

Annual Report 2026



photo by James Buck

First Unitarian Universalist Society Burlington
April 7, 2024



**FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
SOCIETY OF BURLINGTON**

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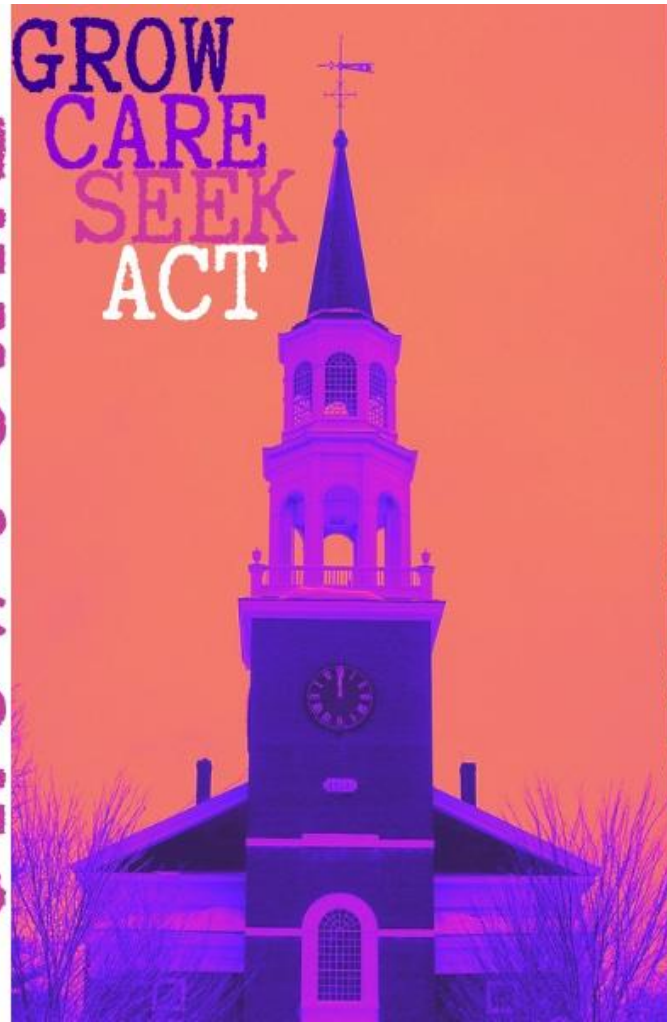
Our Mission

To inspire spiritual growth, to care for each other and our community, to seek truth, and to act for justice.

GROW . CARE

GROW
CARE
SEEK
ACT

SEEK . ACT



Guided by Our Values

Love: Nourishing lives with love, caring and compassion.

Service: Building a community for justice, equity and empathetic action.

Openness: Celebrating the wonders of life and spiritual transformation with boldness, joy, courage and openness.

Respect: Engaging all with kindness, understanding and mutual respect as faithful democratic stewards of all we hold dear.

Visionary Ends

- FUUSB uses its power as an organization and faith community to work for social, economic and environmental justice.
- FUUSB's welcoming worship, supported by powerful and diverse music and art, acts as a magnet that fosters spiritual growth, compassion, introspection and impetus to action.
- FUUSB is a compassionate community, offering all who engage in its ministries a profound sense of welcome, belonging, and spiritual care through life's joys, struggles, and sacred passages.
- FUUSB provides diverse opportunities for transformational spiritual growth, faith development and personal discovery, promoting life-long learning for all ages and stages of life.
- FUUSB generously stewards our mission and strongly supports ministries, activities and an historic building and spaces.

FUUSB Covenant

We gather together with the intention of creating a vibrant, healthy, liberal religious community. To this end, we make the following promises to each other:

- To come with open minds and hearts so that we can welcome new ideas, new people and new possibilities.
- To listen carefully to each other, to speak openly and respectfully, and to assume good intentions, especially in times of disagreement.
- To participate actively in the life of the Society by being present, serving/volunteering, and providing financial support.

We recognize that there will be times when we will fall short of these ideals. We will be accountable to each other and forgiving of each other.

2025 FUUSB Board of Trustees



Eileen Blackwood,
President



Alana Shaw,
Vice President



Susan Ogden,
Secretary



Peter Clavelle



Avery Hammill

2026 FUUSB Board of Trustees (cont.)



Stephen Rainville



Kathy Stamper



Kim Watkin



Christina Fulton,
Dir. of Operations &
Finance,
ex-officio



Rev. Karen G. Johnston,
Senior Minister,
ex-officio

Reports

Report: Board President

This year, the Board continued its focus on implementing the model of policy-based governance adopted by this congregation. The Board's governance work has been guided by the Vision of Ministry that was developed in January 2025:

We envision a shared congregational ministry fed by current, strengthened, and innovative sources of income, in which we place love at the center for those being targeted for oppression, while prioritizing the creation of sustainable and responsive pastoral care and faith development for all ages.

Out of that Vision of Ministry, the Board developed three goals for its work, and this report will track those goals:

1. **Financial:** Create a plan to reach a healthy, sustainable financial status.
2. **Oversight of Ministry Goals:** Use the vision for ministry to guide revision of the monitoring reports the Board receives from staff.
3. **Board Role and Communication:** Establish channels for regular communication with Society teams and congregation members.

Report: Board President

Reaching a Healthy, Sustainable Financial Status

For this goal, the Board identified three major tasks.

The first was to establish a task force to explore diversified and innovative new sources of income (in addition to direct pledging by the congregation). The Innovative Income Task Force was created in the fall of 2025. A sub-group of the Board drafted a written charge for the Task Force and recruited members to serve on it. Board member Christine Hallquist agreed to chair the Task Force, which checks in with the Board quarterly. The Task Force's work is expected to take at least two years.

The second task was to analyze and strengthen our existing financial stewardship activities. Our current financial stewardship activities include several annual activities such as wreath sales, the bazaar, the auction, and the home stays program, as well as the annual stewardship campaign to establish annual pledges. Small changes were made to improve each of the activities, and this analysis is ongoing. It is important to note that our stewardship activities overlap both the ministry and governance functions and often include community building goals as well as fundraising, so that our staff Executive Team (Senior Minister Rev. Karen G. Johnston and Director of Operations and Finance Christina Fulton) is deeply involved with this task.

Report: Board President

The third task was to clarify the role of the Finance Team and Treasurer. When FUUSB moved to policy-based governance, the Society's bylaws were amended to clarify that the Treasurer is not a member of the Board of Trustees; that change occurred because Society finances fall in the overlap between governance and ministry, so the Treasurer must be independent of the Board's governance role. The bylaws provided that the Board would prescribe duties for all the Society's officers, including the Treasurer, but those had not been formally prepared and adopted. After much discussion and input, in January the Board adopted a resolution establishing the Duties of Officers, including the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The resolution clarifies that the Treasurer has duties that serve both governance and ministry functions and documents the Society's existing budget process.

In conjunction with the Duties of Officers, the Board also adopted a resolution entitled "Finance Group Formation, Duties, and Responsibilities" which will create a new Finance Group to begin next fiscal year. This Group is chaired by the Treasurer and consists of representatives from the Endowment Committee, as well as from the three Ministry finance teams (Planned Giving, Stewardship, and Fundraising). The Director of Operations and Finance serves *ex officio*. Since policy-based governance was adopted, an informal finance team had been working with the Director of Operations and Finance, but the role of that team had never been defined. Note that for clarity, we are calling official, continuing groups on the governance side as "committees" and those on the ministry side as "teams." The new Finance Group straddles both functions and thus is neither a "committee" or a "team."

Report: Board President

Oversight of Ministry Goals

Under policy-based governance one important responsibility of the Board is monitoring. Unlike the role of a board in many organizations, the Board is not the supervisor of any of the Society's staff. The Senior Minister is called by the congregation and is responsible for appropriate staffing, within budgeting limits. In practice, our Senior Minister and Director of Operations and Finance function as an Executive Team . The Board's role is to monitor ministry tasks and ensure there are mechanisms for accountability.

