficit)</b>		<b>\$529</b>

## FOUNDATION BOARD NOMINEES



**Kaitlin Hallett-Pugh** has been attending First U since the Christmas Pageant of 2015, when her son, Griffith, turned to her and said “Mom, this place has everything you’ve been looking for in a church!” She was involved with creating curriculum for first grade Our Whole Lives and teaching OWL. Most recently she was a facilitator for Visionary Goals workshops and was a mentor in the Coming of Age program. Kaitlin was a lawyer for many years and then became a social studies teacher. Her primary hobby is reading (yes, she’s a nerd) and hanging out with her husband Andy, two kids (Lillian and Griff) two cats (pippa and Monty) and one dog (Otis).



**Carol E. Jackson**, a 50-year member of First Universalist, visited previously when she married her husband, Tom, in 1968. She has served in numerous roles at First U, including Social Action Committee Chair, trustee/Vice President/President of the Board of Trustees, several Search Committees, Long-Range Planning, Membership, Pastoral Care, and wider UU activities as well. Her professional activities included leadership positions in the Minnesota Home Economics Association (MHEA), now MN Assn of Family and Consumer Sciences, Twin Cities Home Economists in Business (HEIB), Phi Upsilon Omicron/Alpha Alumni Chapter, University of MN College of Home Economics Alumni Society, and more recently President, Vice President and Secretary of the Ney Nature Center, and she is presently serving on Ney’s committees for Fund Development and Marketing, Policy, Nominating, Building and Land Preservation, and Historian. She served for 30 years as the overall company coordinator for the United Way at Jerry’s Enterprises until her retirement in 2017. Passions include genealogy, history, and photo notecard-making.



**Robert Kimball** (he/him) moved to Minneapolis in late November, 2020, began virtually attending Sunday services shortly thereafter, and became a member of First U in 2021. Before that, he had early, brief encounters with several other religious traditions but had been effectively unchurched for nearly 65 years. Consequently, it was beyond surprising that right from the start UU resonated so deeply with him. He found awe and wonder coupled with humility in the presence of the natural world; radical acceptance of the value of all people as ends in themselves, infinitely worthy of dignity and respect; a dedication to the development of individual psychological insight and spiritual growth; a commitment to collective social justice and the abolition of oppressive inequalities; all without the encumbrances of restrictive metaphysical creeds. This is right where he belongs. At First U, Robert has been a Place to Start facilitator and has participated in many groups and circles, most significantly for him, the 75+ Spirituality group. In his career, he taught philosophy at the University of Louisville for 40 years, where he was Chair of the Philosophy Department for 10 years, Co-Director and Co-Founder of the Interdisciplinary Masters in Bioethics, and chair or member of many different committees.

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE NOMINEES



**Katie Fox** was first drawn to First Universalist by circle suppers, women’s writing groups, and sermon based small groups, nearly 15 years ago. Since that time she has hosted suppers, facilitated groups, and co-facilitated 8th grade OWL. Her children, Rita and Cormac, have also joined the community. Katie is currently an MPS school social worker and has experience in nonprofit talent acquisition, grants management, and community outreach. Katie looks forward to being part of the messiness, awkwardness, and beauty of growing our community



**Maria Heath** (she/her) started attending First Universalist in 2021, just as the church moved back to in-person services. Having grown up UU in a small town in Illinois and having recently graduated from a long graduate program, she was looking for a new community that could become a long-term home. First Universalist, with its large membership, huge RE program, and many groups and volunteer opportunities, provided a perfect space. Over the years she has gotten more and more involved, from participating in the Early Adult group, advising the High School Youth Group, participating in the choir, and helping with or speaking at several services. She has found that involvement creates investment, which creates strong community, and looks forward to this opportunity to become even more involved and to grow as part of the community we all make here together.



**Amelia Danielle Marquez** (she/they, Coahuiltecan Nation) is from the “Big Sky Country” known as Montana. Amelia moved to the Twin Cities almost exactly four years ago. Amelia serves the city of Minneapolis as a social studies and career readiness public school teacher. When she is not busy teaching, Amelia spends her time with the Early Adult group of First Universalist. In addition, she enjoys relaxing with her cat full of “tortitude” Coco, streaming or watching her friends stream on TikTok, or holding power figures in the community accountable. She is wrapping up her term as an executive board member of Minneapolis Federation of Educators Local 59. Previous board experience includes: TransVisible Montana (At-large), Montana Democratic Party (Eastern At-large), Yellowstone County Democratic Central Committee (Chair and Vice Chair), Montana State University Billings Communication Department (Student Representative), and the Associated Students of Montana State University Billings (At-large).

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE NOMINEES, CONTINUED

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**CT Neal-Herman** (he/him) has been attending First Universalist Church of Minneapolis since 2019. During the pandemic lockdowns, the Parents and Caregivers of Littles group at this church was one of his biggest lifelines. He has facilitated Adult OWL, led Newcomers Circles, and volunteered in various levels of RE. His two kids, Emil and Ollie, very much enjoy the church as well. He enjoys spending time with his kids (outside preferably), staying active, connecting with friends, cooking and reading.



