First Universalist
CHURCH OF MINNEAPOLIS

August 20, 2026

Friends,

Let's Finish the Promise.

Nearly ten years ago, First Universalist members united to transform our physical space. An astounding 450 households—you were likely among them—came together to fund ***Not for Ourselves Alone: Building an Inclusive Future*****, raising $5.5 million**. The goal of that effort was to repair and improve our historic Dupont Avenue building, making it more accessible, welcoming, and sustainable for all. Most notably, we invested in transforming part of the building into an apartment that could safely and comfortably provide sanctuary to families in need. None of us could have predicted how essential that investment would become.

Because our congregation had the foresight to renovate generously with the wider community in mind, we were ready when our nation needed us last winter. Our building became a literal sanctuary — a place for housing, for community meetings and trainings. In January, we welcomed clergy from across the country who came to bear witness: First U hosted two dinners for 200 UU clergy, and 400+ interfaith clergy were trained at First U for civil disobedience.

But we're not done. Each of us knows there is more work ahead. **We've built the foundation for our promise to be there for the community, and now it's time to finish that promise**.

For the past five years, since completing the *Not for Ourselves Alone* renovations, we have carried a construction loan. **Each year, $132,000 — nearly 10% of our annual operating budget — goes directly to loan payments**. That is money going to a bank instead of to our programming, our community partnerships, and our shared ministry.

And this fall, under the terms of our loan, our interest rate will increase. We anticipate nearly double the amount of interest we currently pay. More money to the bank, less to the values and vision we share. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Last winter, when we asked the congregation to share their dreams for our future, the number one priority was clear: pay off the construction loan. Free ourselves from bank debt. Reinvest in our mission. Strengthen our sanctuary and resistance work. Expand our music program. Lean into our environmental values. Support our young people.

This is what it means to *Finish the Promise*. And we can do it.

Our fundraising goal is $1.36 million. Reaching this goal will eliminate the construction loan entirely and immediately free up $132,000 each year for ministry, justice work, and community building.

We are thrilled to share that as of mid-August, **24 households have stepped forward with early commitments totaling $945,429** toward the goal. Of that amount, **$560,100** is already in the door. As gifts come in, Brad Schmidt, the church's finance manager, is sending them over to Sunrise Bank to apply to the loan's principal. In other words, the loan is being paid off in real time. Each early payment reduces the amount we pay in interest and accelerates the pay-off.

As of mid-August we have $415,000 remaining to completely pay off the construction loan.

We feel hopeful. We feel energized. And we feel ready. This is our moment to finish what we began — to honor the commitments we made to one another and to the wider community. We hope you'll join us. You can learn more about Finish the Promise on the church website. Commitments and gifts can be made through this link: bit.ly/FinishThePromise.

Whatever your role, we're glad that you're with us. *Let's finish the promise together.*

In gratitude,

Finish the Promise Campaign Team

Lynn Broaddus, *Stewardship Committee Chair*
Rev. Jennifer Crow, *Senior Minister*
Marc Gorelick, *Board Chair*
Jeanne Guignon, *Board Member*
Ginny McAninch, *Stewardship Committee Member*
Cameron Smither, *Treasurer*

SCAN ME

Do your part to help Finish The Promise:
bit.ly/FinishThePromise

CONSTRUCTION LOAN

TIMELINE

ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2021, FIRST UNIVERSALIST TOOK OUT A 10-YEAR CONSTRUCTION LOAN ("PROMISSORY NOTE") FROM SUNRISE BANK FOR $1,606,995. THE LOAN HAS FOUR PHASES, ENDING WITH A BALLOON PAYMENT IN 2031. THE REMAINING BALANCE IS APPROXIMATELY $1.36 MILLION. THE CURRENT 3.75% INTEREST RATE WILL ADJUST ON OCTOBER 2, 2026. WE EXPECT THE NEW RATE TO BE ~ 6.5%.