When our Society adopted policy-based governance, the Board of Trustees created a schedule of monitoring reports that staff was to provide in writing to the Board. At the end of last fiscal year, the Board suspended receiving those specific reports because of concerns that the reports were not particularly helpful to the Board and took significant time for staff to produce. Instead, the Board has been receiving standard monthly financial reports, such as a balance sheet and treasurer's report, a monthly report from the Senior Minister, and a quarterly financial report narrative. The work toward documenting a simplified monitoring system is underway.

In addition, the Board has begun looking at systems to evaluate and provide feedback about the ministry side of our operations. Our hope is to create and implement a system in the next fiscal year.

Report: Board President

Board Role and Communications

The third goal was to establish channels for regular communication with Society teams and congregational members. The bylaws establish two committees that report directly to the Board, the Endowment Committee and the Nominating Committee. This year, the Endowment Committee attended the first half of the Board's September retreat and assisted in developing the new roles for the Treasurer and Finance Group.

Arising out of discussion at the retreat, the Committee considered and recommended to the Board a change to a portion of our Endowment Policy. Previously, if an unrestricted gift was made to the Society, the first \$1,000 went into the Society's operating account and any amount over \$1,000 was deposited to the First UU Trust Fund. This threshold was increased so that the first \$2,500 of any unrestricted gift flows into the operating account, and the balance over \$2,500 goes to the First UU Trust Fund.

The Board also met with the Nominating Committee to discuss the process of finding new volunteers and provided a list of possible names for the Committee to consider. The Board President met with the Nominating Committee and regularly communicated with the Committee chair about the process. The Board also adopted a job description for Board members that, along with the Duties of Officers resolution, will provide the Committee with more information to provide to candidates.

Report: Board President

In the past, the Board had identified liaisons with various Society teams, such as the justice teams, but as it has been clarified that the Society teams are within the ministry function, not the governance function, the Board has not continued that practice. Instead, the Board relies on reports from the Senior Minister about ministry activities. Last year, the Board had adopted a policy on public statements to clarify for the teams how to bring requests for endorsement to the Board, and that process has been used successfully this year.

The Board also has attempted to improve communications with the whole congregation. After each Board meeting, a Board member prepares a brief summary of the meeting, which is then published in the following week's e-news. We have also started posting a proposed agenda in the e-news before each Board meeting so that members are aware of the topics being considered. Additionally, we have been updating Board records, both physical hard copies and electronic copies available on the Society's website.

The Board held an informational session with the congregation in the fall to discuss the plan for using the funds received from the federal government under the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) program which refunded certain taxes paid during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another listening/informational session was held this spring to hear from the congregation and answer questions, including those about the Apartheid-Free Communities Pledge.

Report: Board President

In addition, for the past 18 months, a Board task force has been working on a Responsible Behaviors policy; that policy is currently under consideration by the Board. The Board voted to join the ICE Out VT Alliance.

I believe that the Board has successfully used the goals developed for its 2025-26 fiscal year to guide its activities and to further our Society's commitment to a solid policy-based governance model. I have appreciated the opportunity to serve as your President and look forward to another successful year.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eileen Blackwood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eileen Blackwood, President
Board of Trustees, FUUSB

Report: Senior Minister

Milestones

During the past congregational year, since we last convened for our Annual Meeting, we experienced the deaths of the following members of the congregation:

- Jane Packard Bryant - 6/19/25
- Jyll Allen - 7/18/25
- Ginger Hobbs - 8/25/25
- Alison Etherton - 11/21/25
- Rita Bortz - 11/24/25
- Iris MacDonald - 12/30/25
- Ron Williamson Jr - 2/2/26
- Charlene Ploof - 2/15/26
- Peggy Twitchell - 2/24/26
- Bud Etherton - 3/5/26
- Connie Hitt - 5/17/26

Report: Senior Minister

Milestones (cont.)

During the past congregational year, since we last convened for our Annual Meeting, we dedicated the following children:

- Clea Grace Morena

And we celebrated the quinceñara of

- Jade Naomi Guaman Sanchez

We officiated no weddings of members this year.

Report: Senior Minister

Accomplishments

This year, the Board's new Vision for Ministry gave shape to how to set priorities of the ministry and how to spend my limited time. Towards that end, this section of the report is organized based on that statement.

We envision a shared congregational ministry

- Developed and implemented a written policy and procedures for the path to become a recognized team, project, or affinity group at FUUSB, ensuring transparency and access to the process for everyone. [This information is on our website.](#)
- Ensured the Justice Teams Collaborative was involved in the Five to Thrive Initiative as it related to the ERTC Windfall
- Continued to provide support and input into the Board's Disruptive Behaviors Policy Task Force's work on developing this kind of policy common in many UU congregations.
- We continued to invest in our staff through professional development opportunities that each pursued on their own and ones that we experienced as a team. We held a training on Comfort with Conflict facilitated by Leaderwise. We invested in team building time to strengthen our relationships. It was a good investment when Christina, Erika, and I all attended the UUMA Institute for the Learning Ministry in January in Albuquerque.

Report: Senior Minister

fed by current, strengthened, and innovative sources of income,

- Strengthened relationship between Board and Endowment Committee to allow for more creative conversations.
- Led a portion of the summer Board retreat on the so-called “Great Wealth Transfer” and how we might explore how to harness this societal trend to the long-term benefit of the Society.
- Guided an intentional decision-making process for how to let our values and needs inform how we responded to the ERTC Windfall, including the joyful, mission-forward Five to Thrive Initiative.

in which we place Love at the center for those being targeted for oppression,

- Accompanied our congregants who had appointments with ICE in St. Albans as part of their asylum journey, as well as other Vermonters.
- Continued the practice, started in 2024, of having Spanish versions of our chalice lighting and extinguishing, as part of our wide welcome, including to our Spanish-speaking congregants (a small subgroup which continues to grow). This also included integrating a UU quinceñara ceremony in October, 2025.
- Provided support to the Radical Welcoming Team as they took on the dual projects of bringing the Authentic Lives Photo Exhibit and the Beyond the Binary Building Beloved Community conference in April.

Report: Senior Minister

- Collaborated with the new Democracy Project to support deepening our knowledge, skilling up, and growing our bravery when it comes to resisting threats to our nation's democracy. This included many educational and skill-building sessions on a variety of topics, as well as engaging our Board in relevant conversations and presenting on our efforts to other UU individuals and congregations through the Side with Love's The Gathering.
- When Pastor Steven Tendo was abducted by ICE, a FUUSB congregant and I played a key role in sparking the wider community into action within an hour of his being taken.
- In January, I was one of 1,200 clergy who responded to the call, and with your moral and financial support, I traveled to Minneapolis to be in solidarity with that community experiencing a horrific surge of ICE violence which led to hundreds being detained and two murders of (white) U.S.citizen protectors.
- As were many FUUSB congregants present throughout the day at the ICE Incursion on Dorset Street in South Burlington on March, I attended the last 4 hours and provided de-escalation, comfort, medic response, and non-violent presence in the face of that awful violence, a part of a diverse community response to protect our immigrant neighbors.
- We continue to use our location at the top of Church Street and across from the federal building to provide support (including opening our restrooms and sometimes providing hot coffee) when the community gathers there as moral witnesses.
- Through this current congregational year, we have hosted guests in our pulpit that affirm our commitment to placing love at the center for those being targeted for oppression, including Dana Kaplan of Outright VT and Palestinian Vermonter, Mohsen Mahdawi.

Report: Senior Minister

while prioritizing the creation of sustainable and responsive pastoral care

- Continued to develop the lay Pastoral Visiting Team in collaboration with the team chair, Heidi Duke. Over our first year we said good-bye to Meg Randall, Peter Newport, and Elizabeth Logan as Pastoral Visitors and have welcomed Ellen Wollensack, Holly Moorehouse, Linda Propoky, and Leina Castro. In the past year, our Pastoral Visitors have conducted approximately 100 visits plus an additional 30+ forms of contact (between mid May 2025 and early May, 2026). A strong (but not sole) priority of the Pastoral Visiting Team has been matching visitors with elders or those who are isolated. The make-up of our Pastoral Visiting Team skews heavily female and we hope to welcome more men into this vibrant and rewarding ministry.
- In the fall, we had six memorial services in a five week period. This spring, we are having four services in a four week period. Our staff was able to respond to these needs; the fall cycle definitely stretched us.
- Developed and facilitated an orientation for a group of volunteer chaplains, both trans/nonbinary and cisgender, who were present at the Beyond the Binary conference.
- As my schedule allows, I continue to provide individual pastoral contact.