**Raelyn Rasset** (they/them) has been a member of First Universalist since July 2023. Since joining they are a Coming of Age Advisor, participant of the Early Adults group, summertime usher, and enjoy jumping in to help wherever is needed in our community. Raelyn professionally is a PreK teacher in Saint Paul Public Schools where they also serve as a union steward. They feel a lot of their professional skills in helping create a mutual aid network and advocacy for their colleagues will help them step into the Nominating Committee.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES OFFICER NOMINEES

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### **Nominee for President: Marc Gorelick**

Marc became a UU in the early 1990s, and started coming to First Universalist shortly after moving to Minneapolis in 2017. He is particularly drawn to First U's focus on anti-racism and racial justice. At his previous churches, he has taught RE, served on ministerial search, bylaws, and auction committees as well as the Board of Trustees including two terms as President. A pediatric emergency medicine physician by training, he is currently chief executive officer of Children's Minnesota, with plans to retire later in 2025. He also serves on the boards of Playworks MN and Minnesota Public Radio. Marc enjoys running, cycling, homebrewing, and playing tuba in the Minnesota Freedom Band.



### **Nominee for Vice President: Emily Wallace**

Emily became a member at First Universalist in 2018, and was particularly drawn to it because of its commitment to racial and environmental justice. She knew she had found a spiritual home when she cried the first time she attended a Sunday service. She helped co-facilitate racial justice workshops as well as the Newcomer Circle. Emily has served on the Board since 2023, supports families with children through Saturday Sprouts, and is co-chair on the Stewardship Team. In her spare time, she likes to bake, take walks in nature, and read. Her daughters, Vivian and Corinne, also attend church with her, and she is so glad to have such a loving and supportive church community helping her navigate the joys and challenges of life and parenting.



### **Nominee for Secretary: Matt Keller**

Matt has been attending First U since 2009. He lives in South Minneapolis, and his career is in education, publishing, and technology. Two of his children attended RE at First U, where he also taught class for several years. Matt has been involved in strategic planning and pastoral care at church and is currently in his fifth year as Secretary on the Board of Trustees. For fun, Matt plays trombone in three bands, bikes, hikes, and travels.



### **Nominee for Treasurer: Cameron Smither**

Cameron joined First Universalist in March of 2024 after moving to Minneapolis in mid-2023, but no place has felt more like home. After spending a dozen plus years in transient-heavy Washington DC, he was ready for a more thoughtful and grounded approach to community and First U has been that gift! His two-year First U anniversary "Rocky training montage" would include lots of discord messaging with other young adults, shyly singing for the first time in the choir, giving ad hoc presentations with senior high youth, quilting extremely slowly with the quilting group, tracking waterfall charts with the finance committee, and much much more. When not working, Cameron likes to bike, play games, and cook in the First U kitchen.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES TRUSTEE NOMINEES



**Kirk Cozine** (he/him) has been associated to one degree or another with First U since 2001, when his wife (Liz Short) began attending in the aftermath of 9/11. Kirk began attending more regularly several years later when his children (McLean and Owen) began participating in RE. Kirk found his initial First U calling when he started advising 8th grade OWL classes in 2012; in the years since he has facilitated multiple OWL classes for 8th and 9th grade, senior high and adults. In recent years, he has added service on the Children, Youth and Families Advisory and as a high school youth group advisor. Kirk is a retired lawyer. He enjoys rowing, cross-country skiing, museums, travel, cooking and reading, and has in recent years developed a passion for watching rugby on TV (no, he has never played). He also serves as a board member and Secretary of the Minneapolis Rowing Club.



**Jeanne Guignon** (she/her) joined First Universalist in 2010, knowing she'd found her 'spiritual-place-and-people.' After a life of exploration of various faiths and practices, she was drawn to this beloved community where spiritual growth, authentic relationships, and racial, social and environmental justice were openly discussed and acted upon. This complemented her life both with her family (partner Tom and two adult children & their families) and professionally as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. At First U, Jeanne served on the Welcoming, Memorial, Housing, Capital Campaign and other teams; facilitated Newcomers' groups and other circles; participated in Wellspring, Soul Matters, Racial Justice training; and held leadership roles on the Annual Giving/Pledge team, Rev. Arif's Committee on Ministry, and for the past 9+ yrs on the Sanctuary & Resistance Team. Invited to join the Board of Trustees in August 2025 to complete a member's term, Jeanne is honored to serve and has been on the Board's Covenant and Governance committees.



**Katherine Harrell** has attended First Universalist since 2017. She was drawn to the church because of the depth of conversation First U holds as a faith community for discerning what possibilities emerge for a reimagined world when our time, talents, and treasures are collected and refined with questions of heart. In these heartbreaking times, Katherine sees faith communities as uniquely positioned to heal the traumas of injustice, question and challenge oppressors, and offer a path for liberation. Katherine has served as a worship associate, taught Religious Education, served on ministerial search committees, Rev. Arif's Committee on Ministry, and organized volunteers for supporting a church-sponsored asylum seeker. Katherine has training in deep listening traditions including Buddhist eco-chaplaincy and Marriage and Family Therapy.



**Lou Quast** has been attending First Universalist since about 1995, and came here after a dozen years at First Unitarian Society, where he and his late wife Sharon were married. Lou has two daughters, Isabel and Louisa, both of whom participated in the Religious Education program through high school. Lou has served on a number of committees, and has sung in the choir for more than 20 years. Lou is on the faculty in the College of Education at the U of M. He enjoys bird watching and time with his family up at the lake cabin. He believes deeply in the core principles of Unitarian Universalism, and hopes to contribute to helping the congregation continue to make progress on our important mission in our community and the world.