



First Unitarian Universalist
Church of Columbus

2024/2025 ANNUAL REPORT

A vibrant and inclusive community
committed to fostering spiritual
growth, social justice, and
compassionate connections.



firstuucolumbus.org



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Governance

2025 Board Of Trustees



Cindy Whicker
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Trustee



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Trustee

2025 Board Report

This has been a great year of perseverance and growth. As a church we have made amazing strides towards healing from the previous minister's misconduct, and we're moving towards a stronger and more vibrant congregation. As your Board, we were BUSY!! We made an exceptional effort at every Board meeting to deliver on extremely lofty goals identified throughout the year and at the two Board retreats. While continuing to heal, we made a commitment to build stronger communication and relations with the staff and you, the congregation. At our first retreat in August, we identified several goals as being critical to our church's future. Some goals were quick and easy to complete while other goals were set as a three-year initiative. One of the goals, to create a sustainable funding task force, spurred the Bridge the Gap Campaign. That campaign was wildly successful, going above and beyond our ask and happened in a lightning-fast time frame. Moreover, the Bridge the Gap Campaign demonstrated your tremendous generosity to this church, your love for this community, and your dedication to continue to help us live our values together.

Governance

2025 Board Report (continued)

As mentioned at the Mid-Year meeting, we've improved Board Communication through the monthly Board Bulletin, setting up a Board meeting request form, and having a unified Staff Report submitted at Board meetings. In our evaluation of Rev. Terasa's first year, we identified missing aspects of the process and have incorporated them into this year's process.

We established a Governance Review taskforce with a multi-faceted approach broken into five phases. At the January Board/Staff retreat, we identified five additional goals and we've put into motion or accomplished all of those goals, with the exception of a few due to a reduction in manpower.

Here are our January goals and progress

- Establish a Reserve Fund Taskforce.
 - Processes are still being developed.
- Establish a Budget Process Taskforce.
 - This taskforce worked together to establish this year's budget.
- Review the Board size.
 - It was determined that, as of now, we will not expand the Board, but establish a Board Advisory Committee of current committee volunteers to offer support and answer questions as well as provide information around continuity of practices during Board meetings.
- Identify roles and responsibility in finance operations and strategic oversight.
 - This is an ongoing goal with tasks in progress.
- Create more opportunities for the Board to hear what's going well in the congregation
 - Thank you to everyone that has met with us after services in Beach Hall, attended listening sessions, or completed surveys asking for your input.

Leadership Development is a goal we were not able to tackle this year but it is on the list for next year's Board goals to address.

In August 2024, Rev. Sunshine Wolfe, our UUA Regional contact, who had been working with us on the Congregational Special Care work, moved into a new position. That change put a slight pause on the UUA regional connection, but we continued to work towards the areas of improvement identified as a special care congregation. Thankfully, at the Mid-Year Meeting, we all met (via video) our new UUA regional contact, Cassandra Montenegro. I look forward to more meaningful interactions with her in the future.

Rev. Terasa has brought much stability and clarity of processes to our work this year for the Board, staff, and our church. Her ability to connect people in a seamless, genuine way towards a common goal is an amazing skill that I am in awe of.

Governance

2025 Board Report (continued)

She also has lent us her network of contacts to help strengthen our church. Rev. Terasa is a wealth of knowledge with a plethora of resources, which I know is worth its weight in gold. Case in point, at the January Board retreat we worked with Rev. Roger Bertschausen. He specializes in Governance, a goal that we identified at the August retreat. Rev. Roger helped identify new goals and move the Board's vision towards long term, achievable goals that will benefit First UU Columbus as we grow into our future. Being mindful of our finances, Rev. Terasa and Rev. Roger agreed to swap services of each other's expertise, saving us the need to pay for a facilitation fee. Aside from her financial stewardship, I am extremely grateful to Rev. Terasa for her leadership and her strength while navigating hardships over this past Board year. I have called or texted with her many days to ask "What the heck do we do now?" She is calm and always has answers and or resources. It's like she's dealt with congregations who are in the middle of healing from conflict.

I am giving this Board report as the Board Chair, but I want to be very clear that 90% of what we do as your Board could not be accomplished without the steadfast support and know-how of our amazing staff. Each month they advise us on processes, provide connections, and attend countless weekly meetings of Board-initiatives to keep our work moving forward (ie- safety, governance, solar panels, creating the budget and budget processes, etc). They truly do the work of this church throughout the whole week, not just to get ready for Sunday services. Staff keep all the trains running on time at First UU, and we as the Board could not be half as effective without their constant support. Thank you to all of our staff!

While our church community continues to experiment with trying new ways of doing things, like the Expressive Worship and Nourish Worship service, we are also trying to remember to do more connecting with each other. I've learned the lessons from my first year on the Board; that urgency and secrecy are the language of the oppressor. Advice that we've been given over these last two years is to take the time that is needed to do the work fully and clearly. Don't be afraid to do less business in order to do more connecting. Connection is where the healing and growth will happen.



A Mayabb
Youth Board Rep



Violet Davidson
Youth Board Rep

Governance

2025 Board Report (continued)

As a church, the majority of us are juggling that discomfort of taking things a little slower than we'd like in an effort to connect with each other in a more meaningful way, and I believe it's having a positive impact.

As a reminder, the UUA General Assembly, commonly called GA, is coming up this June 18-22 in Baltimore Maryland, and registration is still open. First UU has 11 delegate slots, and we still have openings. If you are a member of the congregation and are interested in being a delegate, please email the Board at board@firstuucolumbus.org.

I write this report as the final year of my three-year term on the Board of Trustees draws to a close. I will remain active with the Board for an additional year in an ex-officio non-voting position as the past chair. Thank you to all of my fellow Board Members, Staff, and of course my family. I appreciate all of your patience and grace over this past year. Also thank you to all of the congregants and friends of the church who remain present and engaged here at First UU Columbus.

Cindy Whicker,
Chair of the First UU Columbus
Board of Trustees

2025 Ex-Officio Officers



Billy Davidson
Past Board Chair



Debra Boyd
Treasurer

Additional Congregational Leadership



Dana Reynolds
Moderator



Carolee Noonan
Personnel Chair



Marc Pinsonneault
Finance Chair

Governance

Nominating Report

We are a committee of the congregation. *NomCom* as we like to call ourselves, is charged with recruiting, screening, and recommending church members for leadership positions. The committee comprises three new members, three second-year members, and the former Chair or Co-chair of the Board of Trustees, who serves as an ex-officio member and liaison to the Board.