Report: Senior Minister

and faith development for all ages.

- Developed the vision and infrastructure for the upcoming two-part paid sabbatical for the Director of Lifespan Faith Development (May - August and then November through February) and provided support as Erika prepared for this first-ever sabbatical.
- What began last year in its development phase, this year we launched the new lay-led Adult Faith Development Council to provide support to those who wish to provide adult offerings, coordinating them.
- Completed the facilitation of 13 sessions of the monthly Date with Death Club curriculum at FUUSB with an average of 20 participants in each session.
- We have seen an increase in emerging adults (college-age) folx attending on Sunday mornings and becoming involved in other congregational activities (the Bazaar, social justice actions, etc.). This is very exciting development that deserves our attention and investment.

Report: Senior Minister

Challenges

There are perennial challenges in this congregation. It is worth noting them explicitly. There are new challenges, some of which do not belong solely to this congregation but are part of demographic trends in Vermont, wider society or within Unitarian Universalism.

- **We do not have enough professional ministerial staffing.** A congregation with over 400 members and 100+ friends: one minister is not enough, especially given high societal stressors, congregants who are aging, the ambitions of the congregation to make a difference in our community, and a call to be engaged in the community and Unitarian Universalism. Being a minister during the pandemic had its own challenges. Being a minister when our democracy is experiencing the level of threat it is experiencing: this is stressful for all and for the minister to tends to the all who are stressed, as well as managing her own stress. *What does the system want to do about this?*
- Relatedly, **we are understaffed in general.** We have high expectations of ourselves that require more staff hours than we, as a congregation, are willing to pay for. This causes stress for our hardworking staff and frustration for our ambitious and visionary lay leaders. One example among many: we know that more people need more skills to access Realm effectively. Yet we have not been able to provide the tutorials we hoped for because we do not have the staff bandwidth and lay leaders haven't organized around this. *What does the system want to do about this?*

Report: Senior Minister

- Despite a generous stream of income from endowment sources, as well as strong success in generating income from rentals (thank you, Erin Barbot, our Events Coordinator), **our current pledge income and our fundraising projects are not sufficient to address the challenges around staffing.** *What does the system want to do about this?*
- **The divisiveness that grows in the world grows within the congregation as well.** This has been a challenging year as we have found that our spiritual muscles to speak and listen with each other directly and to handle conversations across disagreements were not as strong as we thought they were and as strong as we need them to be. We have seen the bending of our congregational covenant and healthy responses to try to invest in healthy communications, interactions, and ideals. *What does the system want to do about this?*
- As downtown Burlington struggles to meet the very real impact of **late-stage capitalism** - lack of affordable and relevant housing alongside ineffective responses to high rates of substance abuse disorder and mental health challenges, our Society and Meetinghouse grounds are impacted. This impacts staff time and morale, congregants and the wider community. It causes mass moral injury. It impacts how we - staff, lay folks, clergy - understand what our ministry is and can be. We must continue to evolve our responses, guided by our values. The way is not simple or clear. *What does the wider system want to do about this and what is our part?*

Report: Senior Minister

- **Emerging Adult/Young Adults : how do we welcome them?** While there are informal supports and relationships, we do not have an Emerging Adult ministry (what might have formerly been called a “campus ministry”). Yet, we have momentum around this that will be lost if we do not invest next year. We also haven’t been able to identify an established adult who would be willing to provide logistical support to our Young Adults (the group just older than Emerging Adults) who wish for this. *What does the system want to do about this?*

What Excites Me About the Coming Year

- As we find the right pace at which to engage the important conversations that our FUUSB Palestine Solidarity Team has brought to the congregation - *how do we embody our support for Palestinians and those impacted persistently by the violence in the Middle East* - I look forward to the process of developing our spiritual muscles so that we can listen to each other to understand, even as we do not agree; so we can honor the integrity of those who disagree with us; so we can live into our shared congregational covenant when there are deep disagreements; so we can hold conversations and votes while minimizing the damage to the congregation from divisiveness and disappointment. I believe that if a significant number of us can invest in the process we are currently developing and show up when invited to do so (even if it’s inconvenient for our calendars), I think we will come through this challenging time stronger and more able to weather difficulties.

Report: Senior Minister

- As I take a break from teaching Date with Death Club next year, I plan to lead some new and meaningful Adult Faith Development offerings.
- I am excited for the Board's work in the coming year: developing a feedback process for gathering information on how the Ministry side of the Society is experienced by the congregation. This includes clarity about what the measures or goals are used for such feedback. We are in conversation with another UU congregation which is well ahead of us on this matter; I look forward to learning from and with them.
- Am I excited about Erika being on sabbatical for four months (November - February) during the height of our next congregational year, after having her gone during the upcoming summer? Well, that's not *exactly* the word I would use. I am excited for her. I believe this is an investment not just in Erika, but in what she will bring back to the congregation. We have already begun the process to get the word out about hiring a Sabbatical Faith Development Director for the winter period when Erika is gone. Fingers crossed that we can find someone experienced and interested.

Report: Senior Minister

Gratitude

- I experience such gratitude for the ways in which our shared ministry has come together and continues to do so, here at the end of Year Three. I appreciated the opportunity to attend a 10-day silent meditation retreat this past year, as well as to accept an invitation as one of 25 people across the nation to take part in an incubation retreat (May, 2026) sponsored by the Chaplaincy Innovation Lab, based on my Date with Death Club mortality ministry. I appreciate the chance to participate in ministerial collegial gatherings to ensure that I learn new information and stay connected to the network of state, regional and national UU ministers whose ministries are shared in order to help us all be a bit more brilliant than we are on our own. I am proud to have had yet another reflection, "[These Are My People](#)," published by Braver/Wiser. I am pleased to celebrate the 10th anniversary of my ordination (June 5, 2016) to the Unitarian Universalist ministry while serving First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington.

I am blessed to be on this journey with you.



Reverend Karen G. Johnston, Senior Minister

Report: Director of Operations & Finance

2026 Annual Report

Christina Fulton, Director of Operations & Finance

Human Resources - Early in the congregational year, after an unsuccessful hiring process, I assisted our Director of Lifespan Faith Development (Erika) with the search process for the Family Programs Assistant position, which concluded with a successful hire. Hiring for the Custodian position has proven more difficult. Our Facilities Manager (Devin) has borne the brunt of this process, which resulted in two short-lived hires. While this search continues, Devin, the caretakers, and one of our occasional employees (Margo) have been completing the essential custodial responsibilities.

We continue to pay attention to building staff team morale as one of our strategies to strengthen staff retention. The Society's line item for "Employee Morale" was supplemented with funds from a Paddle Raise at last year's auction. This year, we joined together for a mid-winter dinner and Yankee swap at Halverson's, and a mid-day escape to go bowling and have lunch together. We have only dipped into the extra funds, and will continue to use them next year. Another strategy for staff retention is the implementation (in May, 2025) of an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that provides cost-free services to all of our staff.

Report: Director of Operations & Finance

FUUSB has a commitment to ensuring that our employees have access to health insurance options. The health insurance landscape is a complicated one, and each year brings new challenges, so I spend part of my time staying on top of issues. I do this by attending relevant webinars and tracking cost increases and open enrollment processes.

Facilities Management - Part of my responsibility as it relates to Facilities Management includes the purchasing and care of our computer systems, both hardware and software. Devin and I work as a team on this, as the job has become too big for one person to handle. Using the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC), we have updated much of our tech hardware, including five new laptops with updated software, an owl (the gadget that makes hybrid meetings more successful), and a device called a 'switch,' which we have been informed must be replaced.

We also renegotiated our managed care contract with Tech Group, which we rely on for virus protection, repairs, Microsoft licenses, and other IT assistance. We will purchase a new scheduling software package this summer, replacing the very outdated system we currently use. This will improve coordination between scheduling spaces, equipment, and staff.