PHASE 1: COMPLETED

- 18 MONTHS OF INTEREST-ONLY PAYMENTS
- 3.75% PER YEAR

PHASE 2: CURRENT

- PRINCIPAL + INTEREST
- ENDS OCTOBER 2, 2026 (42 MONTHS)
- 3.75% PER YEAR
- TOTAL EXPENSE OF $132K/YEAR

PHASE 3: BEGINS OCT. 2, 2026

- NEW INTEREST RATE
- 5-YEAR U.S. TREASURY RATE + 2.25% MARGIN
- WE ESTIMATE THAT NEW RATE WILL BE ~ 6.5%
- SUNRISE BANK WILL HAVE THE CHOICE TO: INCREASE CHURCH'S MONTHLY PAYMENTS TO COVER THE HIGHER INTEREST, EXTEND THE LOAN'S TERM, ADD MORE PAYMENTS, OR KEEP OUR PAYMENTS THE SAME BUT INCREASE THE FINAL BALLOON PAYMENT.

PHASE 4: SEPT. 1, 2031

- FINAL BALLOON PAYMENT
- ESTIMATED ~ $1 MILLION

More about the construction loan

Principal and interest payments are currently $11,076 a month, or approximately $132K per year. About two thirds ($84K a year) is allocated to principal and roughly one third ($48K a year) to interest. In five years—by September 1, 2031—we will need to pay off the remaining balance.

The loan may be paid off early with no penalty. Partial payment would reduce the principal, reduce the amount of interest we pay, accelerate the paydown of principal, and reduce the principal due (if any) in September 2031, but it would not alter our monthly payments until the loan is completely extinguished. Unlike a private homeowner or business, there are no tax advantages for a church to carry a construction loan or mortgage. As an untaxed non-profit organization, there is no taxable income to deduct our payments from.

If we pooled our resources, and paid off the construction loan early on October 1, 2026 (before the scheduled rate change), our church would celebrate significant benefits:

1. We avoid ~$132K in annual debt payments, allowing funds to go toward our mission.
2. The church would save roughly $415,000 in interest payments over the life of the loan.
3. The church would avoid a $1 million (estimated) balloon payment in 2031.

> *“If people knew how fun it was to give their money away, they wouldn't wait until they were dead to do it.”*
> Paul Newman

You May Have Questions

Is this a capital campaign?
No. “Finish the Promise” is focused just on eliminating the church’s debt burden. The idea for this campaign arose from dreams shared during the 2026 pledge season. The top priority was to pay off the remaining $1.4 million construction loan. There may be a true “capital campaign” in a future year, but it will require a longer planning horizon and thoughtful input from the entire congregation.

Can I extend my pledge over multiple years?
While gifts of any size and at any time are always appreciated, we are hoping to pay off the loan before December 31, 2026. Ideally, we will receive all funds by October, when our interest rate adjusts.

Can I give through my Donor Advised Fund or IRA? Are there even more ways to give?
Absolutely. You may give through either of these mechanisms, as well as cash or stock. Brad Schmidt (Brad@firstuniv.org), the church’s finance manager, would be happy to help you think through these options.

I already have First Universalist in my estate plans. Can’t we just wait for the funds?
First of all, thank you. You and others in our Legacy Circle ensure a stable base for First Universalist in years ahead, for congregations that we will never see. However, if you think that you have more than you’ll need during your lifetime, please consider giving now. For one thing, it’s a lot more fun to give while you can see the benefit. Secondly, a gift now is a way of investing in your values. What better return could there be?

What happens if we raise less than $1.4 million?
Early indications are that we’ll be able to raise the full amount. If that isn’t possible, all contributions will still go toward paying down the loan’s principal and allow us to pay it off sooner than scheduled.

What happens if we raise more than $1.4 million?
We would love to have this “problem.” It would be up to the Board to decide how to allocate any additional funds, (i.e. building repair and maintenance, applied to a future capital campaign, special programming, etc.).

If you have other questions, or just want to talk this through, please reach out to anyone on the campaign team (contact information available on Breeze):

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Rev. Jennifer Crow, *Senior Minister*
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