Each year, we search for a person to serve as Moderator for our mid-year and annual meetings, two members for the Board of Trustees, and six congregants to run for three places on NomCom. As members of NomCom, we become acquainted with members of the congregation whom we might not otherwise have known. We take seriously our responsibility to select strong candidates for these key roles in our church governance. Finding at least nine diverse members who are willing to serve and bring the necessary skills to these positions takes nine months of the year.

Last June, we started a new tradition with a potluck that included the new, retiring, and remaining members of NomCom. In the fall, we set our agenda and began scouting for people to run for various positions. In the new year, we began interviewing candidates, and by April, we had a slate of candidates and produced a printed and online brochure.

In May, we held candidate “meet and greet” sessions in Beach Hall, passed out brochures and generally introduced our candidates to the church congregants. Other topics we discussed this year, include possible scheduling of leadership training and changing the way we vote for the three NomCom members.

2025 Nominating Committee Members



Eddy Fried



Jack Holdford



Joan Matyskella



Karla Rinto



Glenn Waring



Judy Vazquez

Governance

Archives Team and Historian

Historian: Linda Thompson

Archivists: Linda Royalty, Marguerite Molk, Jan Waters, Marilyn Beerman, Jane Reisman, Deb Baillieul, Olwen Firestone, Ohma Willette, Sylvia Howe, Susan Williams

In addition to our weekly gathering for snacks and conversation, the Archives Team has had a busy year primarily spent on reviewing and sharing the history of the congregation. With the help of the Archives Team, Deb Baillieul, a member of the Transition Team, collected the information from each decade of our existence. This was shared with the congregation in monthly presentations. Following this presentation, the Team and Rev. Teresa created a video session using the same material, which will be available for future viewing. Our hope is to provide the congregation with a comprehensive review of the ups and downs of First Unitarian Universalist Church.

Individual members continued organizing different aspects of the church's historical records. Linda Thompson researched the decades and outside information for the church history presentations. Olwen Firestone sorts through and organizes the boxes of photos. Jane Reisman and Marilyn Beerman organized early records from the 40s and 50s into easily accessible notebooks. Jan Waters works on the School for Young Children records. Marguerite Molk files the obituaries and memorial services of members and friends who have died during the past year. Linda Royalty is organizing Board documents, Annual Meeting reports and Financial reports. Ohma Willette files newspaper clippings about members, the church, and activities into notebooks. She also searches biographical files for interesting stories about ministers and members. Sylvia Howe is creating notebooks of ministries past and present, ordinations and installations.

In addition to our ongoing organizing efforts, the team is often called upon to research particular members, ministers and events for requests for this information. We have also talked with individuals looking for specific information about the church.

Our goals for the coming year are as follows

1. Clean and organize the Archives Closet
2. Create easily accessible records for the few groups and activities for which few records are available
3. Continue to have fun

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Howe with help from the Archives Team

Congregational Life

Congregational Life Overview

Congregational Life here at First UU has been busier than ever! As you know, we have been shifting around job responsibilities to better reflect the shared ministry model that we aspire to, and in that transition, Adult RE has shifted from my purview to our DRE Amber Scott's. (You can read more about what has been going on in her report further into this report!) As part of the transition, I took on the responsibility of Financial Management, including bookkeeping tasks after Joe retired. I am happy to say that we are getting additional support in this area, and my focus can return to long term financial management, including stewardship, Acorn Society (planned giving), and financial sustainability. I am excited to continue this work, as well as the various other ways in which we all find connection and meaning with this community and faith!



Over this year we have:

- said farewell to Andi Mocharski as our fantastic Engagement and Hospitality Coordinator
- welcomed Robin Lawson as Congregational Life Assistant
- welcomed 40 new members through our monthly Pathways to Membership Classes
- switched to a new membership database (Realm) that provides for more transparency around your giving, as well as enables our community to be better connected with one another
- reengaged the Membership Team with a focus on not just welcoming new members, but finding ways to help all of those in our First UU community find their place in this beloved community
- held an incredibly successful Build the Bridge campaign to help us bridge the gap in our budget as we work to find ways to become more sustainable
- combined the efforts of the Welcome Team with the Membership Team for a more cohesive mission

In the upcoming year you can look forward to:

- reengaging our Covenant and Small Group ministries
- opportunities to gather with new members to get to know one another in deeper ways
- exciting new ways to engage with Realm
- opportunities for groups to gather and learn more about what one another are doing
- volunteering opportunities, and even more!

It has been an absolute joy working with all of you over this past year and I can't wait to see what else we can do together! Our world needs the lifesaving sanctuary of Unitarian Universalism now more than ever, and it is an honor to create this space of comfort and safety, justice and hope, love and perseverance, with each and every one of you.

Blessings,
Rev. Kelli

Congregational Life

Membership Planning Team

Following several years of dormancy, the Membership Planning Team (MPT) reformed at the beginning of this church year with the purpose of helping those who make up our First UU community feel welcome and to help all of our community members become involved and integrated into our community. We are working to promote and support a healthy community at First UU, in collaboration with other First UU Teams. We are excited to continue this work and have a lot of ideas and excitement that we can't wait to share!

ASH: Atheists-Skeptics-Humanists

David Krohn: Chair, Tom Baillieul: Program Chair

The Atheists-Skeptics-Humanists Group currently has over 90 members comprising both FUU and local community members. Monthly meetings this year delved into topics including: "Project 2025 – what is it?"; a presentation on Eric Hoffer's 1951 book *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*; a presentation on Columbus' water system and where our water comes from; an evening with the art of Jim Bowling, Professor Emeritus, Otterbein University; an update of the ACLU's current activities with Colin Marozzi, Deputy Director; a look at current Cosmological research with Marc Pinsonneault; and an update on the city's Urban Forestry Master Plan with Rosalie Hendon, Columbus' Forester. In August, A-S-H members produced a lay-led Sunday service titled "Storytelling."

CUUPS

Our Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans chapter continued to meet and attract new members this year. CUUPS brings together individuals from diverse nature centered paths to share their knowledge and rituals in an open and supportive group setting.