Report: Director of Operations & Finance

There has been a focus on congregational safety this past year. I attended two webinars on congregational safety given by the UUA, which led us to increase the protection of online information of both staff and lay leaders. We held a successful fire drill in the fall. Devin and Rev. Karen developed and offered a great program to staff and volunteers on building safety and how to respond to potential Sunday morning disruptions.

In general, property insurance coverage for houses of worship has become precarious, and rates have become exorbitant. We have not been immune to this dynamic (last year, our Church Mutual coverage was raised by 23%, and this year it is increasing by 7%). We have been looking into whether we might access more effective and more affordable coverage, including participating in a new program that the UUA is overseeing. It's unclear whether this will benefit us; we are staying engaged in hopes that it will.

We continue to struggle with loitering, open drug use, needles, and drug deals on our property. While there is a changing, seasonal pattern, this spring our property is experiencing a concentration of our unhoused neighbors gathering - sometimes uneventfully and sometimes, quite disruptively. Dealing with these issues is draining on all staff, and most especially on our Facilities Manager and Caretakers. Last summer, like many downtown businesses and some houses of worship, we made the complex decision to hire a private security company to be on the property in the late afternoons. We stopped during the late winter months as the problems eased during this time. We are now, once again, trying to hire private security, as we are actively developing our response to this confounding challenge, finding our way while honoring our religious values.

Report: Director of Operations & Finance

Since we find ourselves in the heart of downtown, participating in community conversations is a necessary part of our work. I participated in a focus group for area religious organizations by the team hired to run the Burlington Police Chief search, where I was able to share some of our concerns. We also had Society representation at the rollout of the City's Situation Table initiative, which is focused on addressing challenges that arise from some of our most challenged and challenging neighbors. In May of this year, I attended a meeting of area non-profits that are also interested in finding a solution to this issue.

Finance - The most exciting news of this fiscal year is that FUUSB finally received the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) that we had applied for in November, 2023. In July 2025, we received just over \$239,548.29, a tax credit given because we continued to keep our staff on during the pandemic. At the Board's fall retreat, they decided how that money would be spent, and then held a congregational meeting to let the congregation know. As part of our commitment to transparency and communication, a document describing the planned distribution of those funds was posted on our website.

The approved 2025/2026 fiscal year budget was balanced by taking an additional distribution from the First UU Trust Fund of approximately \$18K. The Board decided that instead of using the First UU Fund to balance the budget, they would use up to \$26,000 of the ERTC funds to balance the budget. As of the April Financial Reports, I expect that we will use less than the \$26,000.

Report: Director of Operations & Finance

A huge thank you to our Stewardship Team, led again this year by Louis deRosset. This was an energetic group with creative ideas and projects that were newly implemented this year. Members of the stewardship team hosted 4 breakfasts in their homes, feeding more than two dozen FUUSB congregants. The team put on a dance party held at the Miller Center. The team collaborated with the First Friday Coffeehouse crew to put on a variety show with music, poetry, and dramatic readings.

This campaign had plenty of success. Of the 251 households that made pledges, 91 increased their pledges, 31 people made a pledge that had not made a pledge last year, and 81 people kept their pledge the same as last year.

Yet, at the time of writing this report, we have not yet met our goal. So this team is back at it, preparing a “Fill the Gap” campaign to try to bring in an additional \$15,000 to support next year’s budget. We truly hope that folks will stretch their giving during the Fill the Gap Campaign. As the Stewardship Team rolled out the Close the Gap campaign in the second half of May, we hope to know by the end of this fiscal year (June 30) whether we met this ambitious goal.

Report: Director of Operations & Finance

The budget being presented to the Congregation this year is balanced. In the spirit of full transparency, it is important to note that we are using approximately \$70,000 of ERTC funds to do so. The Board is prioritizing our mission and Vision of Ministry by not cutting staff or programs. So, how do we sustain this? That is the question that the Board is working on. Our congregation is busier than it has ever been; we have so many teams doing amazing things, and the future is bright in so many ways. Please stay curious and engaged, as it will take all of us to figure this out. I am confident that we will.

Detailed budget reports and graphs can be found on the website. And as always, please reach out to me if you would like to talk about any of this.

Administration - Administration is all the other stuff that I do. Stuff that doesn't always fit easily into the other categories. I regularly attend 18 meetings a month, and many other meetings that I am asked to attend occasionally. I truly enjoy these meetings as they are the time I get to interact with all of you.

I supervise 4 staff members: the Facilities Manager, the Administrative Assistant, the Events & Scheduling Coordinator, and the Bookkeeper. I work closely with extremely competent people and am so proud to have them on my team.

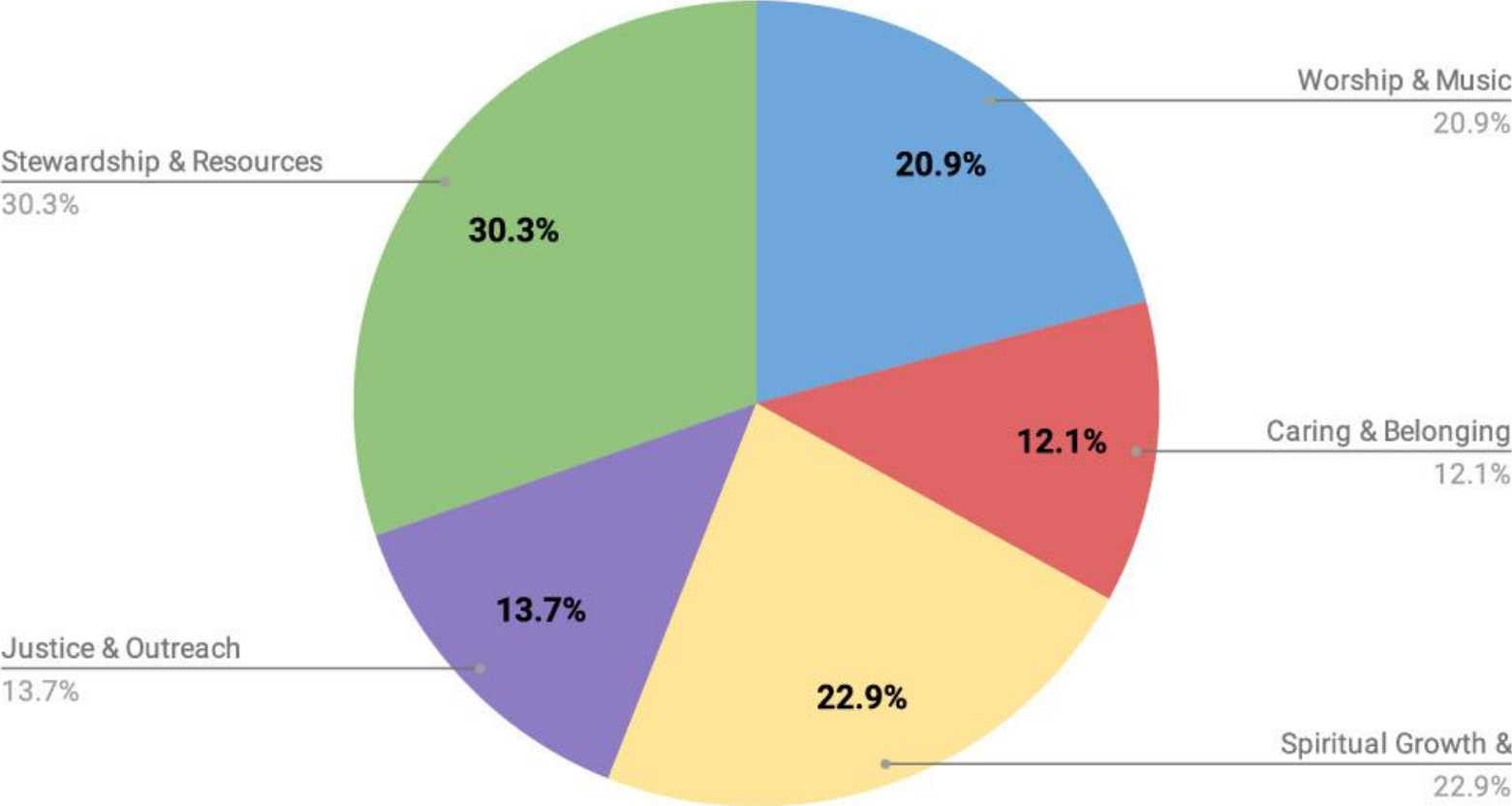
Report: Director of Operations & Finance

Summary - This job is a busy one. It is never boring. I am often exhausted by it, and I am always inspired by it. It is my pleasure and my honor to serve this congregation.

