

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus

PickupPal Carpooling Program

Every week members and friends of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus drive to church on Sundays (or on other days for other activities). Many arrive in their own cars either alone or accompanied by family members. This practice involves the regular emission of vast amounts of CO₂ and use of gasoline. There are alternatives that many use: walk, bicycle (weather permitting) or public transportation. But, where these are not practical, there is an alternative: car-pooling!

The Social Justice Committee and Green Team are developing a program with a free service provider (PickupPal.com) that will help us to match ourselves with other church members/friends (or riders/drivers in the wider community) for individual or regular rides to church or anywhere else you need to go.

Described below is how it works!

Benefits of car pooling

- Get to know fellow members better
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and gasoline use – leading to reduced oil imports. The program home page will maintain a running total of lbs of CO₂ avoided and miles not driven.
- Reduce number of cars on the road
- Reduce wear on your own car – depreciation, tires and engine
- Could avoid need to buy a car
- Make personal vehicle more available to other family members
- Decrease parking congestion

Disadvantage of carpooling

Just one!: Reduced flexibility – habits can be hard to shake. You will need to adjust your schedule to that of others with whom you are riding/driving!

Can you do that?

Register and enter a first ride/drive

Go to:

<http://www.pickupal.com/pup/erp/First-Unitarian-Universalist-Church>

This is the First UU “Start page” – permitting the arrangement of transportation to and from 93 W. Weisheimer Rd. It even includes a link to the church website to permit you to check for activity schedules. This start page serves to register you in the system and to record your first drive/ride. Enter requested information, including e-mail address.

You will immediately receive an e-mail. Click on the URL embedded in the message and finish the registration process: entering a password and confirming you have read the rules. At this point you can click on “log in” and add information, such as your photo and other preferences to your profile by clicking on “account settings”, if you wish, but this is not necessary. You can also review the status of your pending offers to drive or requests to ride, add to them or delete requests that are no longer relevant.

Responding to invitations

When there is a “match” between your entry and someone else’s needs (anyone on the system), you will automatically receive an e-mail from PickupPal advising you of this possibility. The URL embedded in the e-mail will take you to information about the person, including their name on the system and their offer or need. You can send a response – if you wish – to request more information or to agree to the drive/ride. Your actual identity (and theirs) remains confidential until you each decide to be identified. As needed, request full names, phone numbers and addresses to ensure your own safety.

Once the passenger accepts the driver’s offer, PickupPal sends both a “ticket to ride” with all the necessary information.

Agree to compensation

The system provides a means to agree to fair compensation for a ride. Whether a fee is agreed to or not is completely up to the individuals. Use your own judgment, but if no fee is involved, enter \$0.00 in the appropriate entry box.

Closing the Loop

After the ride/drive has been concluded, be sure to answer the brief survey questionnaire that will be sent to you. This will help to ensure the system continues to be improved.

Adding Rides/drives

Once you are registered (with user name and password), when you wish to add new drives/rides, enter the web site as usual, then go to “Log In” (upper right of page). At the “Home” tab, click on “Add a trip”. Now you can enter your wish for any future drives or rides, including to and from any location.

Use this screen also to add the return trip for a round-trip drive/ride. This is not essential, as it will, in any case be between you and your driver/passenger, but if we begin to do this on a regular basis, we'll see the miles and CO₂ reduction climb rapidly.

For drivers, you can also register to offer the same drive "just this once", "every weekday", or "every week on this day". For example, every Sunday to church, or every Thursday to choir practice. It doesn't work yet for "rides" but that capability has been requested.

As the system arranges more rides, the matching of drivers with riders will automatically extend to a wider geographical area.

MORPC

MORPC or Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, also runs a car pooling system. They call it "Ride Solutions". You may wish to register with them as well. If you are registered, MORPC will send you a letter of confirmation with possible rides/drivers and a voucher for their "Guaranteed Ride Home" program. You do not need to contact these suggested rides, but you are certainly free to do so if you wish.

If you come to church with a driver and, for some reason, such as an emergency or schedule change, the driver can't bring you home, you can take a taxi home, pay the fare, and complete and send in the voucher with the taxi receipt. You'll receive a check for 90% of the fare plus tip, and a replacement voucher. Up to 4 per year. A pretty good deal! To be eligible for this additional benefit, you must be registered with the MORPC by calling 1-888-742-RIDE (7433) or by email at kthompson@morpc.org.

Liability

Users of the PickupPal system understand that they are fully responsible for their own choices regarding drivers and riders in all cases. This system is not endorsed by the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, nor by the Social Justice Committee or the Green Team. You should always exercise the same caution in arranging rides as you would in any other situation that might involve contacts with strangers.

Other Uses

You can, of course, use the same system to obtain drives/rides for other purposes: going to work, shopping trips, long distance travel. PickupPal is a national organization that can match drivers with riders anywhere in the U.S. and Canada.

Get support

PickupPal has a full range of "Help" and information services. On the "Start" page, click "Help" to obtain a range of support information, including a simple "How it Works" section, a section of "Frequently Asked Questions" and a "PickupPal Members' Forum" for the real carpooling "aficionado"!

You can also contact Michael Greenman (614-898-5825) or mgreenma@columbus.rr.com with questions or suggestions.