This year, in addition to meeting monthly on the second Wednesday; our members wrote and presented both the Remembrance and Yule services at 11am and are currently working on a Summer Solstice service for June 22nd at 10am. We will be having a full moon ritual and organizational meeting Wednesday, June 11 where we will plan our 25/26 church year activities; all who are interested in joining us to learn more are welcome. For more information contact myra@firstuucolumbus.org



Congregational Life



First Friday

The monthly pasta dinner continues to be a cherished event in our community, consistently drawing between 40-90 attendees.

This year, we tried a few new things. We added chicken nuggets to the menu, regular as well as vegan/gf. We also began to invite different groups of the church to cook which appears to have generated a boost in overall attendance.

Over the Summer, we will again transition to a bring-your-own-food picnic on the South playground, enjoying a relaxed outdoor gathering and programming by our JAM Team. Team leaders: watch your inboxes this August for your invitation to cook or provide programming one Friday night this year.

Rainbow Connexion

You have probably seen us in Beach Hall during coffee hour, at the table with the bright cover and all the flags. Rainbow Connexion is our congregation's social and support group for people who identify as LGBTQIA+. We meet every month on the third Friday to have time together with others who share the experience of living out in Central Ohio. We present a worship service annually in June to commemorate Pride month and share our experiences and joy with the wider congregation. If you are interested in learning more about us, stop by the table in Beach Hall any Sunday during coffee hour or email us at rainbow@firstuucolumbus.org

A Note From Robin:

I was hired as your Congregational Life Assistant at the end of March this year. I have been so grateful to step into this role, and as a Lifelong UU I look forward to the opportunity to learn and grow while serving this congregation.



Robin Lawson
Congregational Life Assistant

Ministries

Developmental Minister's Report

When I think back to the beginning of this church year, I remember the fear and hope that were roiling inside us about the impact of the US Presidential campaign. That anxiety of “not knowing” has now morphed into the sometimes despairing “what can we possibly do?” While I share the frustration and anxiety of the moment, I think that we, as a congregation, have answered the question about what we can possibly do. We have been building a community of care and concern. We have been welcoming new people seeking a place of safety and congruence. We have been taking our financial needs seriously and responding with generosity. We have been working on making our governance transparent and exploring our history together. We have been, in short, a congregation that has gathered strength and responded with love, even in the midst of a world on fire.



Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley
Developmental Minister

Two years ago we began our time with these goals of:

- Recovering from Rev. Stewart's departure
- Improving Staff/Board relations,
- To engage in conflict resolution and transformation in all areas of church life.
- To create a covenant between members of the Congregation who are ministers, both UU and from other denominations, and the congregation itself.
- Engage in intentional work as a recovering congregation - meaning a congregation that has experienced ministerial misconduct and challenging conflicts.



In the two years of our time together, I believe many relationships have experienced healing, if not fully healed. There are folks who have lingering feelings of hurt or confusion. But I believe we are on the other side of this emotionally and I hear people often say that they feel ready to move on.

The staff / Board relationship continues to be on a learning curve. Given the way the Board was so traumatized in the previous ministry, it has been difficult to learn new patterns, and the burden of work on the Board has made it challenging. The staff still carry scars and are working hard to learn new patterns as well. There has been a great increase in the trust level among staff which is starting to extend outward.

Ministries

Developmental Minister's Report (cont.)

A learning process is underway related to conflict transformation as well. The Covenantal Relations Committee has been helpful in recognizing the dynamics that we need to shift – learning better listening skills, engaging with conflict rather than avoiding it, recognizing cultural differences — these are among the issues we know we need to work through.

While there is no official covenant yet between minister members or ministers on staff, we have been building the infrastructure of a more trusting relationship that can become codified in a covenant soon.

The work we have been doing in examining our history, one decade at a time, has been helpful in surfacing ongoing patterns in the life of the congregation. One of those has been a lack of appropriate boundaries in a number of situations. Ministerial misconduct is only one aspect of this. Learning ways to have healthy boundaries and still be connected is one of the tasks of conflict transformation.

There are many things I look forward to in these years we now have together. But most importantly I look forward to the spaciousness that will allow us to work together on the issues that have been of ongoing concern: governance, financial stability, leadership development, integration of generations and silos in the congregation. I have been so impressed by the spirit with which so many of you have engaged with our work together. You show up, you give in a multitude of ways, you welcome the stranger. It is an ongoing privilege to serve as one of your ministers.

Senior Gatherings

Senior gatherings were held four times this past year, continuing a tradition that began in the fall of 2007. These gatherings bring together our older seniors, many of whom are not able to attend services and other events regularly, and enable them to continue to experience church in a smaller, friendly setting. Each gathering provides connection with ministers and staff, a short worship service, information on church happenings, and food and fellowship. The past two years, the Fall and early Spring gatherings have included coffee and muffins. The early Winter and late Spring gatherings have included lunch, prepared and served by loyal volunteers. Rides are provided for those that need them.



Ministries

Senior Gatherings (cont.)

From the beginning, these gatherings have been popular with both seniors and staff. 82 seniors signed up for the May gathering, an increase from last year at the same time. Experiencing church in this small, informal setting provides meaningful connection. For the past three years Karen Keenan has been the major player in making these gatherings happen. She manages the volunteers and processes that make it all possible. The dates for next year have been selected if you'd like to get them on your calendar: 10/16, 12/4, 3/12 and 5/7. Dick Dawson works with the ministers to provide the worship and programming. If you are interested in helping with this important ministry, please contact Dick Dawson or Karen Keenan.

Caring Ministries

The Caring Ministries at First UU provide compassionate and empathetic services to our church community. Caring Ministries include the work of the ministers as well as the trained volunteer services of the Pastoral and Caring Teams.

Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team extends the pastoral ministry of our congregation in several ways. Pastoral Care Connections is a one-on-one ministry in which Pastoral Care Team members connect with other members who desire a listening ear. As well, Pastoral Listeners are available after the Sunday service to extend this compassionate listening or to facilitate a meeting with the ministers of the church.

- Nancy McDonald-Kenworthy facilitates Continuing Bonds, a support group for widowed UU individuals. The group meets on Zoom the first and third Thursdays of the month at 3:30 pm.
- Denise Deschenes facilitates Keep on Moving, a support group for anyone suffering from chronic pain or other chronic diagnoses. The group meets on Zoom the third Monday of the month from 7 to 8 pm.
- Clare Fried facilitates Caregivers, a support group for church members/friends who are currently caring for a loved one or who have done so in the past. The group meets on Zoom the first Monday of the month from 7-8 pm.