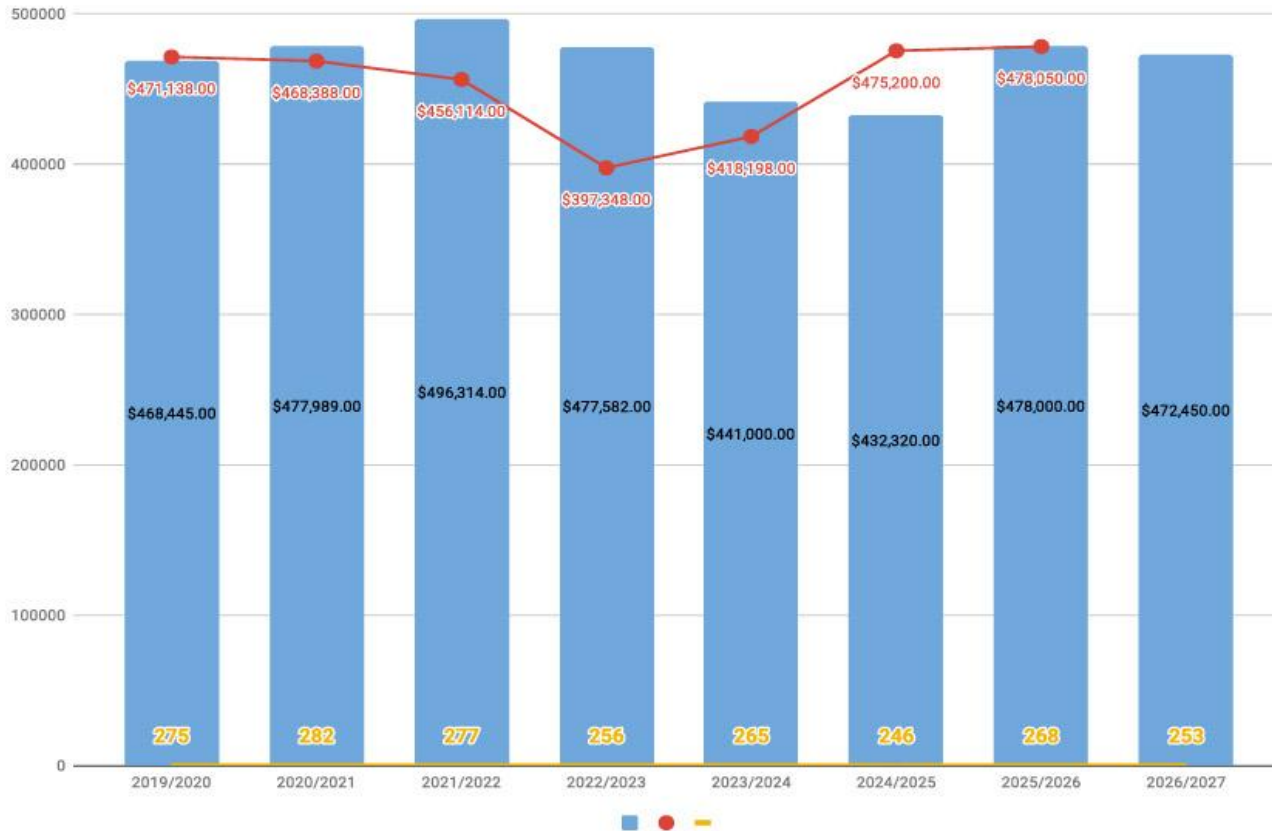
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Christina Fulton
Director of Operations and Finance