There are currently eighteen individuals on the Pastoral Care Team itself. The Pastoral Team Council consists of individuals who oversee the pastoral needs of the congregation and include Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley, David Carr, Denise Deschenes, Rev. Kathleen Fowler, Caroline Mocharski, and Karen Torvik.



Ministries

Caring Team

Jane Reisman, Chris Sullivan, Karen Torvik, Gail Baxter, Nan Beamish, Jane Tessier, Olwen Firestone and Karla Rinto. New members this year are Kari Garnes and Julia Sargent .

Mission Statement

The Caring Team seeks to be aware of and respond to the joys and sorrows of First UU members and Friends by:

- Sending caring cards
- Providing a network of volunteers who offer short term support
- Organizing memorial service receptions
- Offering the loan of medical equipment
- Coordinating and presenting programs related to life issues
- Providing an umbrella under which the Ministerial Appreciation & Funeral Consumers Alliance exist

Services to the First UU Community

1. The Caring Team sent (to date) 129 caring cards for joys and sorrows generated by members. In addition cards were sent to new members, coming of age participants, graduates, teachers, mentors, ministers significant dates, significant birthdays, and other special situations.
2. There are 18 plus volunteers who share writing cards and sitting at the caring table before and after Sunday services. Jane Reisman coordinates these volunteers.
3. Recruitment for new volunteers occurred at the Engagement Fair in September with 3 new volunteers joining.
4. The Caring Team participated in the January Sunday service on the Caring Ministries with the Pastoral team to highlight the services provided to members and friends. Becca Morse and Nan Beamish developed a volunteer form that was distributed at the service with 8 new volunteers stepping forward.
5. The Caring Network is led by Karen Torvik and Gail Baxter. Their primary focus is to be proactive in reaching out to members to identify needs. They coordinate meals and rides on a short-term basis for members and their families. These supports most often occur when there is an injury, illness or death.
6. Memorial Service Receptions are coordinated by Chris Sullivan, Karla Rinto and Nan Beamish. There were 5 Memorial Service Receptions coordinated this past year for current and former members. There are many dedicated volunteers who provide food, setup and cleanup and serve as ushers, greeters and servers.
7. The medical equipment loan is coordinated by Jane Tessier. Some of the equipment loaned this year included knee rollers, wheelchairs, walkers, and shower chairs. Jane also spoke to the Senior gathering in December to update the list of equipment she maintains.

Ministries

Services to the First UU Community (cont.)

8. Holiday Cards: Cards are signed by the members and sent to Ministers, staff members, teachers, and former Ministers.

9. There was no annual workshop this year.

Priorities For The Future

The Caring Team continues to recruit new members and volunteers to continue our mission.

Prepared by Karla Rinto, Caring Team leader

Alternative Worship

We just celebrated the conclusion of our first full year with a pizza party and discussion about what went well and where we would like to grow. Our focus is creating and presenting experiences that welcome everyone and offer new paths of spiritual development in community. We pay specific attention to building spaces where those who have experienced religious trauma feel comfortable participating in worship activities and where those who don't resonate with traditional services can find community. We're always happy to welcome new members to the team. Contact Christine Davidson if you are interested in getting involved or would like to share an idea.

Expressive Worship

Focused on the intersection of art and community, Expressive Worship offers fresh avenues of spiritual and creative exploration. This service continues to be a space where participants can engage with their faith and world outlook through diverse artistic media. By integrating creation into worship, we provide a unique and enriching experience that fosters deeper connections both with ourselves and with one another. This approach has not only offered a new spiritual practice to participants but also strengthened our community bonds. This coming year we will be moving from Tuesday to Thursday evenings at 6:30pm to reduce conflicts with other programming. Attendance this year has been as intimate as 5 attendees and as large as 35. All ages and abilities are always welcome.



Nourish

This format has been offered as the 9:15am service this year after warm feedback of the pilots last Summer. An intentionally more embodied experience that takes advantage of being offered to a smaller group than the 11am service, it has attracted a steady core of attendees and frequent visitors. Most services are designed to last around 45min, the centerpiece is the reading of a children's story aloud and attendees then sharing their reflections to create a communal sermon. There is often a small meditation, discussion or art project that ties into the service theme as well. While there is more interaction between attendees than in a traditional service, it is designed to be equally welcoming to introverts and extroverts.

Religious Exploration

Amber Scott

Children and Youth Religious Exploration Program

First UU continues to hover right around 135 registered children and teens, which is equivalent to the registration levels we enjoyed just before the pandemic! We welcomed many new families and visitors this year. More than 45 Sunday school teachers, RE staff members, and other volunteers supported our family programs! Weekly attendance through the regular church year included 40-70 young people in the building each Sunday that classes were held, with 20-30 adults on duty supporting them. On Sundays without classes (such as holidays) we may have had as few as half a dozen children and teens present, and we tend to have one or two dozen in attendance each week during the summer (Memorial Day through Labor Day).

With most classes happening during the 11am service, we used almost every available classroom space most Sundays. In the fall we plan to again offer our full spectrum of classes during the traditional 11am service (which involves up to 9 classes during the service, and as many as 3 activities after the service). The addition of the 9:15am Nourish multigenerational service this year created new and exciting opportunities for families to build community and experience worship together.

We continue to offer many vital programs, including Our Whole Lives sexuality education (Ohio requires schools to teach abstinence, or submit dissent), LGBTQ+ affirming spaces and support groups for young folks and their families (in a time when the state of Ohio and the US at large are plagued with discriminatory legislation targeting these groups). This past year we ran Coming of Age, a program where teens explore their personal beliefs, and were excited to have the involvement of many lay leaders, in addition to a host of our community's current and retired ministers. This coming year we plan to continue Neighboring Faiths, a program in which middle schoolers learn about other faith traditions, visit a wide variety of local places of worship, and hear from guest speakers representing these communities. Our church's impact is further strengthened by the Rising Young Adults small ministry group, and we continue to support awareness and diversity through our Youth Group's Banned Book Library.

More info about our full range of family activities:
<https://firstuucolumbus.org/learning/sunday-school/>





Youth Group

Our Youth Group was small but mighty this year, as many of our older teens were busy with part time jobs, theater productions, and an impressive variety of other hobbies.

This year we had two youth reps serve on the Board of Trustees, four Coming of Age participants, eleven 8th grade OWL participants, four high school grads we congratulated, four teens attending the West Virginia trip in June with the Kent congregation, five who served in regional youth leadership for Central East Region Summer Institute (CERSI) all year long, and an additional four who will be part of youth staff during CERSI in July.

The Youth Group Coordinator position is currently vacant (which includes a \$1000 annual stipend), and we are also hoping to recruit more advisors (age 25+) to help support this vital program. If you are interested in working with our congregation's teens (or really, any age group!) please get in touch with Amber Scott, our Director of Religious Exploration! amber@firstuucolumbus.org

Religious Exploration Team and RE Startup

Sometime this fall, everyone will be invited to join us in reimagining the role of multigenerational and family programming within our congregation as part of a “start-up” retreat, with facilitator Cassandra Montenegro, member of our regional UUA staff team. This event will include efforts to reestablish our congregation's RE Team, a group of various stakeholders and helpers that usually includes both parents and volunteer teachers. After the pandemic, this group dwindled down to the same few highly involved individuals, who continue to do heavy lifting for family ministry. As we look at our congregation's overall governance structure and dreams for the future, we would like to reboot this team and get more folks involved! There is much to do to support our young people and our shared journey as Unitarian Universalists.

Adult Education

The staff team has been hard at work as part of our congregation's developmental ministry, and hopes for the future. As part of this larger work, we are continually looking at staffing structure and portfolios to determine the most effective arrangement. As a result I have taken on some elements of adult programming, and look forward to continuing to work with lay leaders to get more classes and activities off the ground in the coming year. Some highlights from this year included new book groups and movement classes, travelogue screenings, and a few special events featuring guest speakers. I am grateful for and impressed by the many talents and gifts that our community shares with one another!

Professional Development

I am happy to report that in April 2025 I passed my panel interview with the Unitarian Universalist Association's Religious Education Credentialing Committee, and achieved the status of Credentialed Religious Educator, Advanced Level! Completion of this multi-year program requires formal continuing education, regular contact with a seasoned mentor, a substantial amount of reading, and submission of a vast portfolio of competency writing that includes work samples. Candidates then present to and are questioned by a committee, which then deliberates to determine whether or not you passed. I will be recognized for achieving this professional milestone in the Service of the Living Tradition at UUA General Assembly, on Thursday, June 19th, 2025.

I have served as your professional religious educator since August 2019, and have been part of our congregation since I became an Ohio State student in 2004. I bring my skills as an art and early childhood educator, and expertise from over two decades of peer leadership as a UU youth and young adult to this vocation. Along with Rev. Kelli McNeal, who joined the staff team the same week I did, I am celebrating the completion of my fifth year of service to this congregation!

Religious Education Credentialing Program info: <https://www.uua.org/careers/re/credentialing>

UUA GA Service of the Living Tradition: <https://www.uua.org/ga/program/highlights/slt>



Amber Scott
Director of RE



Niki Ducy
RE Assistant



Gus Serbin
Sunday RE Assistant

A Note From Rev. Amanda: A Good Goodbye

I have loved working together with all of you for justice over the past 8 years! First as a Ministerial Intern from 2017-2019, then as a Justice Coordinator from 2020-2023, and finally as your Justice Minister from 2023-2025. You have encouraged me, taught me, worked with me, and ordained me! I am so proud of the work that we have done together, and so grateful for your trust and willingness to try new things with me. You can read more about all we've accomplished this year below.

I could not have asked for a better community in which to work, grow, and learn during this part of my life, nor for a warmer welcome for my family. And, this spring, I have discerned that it's time for my ministry at First UU to come to a close. I have realized that at this time in my life, I long to take some years away from paid work to focus on my children. I also trust and believe that the work we have begun together will continue. Both our work for justice in our world and our internal work to become the anti-racist, anti-oppressive beloved community we dream of.

So, I will be bringing my work at First UU to a close by the end of this summer. In the fall, we will have a good-bye gathering. I am not moving away from Columbus, but after our goodbyes, I will be away from First UU for a number of years. Although I will miss you all terribly, this is an important part of the process of a ministry ending - it allows for the congregation to find a new way forward.

As I end my time at First UU, I will be challenging you not to simply remove my salary to decrease the budget gap. Instead, consider what your commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion means to you as a congregation. At a time when the federal government is withdrawing from everything that could be conceivably connected to equity, diversity, and inclusion, it is up to all of us who share these values to invest in them - including financially.



Rev. Amanda Hayes
Justice Minister

Anti-Racist Allies Planning Team

Danya Furda, Linda Loesch and John McCrystal

Our congregation's Anti-Racist Allies Planning Team's efforts are closely tied to all three components of our congregation's Mission Statement: 1) community and caring, 2) justice through learning, reflecting and doing, and 3) engaging diversity. This new Anti-Racist Allies Planning Team began meeting in August 2024 and began developing a covenant and defining our mission and goals.

The team's top priorities are to discover and name the barriers to anti-racism that may still exist in our church culture and to help our church become a more anti-racist place. Additionally, the team provided educational activities to initiate and continue conversations about anti-racism. The team also presented in January a Sunday worship service on how we continue to move towards being a more anti-racist congregation. The service also included a congregational survey to gain a better idea about feelings and preferences for anti-racism work here at First UU. Here is the link summarizing the survey results: [Survey Summary](#). Following that service an interactive workshop was offered exploring how white supremacy exists all around us.

We would like to acknowledge the wonderful efforts of the Living The Pledge team and Rev. Amanda. We also thank all the many individuals and teams that have been supportive and engaged in this important anti-racism work. Our plans for the 2025-2026 church year are to identify where we are doing good anti-racism work, where we still have barriers to anti-racism in our congregation and to develop ways to incorporate anti-racism awareness in all our programs.

BREAD Team:

Building Responsibility, Equality, and Dignity

Chris Johnson, Robin Lawson, Alice Rathburn, and Marilyn Webster

First UU is a founding member of BREAD, a 20,000-member interfaith, interracial community organization of 44 Central Ohio congregations. BREAD works to solve democratically selected community problems by researching proven solutions, negotiating with decision makers, and using direct action to implement those solutions.