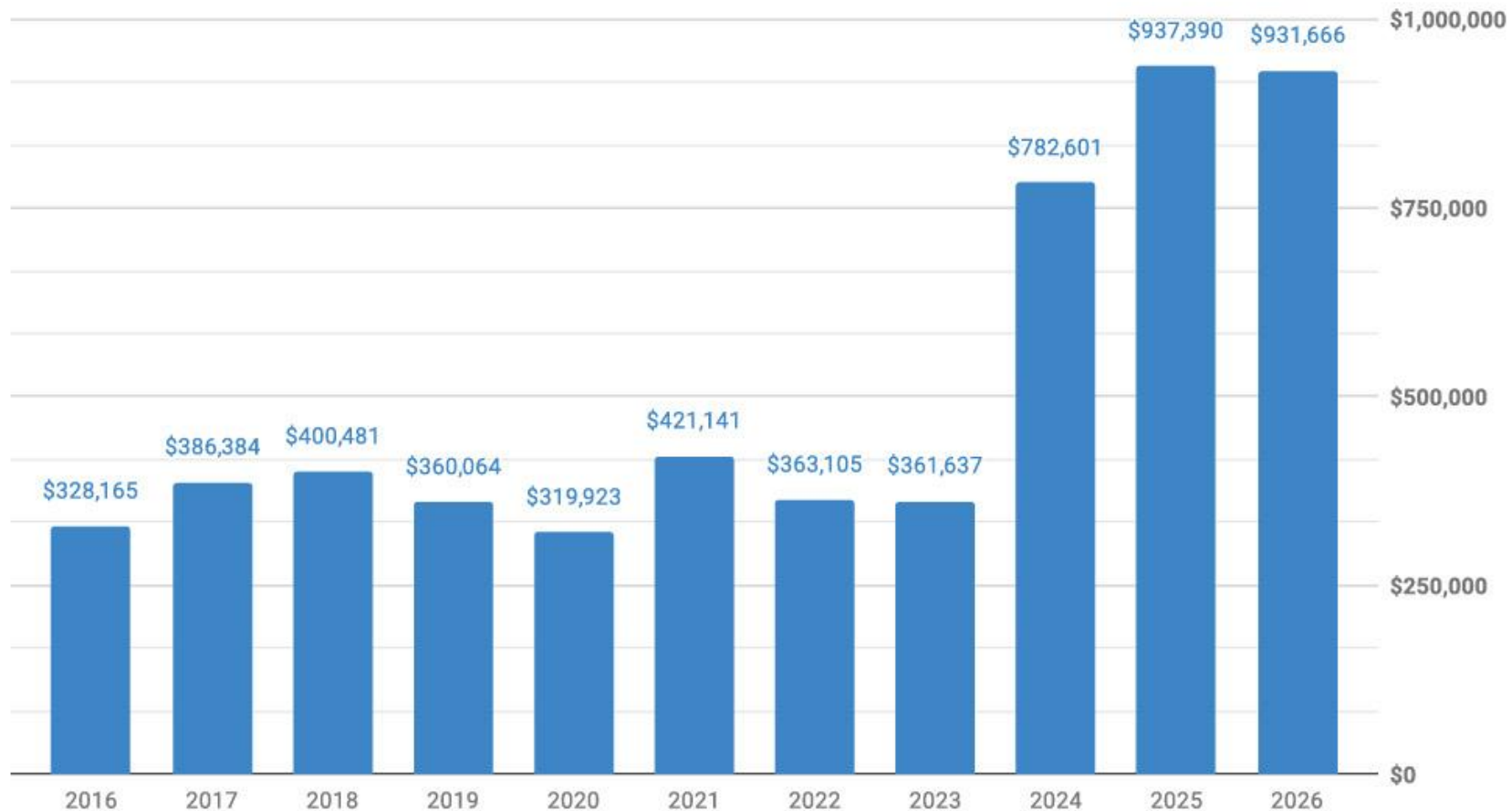
Program Budget 2026/2027



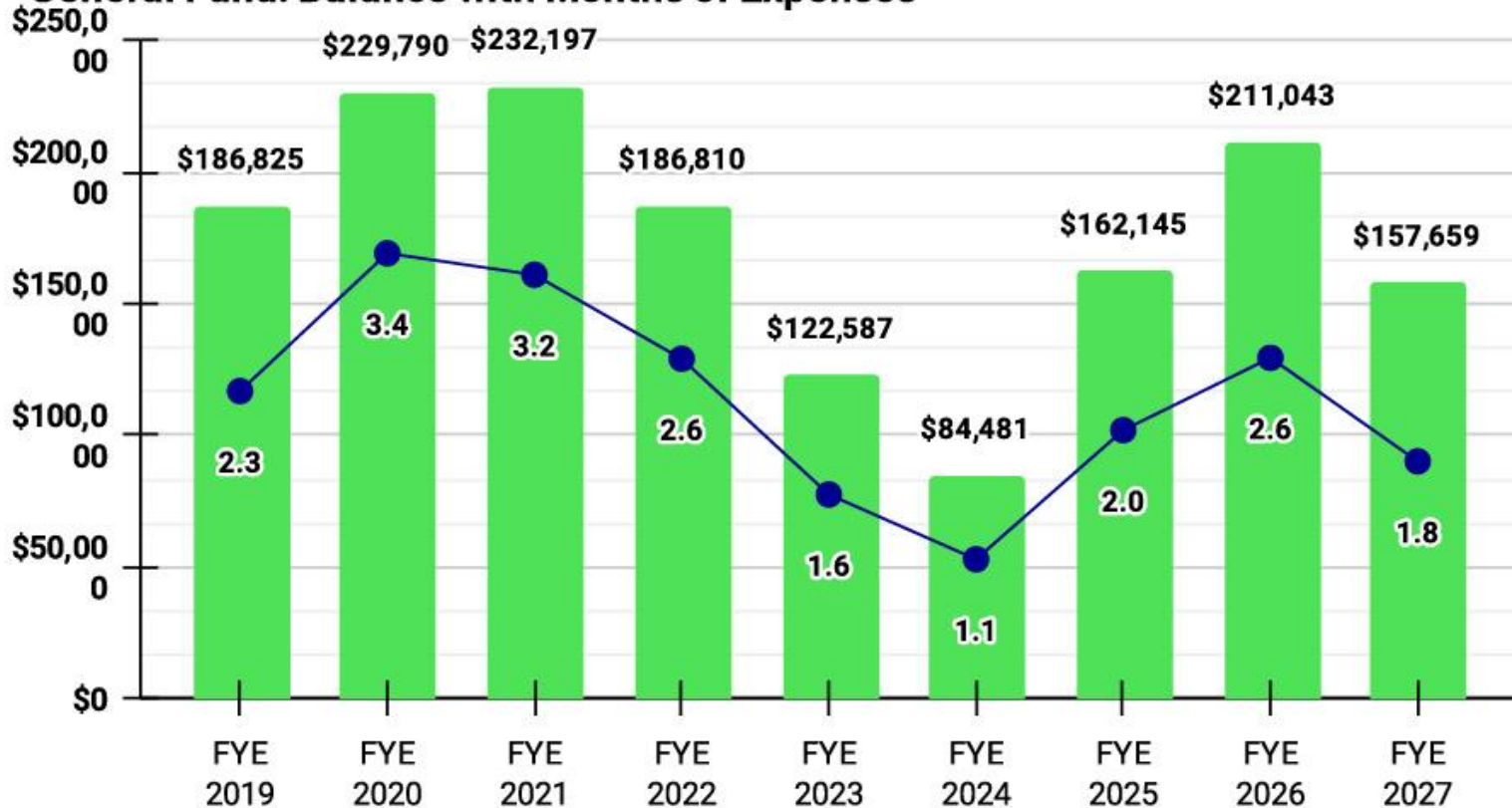
Budgeted Pledge and Actual Pledge



First UU Trust Balance



General Fund: Balance with Months of Expenses



■ General Fund Balance ● Months of Expenses

Budget Assumptions

Budget Assumptions - 26/27	
This report shows highlights of changes, not all changes. The totals represent the exact totals.	
Income	
Pledge Income of \$459,277 a 4% decrease	-\$18,773.00
Estimate of Unpaid Pledges at 3%	-\$13,447.00
Close the Gap Campaign	\$15,000.00
Share the Plate 4% increase	\$1,000.00
Nims Income - 2% increase	\$4,840.00
First UU Trust Income - same as last year	\$98.00
Rental Property Income - 2% increase	\$1,901.00
Space Use Income - 23% increase	\$7,000.00
Monthly Parking Income - 5% increase	\$2,400.00
Fundraiser Income - Bazaar \$3,500K, Auction \$13K, Year End Appeal \$1.5K - 16% decrease	-\$3,500.00
ERTC Funds	\$40,000.00
General Fund	\$30,000.00
Additional distribution from the First UU Trust Fund	\$18,259.00
Total Income Increase of 8%	\$77,395.00
Expense	
Payroll & Benefits	
2 % COLA for most staff	\$10,305.00
Health Insurance- 12% increase for six months	\$3,414.00
Director of Lifespan Faith Development increase - COLA + 2K	\$2,000.00
Director of Operations & Finance increase - COLA + \$2,K	\$2,000.00
Facilities Manager increase - COLA + \$1K	\$1,000.00
Additional Admin Assistant - 10 hrs per week	\$13,490.00
Sabbatical positions added - being funded from ERTC	\$0.00
Total Payroll & Benefits - 7% increase	\$44,907.00

Budget Assumptions (cont.)

Building & Site Expenses	
Total Utilities Increase of 22%	\$4,900.00
Total Meeting House Maintenance Increase of 5%	\$1,500.00
Total Site Maintenance Increase of 22%	\$5,200.00
Clarke Street Maintenance Increase of 53/%	\$1,600.00
Rental Bldgs Maintenance Increase of 46%	\$2,200.00
Security for July - Sept	\$6,175.00
Total Building & Site - Increase 26%	\$21,575.00
Governance & Ministry	
Worship & Music - decrease of 7% - we paid in advance for the virtual hymnal, coffee increase	-\$2,000.00
Caring & Belonging - No Change	\$0.00
Spiritual Growth & Learning 2% decrease - Labyrinth moved to Site Maintenance	-\$200.00
Justice & Outreach - No Change	\$0.00
Stewardship & Resources - No Change	\$0.00
Governance & Ministry 8% decrease - removed Healthy Congregation	-\$250.00
Total Governance & Ministry Increase - 4% decrease	-\$2,100.00
Total Expenses Increase of 8%	\$77,393.00

Budget Summary

	FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	
	Actual Income & Expenses	Total Approved Annual Budget	Projected Year End as of May 11	Total Proposed Annual Budget	Increase/ (Decrease) vs. Prior Yr. Budgeted %
INCOME					
Pledges & Other Contributions	\$466,579	\$478,050	\$484,754	\$472,450	-1%
Share the Plate Collections	\$27,660	\$28,000	\$29,000	\$29,000	4%
Subtotal Congregational Income	\$494,239	\$506,050	\$513,754	\$501,450	-1%
Rental Income	\$168,169	\$175,496	\$188,976	\$185,597	6%
Trust Income/Distributions	\$223,259	\$251,843	\$251,843	\$256,781	2%
Other Income	\$29,641	\$44,803	\$51,390	\$111,759	149%
Subtotal Non-Congregational Income	\$421,069	\$472,142	\$492,209	\$554,137	17%
General Fund Income	\$915,308	\$978,192	\$1,005,963	\$1,055,587	8%
EXPENSES					
Payroll/Benefits	\$649,314	\$683,356	\$697,743	\$728,264	7%
Operating Expenses	\$144,444	\$156,328	\$152,071	\$169,339	8%
Buildings & Site	\$79,918	\$82,900	\$100,132	\$104,475	26%
Governance & Ministry	\$32,445	\$55,610	\$47,928	\$53,510	-4%
General Fund Expense	\$906,121	\$978,194	\$997,874	\$1,055,587	8%
Net Increase / (Decrease) to General Fund	\$9,187	-\$2	\$8,089	\$0	-100%
General Fund Balance, End of Year	\$162,145	\$162,143	\$199,743	\$157,659	-3%

The Ethel J. Nims Trust, Where Did It Come From?