First UU turned out 119 people to its 2025 BREAD Nehemiah Action Meeting on Tuesday, May 13th, significantly contributing to BREAD's total people power of 1,350 attendees.



BREAD Team: Building Responsibility, Equality, and Dignity (cont.)

At the Action, we got a commitment from City Council Member Nick Bankston to create a rental registry requiring property owners to provide contact information before renting out any residential property And require out of town owners to designate a local agent for the city to contact in case of an emergency, as well as creating a systematic pre-rental inspection.

We also called for a private tree ordinance to prevent developers from clear cutting trees on private property (BREAD got a public tree ordinance through in 2023), as well as improving Columbus' tree canopy from 22% to 40% by 2050 with emphasis on priority neighborhoods (those with as little as 9% tree coverage).

Democracy & Human Rights Team

Chris Johnson, Susan O'Donnell, and Tam Dalrymple

First UU's Democracy & Human Rights Team worked extensively on the 2024 election. First UU hosted office hours for the Citizens Not Politicians campaign as it gathered signatures to put an anti-gerrymandering measure (Issue 1) on the ballot. We participated in National Voter Registration Day with the League of Women Voters, and First UUs went to Pathway Clubhouse to make sure members were registered and ready to vote. For the election, we did non-partisan voter outreach, encouraging and assisting voters in voting, and worked for the passage of Issue 1. First UUs sent 650 postcards, texted over 110,000 voters, and knocked on nearly 500 doors.

Since the election, the team has advocated against harmful legislation in the statehouse and collected signatures to repeal the anti-higher education bill SB1. First UU has been a large presence at protests against the assault on our democracy and the attacks on immigrants, trans people, and others. Rev. Amanda started a group on Signal for First UUs to coordinate our attendance at protests and other actions, which has been quite successful.



Food [In]Security Team

Jacques Angelino and Tim Hooks

Feed & Read Ohio

This year, we began to encourage all First UUers to pick up a Feed & Read Ohio green bag at the greeter stand once a month and fill it with food and other essential items for Central Ohio families who are not able to access food pantries or other kinds of resources.

In addition to regular food deliveries, during and after our blessing of the backpacks August service, our congregation blessed and filled backpacks full of school supplies for back-to-school. Around Christmas, we had a Feed & Read Ohio Tree with requested Christmas presents for children and youth. Feed & Read Ohio also gave turkeys and hams for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter.

Feed & Read Ohio has also been distributing Red Cards, which give basic information about the legal rights of immigrants and how to respond in the event of an ICE agent coming to the door.

If you're interested in learning more, doing a ride along or volunteering, talk with Jacques at the table in Beach Hall after our Sunday Services!

YWCA Meals

The YWCA Family Center provides transitional housing and needed services to families with the goal of enabling them to become self-sufficient. First UU continues to provide dinner at the Center each 4th Friday. If you would like to help cook and serve, please contact Tim Hooks.

Eco-Justice Team

This team is a joint effort of JAM and facilities. Please see page 30 for their report.

Fund for Immigration Legal Assistance (FILA)

This First UU fund provides direct assistance to immigrants in Central Ohio in need of help. Beneficiaries of the fund are residents of Central Ohio, with preference given to parent(s) of underage children, and young persons who fit within the DACA age guidelines.

You can help by spreading the word about the fund with those you know who may need it, by donating or raising funds, or by joining the FILA Committee. Learn more or get the application [here](https://firstuucolumbus.org/fila-immigration-assistance) at <https://firstuucolumbus.org/fila-immigration-assistance>; or, you can email with a question or idea to: fila@firstuucolumbus.org.



Music is always a vibrant part of the First UU community, and this year has been no exception, highlighted by the activities of three choirs and a thriving Concert Series.

Peace Pals

Peace Pals, our children's choir, came back from its hiatus after the end of last year, once again with director Erin Rothert leading. The group grew in number from last year to this, with regular biweekly rehearsals following church services and sang in services, including December's Music Sunday, and the Spring Choir Concert.

Chalice and Spirit of Life Choirs

Both adult choirs continue to grow in size and add new members to their mix; in particular, the retention of new members has increased over the past year. In addition to singing at the regular 10:00 am services throughout the year, both choirs were featured at December's Music Sunday service, which was a Lessons & Carols service patterned after the Christmas Eve service at King's College in Cambridge, England. This service was very well-received, and congregants and staff have requested it for next year's Music Sunday service. The choirs also combined for the Spring Choir Concert in May, which featured several challenging pieces for both choirs. Spirit of Life Choir director Michaela Brown also directed a combined ensemble at the traditional Christmas Eve service. The choir directors work hard to program music and grow the choral library with pieces that speak to a variety of musical tastes and styles and that reflect a diverse and inclusive pool of choral composers.

Concert Series

First UU yet again boasted a robust concert series for 2024-25. Concerts this year included a recital by church music staff Michaela Brown, Nathan Hamm, and Brandon Moss; singer-songwriter Joanie Calem; local favorite Bill Cohen; The Magpie Consort; duo Aaron Nathans and Michael G. Ronstadt; and Chamber Music Connection featuring the Cavani String Quartet. We also continued a years-long partnership with the world-renowned Carpe Diem String Quartet, which held four concerts at First UU this season. Our Concert Series is fully self-funded through concert donations and funds raised by the staff recital held in October (most concert donations go directly to the performing artists).



Dr. Brandon Moss
Music Director
Chalice Choir Director



Nathan Hamm
Accompanist



Michaela Brown
Spirit of Life Choir
Director

Stewardship

Our Build the Bridge Campaign was a huge success - thank you to everyone who was so generous with your time and resources! Our spring stewardship drive was also really successful - reaching our goal of \$645,000! Almost half of you increased your pledges and we are so grateful. You can access your pledging information, as well as your giving, by logging in to your Realm profile. If you need help with logging in, please email realm@firstuucolumbus.org.

We also had a great Auction, which raised over \$30,000 - far exceeding their goal. Thank you to the Auction Team for making this a great and fun experience for all! Your hard work and commitment are so appreciated and valued! As we continue our focus on sustainable funding, stay tuned for more information on upcoming events and for ways that we are shifting how we approach stewardship.

Treasurer Report

Fiscal Year 2025 has been a bit bumpy. And that is to be expected when change is afoot. Our longtime bookkeeper, Joe Voltolini, retired in October. Rev Kelli took over these duties. Many important projects were accomplished as she engaged in learning the daily work necessary to keep all the financial pieces moving. The staff is considering outsourcing the bookkeeping for FY26.

We also had a very successful Build the Bridge Campaign. This campaign targeted raising \$500,000 to be used during FY25, FY26, and FY27 to provide the staff and Board time to create and grow into a balanced budget for FY28. Our generous congregation and congregants exceeded the goal by nearly \$200,000. The additional funds will go to needed building projects that need attention due to deferred maintenance.

Before our Build the Bridge Campaign, the Finance Committee recommended a shift in how we calculate and spend from designated and endowment funds. Instead of booking any earnings from designated funds into the operating budget, we will instead budget and transfer a fixed percentage. Moving forward, it will be 5%, but for FY26 it will be 10%. If the earnings don't meet the draw, the designated funds will be made whole through a transfer from unrestricted funds.

Lastly, I am deeply grateful for Chris Sullivan taking over as treasurer beginning June 1 instead of July 1. Being an engaged and responsible treasurer while managing the demands of moving an aging parent from their home of 40 years on a short timeline was simply too much for me to juggle. Chris graciously agreed to take the reins early, and I am indebted to her.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debra Gray Boyd
Treasurer
July 2022-May 2025

Proposed Budget

FY 26 Proposed Budget	FY 25 Budget	FY 25 Projection (As of May 2025)	FY 26 Budget	
Revenue				
Donations				
Total Pledges	646,480	621,437	640,160	Note 1
Total Non-Pledged Donations	60,000	77,562	77,000	
Total Donations	706,480	699,000	717,160	
Other Income				
Rentals	48,300	60,000	53,800	
Total Other Income	122,250	168,566	83,700	
Total Operating Income	828,730	867,565	800,860	
Non Operating Income - Transfers In				
From Endowment	15,750	15,750	149,603	Note 2
From Bridge	250,000	250,000	150,000	
Total Transfers In	265,750	265,750	299,603	
Total Revenue	1,094,480	1,133,315	1,100,463	

Notes

1 -FY 26 Pledge Budget includes \$481,761.478 in received pledges, \$164,874.62 in rollover pledges, \$10,000 new member pledges and \$15,000 prior year pledges. This also includes a 4% uncollectible rate which is our standard plus an added \$5,000 cushion.

2. "From Endowment" line represents the discussed 10% draw from Endowment and Investments. Previously we had three separate lines (Endowment, Shkolnik Estate, & Holding Fund), which have since been combined into one line.

Stewardship & Fundraising

Rev. Kelli McNeal

Proposed Budget

FY 26 Proposed Budget	FY 25 Budget	FY 25 Projection (As of May 2025)	FY 26 Budget	
Expenses				
Salary & Benefits				
Salary	533,247	530,444	553,188	Note 3
Benefits	182,059	180,248	182,743	
Total Personnel & Benefits	715,307	710,693	735,931	
Programs				
Total Charitable Giving	36,230	35,706	34,753	
Total Religious Exploration	9,700	5,033	9,700	
Total Programs	70,290	58,614	65,313	
UUA Annual Program Fund	5,150	5,150	5,500	Note 4
Admin & Facilities				
Total Administration	35,500	45,297	51,500	Note 5
Total Utilities	57,350	48,061	62,800	
Total Building Maintenance & Repair	79,775	80,366	88,000	
Total Grounds Maintenance & Repair	26,900	32,481	34,300	
Total Insurance	73,081	75,931	72,912	
Total Mortgage	41,489	41,489	41,489	
Total Admin & Facilities	253,434	261,095	292,809	
Total Expenditures	1,044,181	1,039,551	1,099,554	
Net Operating Revenue	50,299	93,764	909	

Notes

3. Represents a 3% COLA across the board. Includes a "Compensation Adjustment" line item to be allocated later.

4. Represents a 3% increase. (Contribution level rises with % increase to salaries.)

5. Increase represents increased software costs, bank fees, payroll processing fees, and bookkeeping service.

A Note From Brian:

In the following reports you will hear about how busy we've been this year not only keeping up with the many ongoing needs of our facility and operations, but planning for some exciting future improvements. Outside of my core responsibilities, I sat on a number of teams this year including the Safety Team, Building & Grounds, Solar Project Team. This would not be possible without some of the hardest working volunteers around! I would like to particularly thank Dave Richter, Tom Tichner, Patricia Boughton, Christine & Billy Davidson, Greg Denby (Safety Team), Cara Seidt (legal), Ken Odiorne, Judy Vasquez, Deb & Tom Baillieul, Red Oak and SYC parent volunteers, and the many others who have contributed their time, funds and efforts. I also thank my colleagues on staff who are a true pleasure to collaborate with and work alongside.

We are reminded that our church facility serves the community beyond our congregation as we also host the School for Young Children (an outreach project of First UU), Red Oak Community School, various other religious groups and small group gatherings. We are busy with rental activity for events, memorials, weddings. Twice a year we serve as a voting location for the Franklin County Board of Elections. Our art gallery shows open us up to the larger fine arts community in Columbus. It's rewarding to be a part of this! Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions, concerns, ideas or want to find a place to pitch in with us.



Brian Hagemann
Director of Administration

Building & Grounds

The past year has been productive one for building and grounds maintenance and repair. We negotiated a new contract with our HVAC contractor which will help us better maintain and repair our aging heating and cooling equipment. We have also entered into agreement with Lincoln Construction that provides the church with a civil engineer who guides us on major repair and upgrade projects. He has helped us define needs, chosen and negotiated with contractors and serves as project manager once work is under way. We are currently developing plans for future projects including; carpeting in the Worship Center, parking lot repairs, kitchen appliance replacements, roof replacement of remaining older sections, and general upkeep and improvements. Our Lincoln project lead will also assist in projecting out other future issues we need to be aware of and plan for.

Building & Grounds (cont.)

This year, improvements for safety and accessibility have been a priority. Among the upgrades completed was a new handicap ramp to the parking lot, generously funded by one of our members. At that time, we also rebuilt/surfaced the existing handicap ramp near the main entrance and parking drop-off area. The main entrance also received new lighting with both ground level bollards and overhead flood lights.

Upgraded outdoor security lighting was installed at four other entrances. A lighting project now under way is the replacement of all remaining fluorescent lights in the building with LED lamps, funded in part with SYC.