Christina Fulton, Director of Operations & Finance
May 2026

Over my time here at FUUSB, the topic of the Ethel J. Nims Trust has sparked a lot of conversation. In my early years here, I heard about this Trust and that FUUSB was the secondary beneficiary of the Trust which was divided among 4 primary beneficiaries. As each of the primary beneficiaries passed away, proceeds from their quarter of the Trust would come to us. With each distribution, the Board decided how to use it. The purchase of a phone system. Building maintenance. Most recently, our annual operating budget and disbursements to the Meetinghouse Fund.

Who was Ethel J. Nims and why did she leave us this money? I have heard multiple stories over years, never quite sure which were true or if they were true at all. (cont.)

The Ethel J. Nims Trust (cont.)

Last year, two friends of our congregation agreed to do an inventory of our Archives. Joe & Laura Cook, along with long-time member Mary Gade, spent hours creating an inventory and organizing it in a spreadsheet. I asked Joe and Laura if they might be interested in doing a little research, and they said yes! Attached you will find the many interesting details about Ethel J. Nims that they were able to find. Some questions have been answered, and lots of questions may never be answered, but one thing is for sure; we owe Ethel so much gratitude. Her amazing gift currently results in over \$200,000 of income to our operating budget each year.

[Read all about Ethel J. Nims, here.](#)

Faith Development Update

Beginning on May 11, our Director of Lifespan Faith Development, Erika Reif, began the first of a two-part sabbatical that we grant to full-time director level staff. Erika will be gone until mid August, returning until November 1, when she begins the second half of her sabbatical, which will last until February 28. Preparation for the sabbatical took priority over creating a report on Faith Development.

During the first part of the sabbatical, our Family Programs Assistant, Mo Singletary will be overseeing the Faith Development work with the support of the Faith Development Support Team and Rev. Karen. We have also hired a one-time, year-long OWL Program Coordinator to help us during both sabbatical parts to ensure continuity of programming. The new (temporary) OWL Coordinator is Mary Anthony.

Window Into Mission

Share the Plate: A Year in Review 2025/2026

Each Sunday we share half of our cash collection. Here are the organizations/programs and amounts that we shared our collection with in the past year.

May 2025	Diverse & Revolutionary Multicultural Ministries	\$976.18
June	VT Immigration Legal Defense Fund	\$1,279.50
July	UUA Disaster Relief Fund	\$946.00
August	UUA Disaster Relief Fund	\$904.78
September 7th	Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA)	\$512.05
September	Sunday Morning Breakfast	\$829.50
October	VT Immigration Legal Defense Fund	\$1,372.30
November	350VT	\$1,240.44
December	Socially Responsible Santa	\$2,553.05
December 24th	JUMP & Discretionary Fund	\$7,032.08
January 2026	Migrant Justice	\$1,692.41
February	Vermont Racial Justice Alliance	\$1,270.79
February 15th	Mohsen Legal Defense	\$2,777.00
March	Outright VT	\$1,396.00
April	Intervale Center	\$1,016.68
	Total	\$25,798.76

Five to Thrive

This year, as part of the ERTC Windfall we received in July, the Board decided to go deeply with our practice of generosity, one of the core Unitarian Universalist values. In collaboration with Rev. Karen, the concept of Five to Thrive was developed and implemented. Rev. Karen invited the whole congregation to consider how to live into our values when we experience a windfall and to do so by giving away 5% to worthy causes. The Board role modeled this by giving 5% of the ERTC Windfall to local worthy causes.

The newly formed Justice Collaborative, with representation from all six of our justice teams, discerned the recipients of this practice:

- Vermont Immigration Legal Defense Fund - \$6,000
- Outright VT - \$1,500
- The Munt Family Room - \$3,000
- 350VT - \$1,500

These funds were presented to these organizations as part of Sunday services during April and May.

The Warning



The congregation is warned that the **Annual Meeting** of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington will be held on **Sunday, June 7, 2026, at 11:20 a.m.** The meeting will be held both in-person at the Meeting House and remotely via Zoom at this link <https://bit.ly/3OQUPVM>

Detailed information on how to participate online will be emailed prior to the meeting date.

The following items of business will be voted on by the membership:

- Accept the minutes from the 2025 Annual Meeting, available online at <https://uusociety.org/members/meeting-minutes/>
- Elect candidates for openings on the Board of Trustees, the Officers of the Society, the nominating Team, and the Endowment Fund Team. See attached.
- Vote on the proposed 2026/27 budget. A summary of the proposed budget is included with this warning and is also available online at <https://uusociety.org/members/meeting-minutes/>

All Active Members (people who signed the membership book as of 5/10/2026 and made a pledge and contribution of record in the last year) and all Life Members are eligible to vote.

Nominees can be nominated from the floor with the prior consent of the nominee.

The Warning (cont.)

From the Nominating Committee

Every year, the FUUSB's Nominating Committee prepares a slate of nominees for each of the Society's elected lay leadership positions. The Committee recruits members of the congregation for open positions, which are then voted on by the Society's members at each annual meeting.

The nominees for this coming fiscal year are as follows. You can read brief bios of all candidates online using the QR code below. You will be prompted to log in to Realm to view this content. If you have difficulty using the QR code to view the candidate bios, you can visit FUUSB's Realm homepage and, under "News," look for a post titled "2026–27 Lay Leadership Nominees."

We are also posting the bios on a board during coffee hour, after the services on May 17, 24, and 31, in advance of the vote at our annual meeting on Sunday, June 7.



Note: Because of intentional term staggering, not all roles are up for a vote at each meeting, and because of early resignations or other factors, some roles are shorter than prescribed in the bylaws.

The Warning (cont.)

OFFICERS (two-year terms)

- Vice President (Board Member): Amy Taylor, 2026-27 (completing 2025-27 term).
- Secretary (Board Member): Joshua Prokopy, 2026-27 (completing 2025-27 term).
- Treasurer: Alana Shaw, 2026–28.

BOARD AT-LARGE (three-year terms)

- At-Large: Susan Ogden, 2026–2027 (one-year term, by exception).
- At-Large: Andrea Van Liew, 2026-2029.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE (three-year terms)

- Jana Porter, 2026-2029.
- Lucy Gluck, 2026-2029.
- Alicia Cooper, 2026-27 (completing 2025-27 term).

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE (five-year terms)

Diana Kyser, 2026-2031.

FUUSB Annual Meeting Agenda: Sunday June 7, 2026

Call to order

Chalice Lighting

Confirm Quorum

Recognize Major Milestones

Recognize those Stepping Down

FUUSB 2025/26 Slideshow

Approve Annual Meeting 2025 Minutes

Approve Slate

Approve 2026-2027 Budget

President's Report

Recognition of Legacy Gifts

Chalice Extinguishing



**FUUSB Annual Meeting
8 June 2025 at 11:20 am
at the Meetinghouse and virtually
Draft Minutes**

Quorum present: A quorum of 39 members was reached and exceeded, with 116 present.

Decisions Made

- Eileen Blackwood was elected Moderator for the meeting.
- The 2024 Annual Meeting minutes were approved.
- The 2025-26 Slate of nominees for FUUSB offices was approved.
- The 2025-26 Proposed Congregational Budget was approved.

Call to Order: The Board President, Rodney Lowe called the meeting to order at 11:21 am.

Chalice Lighting: Reverend Karen G. Johnston introduced Gene Ashley to light the chalice. At age 102, he had been a member of the congregation since 1956.

Election of Moderator: Jonathan Sands nominated Eileen Blackwood as Moderator for the meeting. Zoe Hart seconded the nomination. Votes were counted on the motion and it carried with near unanimity.

Recognition of Major Milestones: Reverend Karen read the names of members who had passed away in the last twelve months: Sylvia Holden, Jean Parsley, Brenda Balon, Richard Cassidy, Susan Alden and Ann Nixon.

Draft Annual Meeting Minutes from 2025 (cont'd)

Slideshow: Rev. Karen then introduced the slideshow and video clips of Society activities during 2024-25, which was projected on the front wall.

Approval of Minutes of Annual Meeting 2024: David Call MOVED and Jean Gunther seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting, held at 7 pm on June 10, 2024. The motion PASSED unanimously.

Election of Slate of Nominees: Bill Barbot represented the Nominating Team and read through the slate of nominees as it was projected on the wall. The slate had been included in the Warning for this meeting. Two minor details were corrected after being pointed out: two nominees for the Board of Trustees, Christine Hallquist and Avery Hamill, were not already serving on the Board, and there were two nominees to serve on the Nominating Team rather than three. Thus the nominees presented to the congregation were as follows.

- President of the Board: Eileen Blackwood (2 year term)(current board member)
- Vice President of the Board: Alana Shaw (2 year term) (to be new member of the board)
- Secretary of the Board: Susan Ogden (currently an at-large member with a term ending in 2026)
- Trustees at large: Christine Hallquist and Avery Hamill (3 year terms)(to be new members of the board)
- Trustee at large: Stephen Rainville (completing a vacated term ending in 2026)(current board member)
- Nominating Team: Kameron McConnell and Mark Power Freeman (3 year terms)
- Endowment Fund Team: Jeb Spaulding (5 year term)

Draft Annual Meeting Minutes from 2025 (cont'd)

There were no nominations from the floor. Wendy Coe MOVED and David Call seconded the motion to approve the slate of nominees. The motion PASSED unanimously.

Budget Approval: Society Director of Operations and Finance Christina Fulton presented the proposed 2025-26 budget which was also available as a handout and projected on the wall. Kathy Voight Walsh enquired about the use of funds from the First UU Trust. Christina showed that this fund had grown significantly lately due to bequests, so was at a higher level than in the past. Brian Haas asked to have more details shared. Christina noted that there were further details online, and projected the page of Budget Assumptions on the wall. She then highlighted some of these. Nina Dahlstedt asked about the cost of health insurance, and Christina confirmed that there was a significant increase.

Zoe Hart MOVED and Alana Shaw seconded the motion to approve the budget as presented. The motion PASSED unanimously. (At this point, a few folks left to prepare for the picnic to follow the meeting.)

Recognition of Outgoing Board President: Incoming Board President Eileen Blackwood thanked Rodney Lowe for his service and presented him with a gift.

Draft Annual Meeting Minutes from 2025 (cont'd)

Recognition of Legacy Gifts: Jeb Spaulding of the Legacy Team noted that the congregation had benefitted this year from the gifts of Legacy Society members Maggi Hayes, John Kern, Don Groll, Jerry Packard and Debby Bergh. Jeb thanked the members of the Legacy Team. Melinda Lee spoke on behalf of Jerry Packard, who had been our board president and who remembered us with his legacy gift even though he had moved away. Christina Fulton noted that there is a plaque in the rear of the sanctuary with the names of the Legacy Society members from whom the Society has benefitted.

Presentation of Vision of Ministry and Board Goals: The Vision of Ministry and the Board Goals were available as a handout and were projected on the wall. President-elect Eileen Blackwood noted that this was the first time that the Board had adopted an Annual Vision of Ministry. This was after holding two open sessions to receive congregational input. The Board had also chosen and shared three Open Questions to focus on in the coming year. Zoe Hart inquired about the Ministry Goals, since Oversight of Ministry Goals was included as a board goal. Eileen and Rev. Karen described how our current governance model calls for the board to focus on governance and the staff to focus on ministry. So Ministry Goals will be developed by the Staff, while the Board will hold the Staff accountable. Similarly, since Teams are part of ministry, they function in connection with the Staff, whose goals are being developed separately. Eileen highlighted the element of the Board Goals that calls for creating a schedule of sessions in which the Board can receive input related to the vision of ministry and open questions. John Lincoln stated that he would like to see more about our building and the Net Zero project in our Vision. Eileen responded that other concerns called for attention this year, but the building could be a focus in a future year.

Draft Annual Meeting Minutes from 2025 (cont'd)

Justice Banner Unfurling: Christina asked for and received many willing volunteers to help unfurl and display our new Justice Banner. It pictured our meetinghouse and featured the words “Love at the Center”. Members of the congregation had displayed the banner in Montpelier recently, and it had even appeared on Rachel Maddow’s news program as a result.

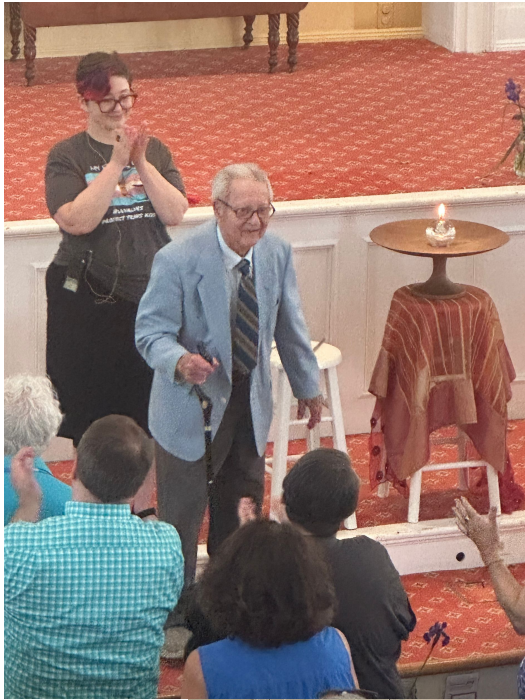
Other Business: Reverend Karen thanked the congregation for their support in making all of our activities possible. Eileen asked if there was any other business. Beth Howard said that she would like to be able to see the faces of the nominees for our offices. Reverend Karen felt it would be worth making bios of the nominees available as well. President-elect Eileen Blackwood expressed thanks for these suggestions. Chip Patullo suggested that the recently elected nominees should stand and be recognized, which they did.

Chalice Extinguishing: The chalice was extinguished by Avery Hamill, who will have the distinction of being both a board member and a college senior in the Fall. The congregation recited our traditional words for the chalice extinguishing ritual.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 12:12 pm.
Minutes submitted by Jonathan Sands, Secretary.

The Year in Pictures

Annual Meeting & Picnic June 8, 2025



New Members

Family Chapel at Elmore, VT June 15, 2025





Water Ingathering Sep. 7, 2025



Home Grown Holy Water



**FUUSB at Pride Parade
Sep. 7, 2025**





**“Here Comes the Sun”
Sep. 21, 2025**



**Sunday Morning Breakfast Ministry
Connection & Capacity Building Retreat
Nov. 8, 2025**





**“Joshua Young Preaches Here”
Dec. 7, 2025**



**Faith Development
Caroling field trip to Cathedral
Square Assisted Living
Dec. 14, 2025**



**Winter Solstice
Multigen Service
Dec. 21, 2025**

“Got Octopus?” Jan. 25, 2026



**“Finding Peace in a Sea of Injustice”
with Mohsen Mahdawi
Feb. 15, 2026**



**Crossing Paths visit to the
Cathedral Church of St. Paul
Jan. 18, 2025**



**Collaborative Expression
from Family Chapel
Jan. 4, 2025**



Rev. Karen in Minneapolis for Day of Truth & Freedom



1/25/26 Rev. Karen shares about her clergy witness trip to Minneapolis for Day of Truth & Freedom - about 90 people stayed for the "2nd" service presentation

**“Bring the Light,
Be the Light”
Feb. 2, 2026**





**Interfaith Panel,
Date with Death Club: Afterlives?
Feb. 28, 2026**



**Rev. Karen speaking at
Love the Immigrant as Yourself
interfaith service at
Temple Sinia - March 1 2026**

on 3/22, sign-making for No Kings
Day on 3/28





Multigenerational Game Night

“Authentic Selves” Exhibit





**“Practice Resurrection:
A Multi-Gen Easter”
April 5, 2026**



FUUSB COTS Walk Team 2026



**“Faith Development
Sunday”
May 3, 2026**



JETPIG



“Faith Development Sunday” May 3, 2026



Children's Choir



**“Faith Development
Sunday”
May 3, 2026**

Music



The FUUSB Choir





FUUSB Staff



**Rev. Karen, Christina Fulton (Dir. of Operations & Finance),
Erika Reif (Dir. of Lifespan Faith Development)**



@itisi_siru