A major outdoor project completed was the total rebuilding of the stone wall around the Memorial Garden. Parking blocks were installed to prevent cars from hitting signs in the parking lot. Brush cutting and clearing around the parking lots and building continues on a regular basis. You can read more about new projects underway in the specific reports below.



Eco-Justice Team

Tom Ballieul, Dana Reynolds, Diana Kadonaga and Susan Carr
Eco-Justice's mission is to find opportunities to engage the congregation in environmental projects. Some recent opportunities include: Taking the kitchen scraps from Sunday breakfast and Coffee Hour at First UU to one of the city's free drop-off locations; planting pollinator gardens; participating in the Fan Donation Project through Life Care Alliance to help those who might not have adequate cooling this Summer; participating in Arborfest and other conservation events run by the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department.

Eco-Justice team members, led by Tom Tichenor, spent the better part of the year evaluating the best way to expand the number of solar panels on the church; funding and contractor interest were the main issues. In May, the Board authorized an expenditure of up to \$175,000 for new panel installation (to be ratified by the membership); this will provide about 50% of the church's electricity use.

Eco-Justice participated in the Service for All Ages on April 14th (Flower Service). It was suggested that everyone bringing a flower that Sunday, could do so in a white yogurt or cottage cheese container that would be used to make plant labels during Coffee Hour in Beach Hall.

Administration & Facilities

Brian Hagemann

Safety Team

Chair: Greg Denby, Brian Hageman, Cara Seitz, Christine Davidson, Paula Egbert and Dave Richter

The Safety Team was established this year to continue the work accomplished by the Safety Task Force from 2017. A major recommendation of the initial Task Force was the formation of a formal Safety Team. Their primary mission to be the regular review of church safety plans and advising the staff on recommended improvements to those plans as well as safety and security updates to the facilities.

The Safety Team has reviewed all recommendations from the Task Force and we have met with Columbus Police Department Community Liaison Officer Montgomery to increase effective communication between the church and Columbus Police.

Plans are underway to:

- revise the church Emergency Procedures Manual
- review and revise all safety related policies
- evaluate methods of communication between Sunday morning volunteers and staff
- implement increased safety training for ushers, greeters and staff

We hope to have most improvements well on their way to implementation by the start of the Fall/Winter Sunday schedule. Anyone who has suggestions or questions is encouraged to contact one of the Safety Team members.



Myra Hartmann
Tech Team Coordinator

Tech Team

It's been another eventful year! Looking back, we have had equipment failures, new tech team members, a large training event, and a huge donation- thanks to the auction team for their wonderful Raise the Paddle event, and to all of you for donating to help us get new equipment!

Brian Hagemann, Billy Davidson, and I are working together to find the best fit for our needs, especially in expanding our accessibility, to use those extra funds wisely. Your Tech Team is always happy to serve our community.

Front Office

First UU, you are a delight! During my second year with you, I have enjoyed getting to know you even more, and I have felt truly blessed to be able to work here. In January, I became a full-time staff member and have taken additional responsibilities; such as helping to roll out and maintain Realm, our member management database. I have also continued in my responsibilities managing communications, publishing Friday's News, and we added a new weekly email called the "Caring Connection," requested by our Caring Team to publish each week's Joys and Sorrows, as well as one poem from the worship service. I added a phone tree option with information about church programming and worked with the Board to create a form for distributing meeting information efficiently. I want to give a HUGE thank you to volunteers who helped me throughout the year on proofreading, orders of worship, and more. If you are ever in the building when I am in the office please stop by and say hello!

Realm

We have been implementing Realm over the course of the year, and at the Mid-Year Meeting in March, 2025 we opened access to allow members to see and edit their information, register for events, and even submit their pledges. I appreciate the many members of our community who have embraced Realm wholeheartedly.

Realm is an online, private member database that is designed to help churches maintain a directory, manage volunteering, track giving, and communicate easily with each other. Members can use Realm to access their personal and giving information, to sign up for volunteering opportunities, and to connect with other members during the week. If you have questions or need an invitation to realm, email realm@firstuucolumbus.org.



Becca Morse
Office Manager



Christine Davidson
Vol. Staff Assistant

School for Young Children

Amy Rudawsky and Susan Roscigno
Co-Directors

Membership:

The SYC Committee had seven voting and three non-voting members this year consisting of church members, teachers, office staff and parents of the school.

Our SYC Staff this year consisted of 18 staff members: 17 part-time teachers (two of whom are also co-directors), and one part-time office manager. Three of our staff members have been here for 20+ years, an additional four have been here for 10+ years.

Service to Church and Community

- Our First UU community outreach program served 122 families with 128 children during this school year. This year, our annual Scholarship Auction provided \$16,188 to a total of 11 families who applied for financial aid for the 2024-25 school year. We are on track to provide \$13,112 in scholarships for the 2025-26 school year.
- SYC hosted internationally known occupational therapist Kelsie Olds, The Occupaytional Therapist, for two workshops, one for the community and one for SYC staff.
- We continue to build community through school-wide activities such as the SYC Family Orientation Night and New Family Orientation and also through our fall SYC Family Play Date and Spring Family Play Night.
- Caregivers were invited to four Parent Ed nights including topics such as discipline, resilience, and independence. In addition, SYC teachers hosted an informal conversation about kindergarten.
- We hosted the staff of St. Marks Kindergarten and Nursery School in Bloomington, IN for a joint session on Thriving Together: Fostering Stronger Connections.

Looking Ahead

- We will continue to work toward our playground improvement project, hopefully beginning the work this summer.
- We are adding to our administrative team with a family consultant and assistant director.
- Three new people will join our staff in the fall, and we expect to be at full capacity.



Red Oak Community School

Red Oak is the elementary school that rents the Religious Exploration classrooms during the week. Their full annual report can be found at <https://www.redoakcommunityschool.org/2025-annual-report>

24/25 School Year in Review

- Ended the year with 85 students & 9 staff members
- 'Disability Justice' school-wide, yearlong theme for another year
- SEEDS program formalized & director hired (student support program)
- Kicked off 'Branching Out' programming for ROCS alum (150+ students)
- Independent Financial Aid program's 2026 kickoff was ensured
- 4th year partnering with Community Refugee & Immigration Services (CRIS)
- 13 graduates moving on to middle school!

Plans for 25/26 School Year

- 10th school year celebrations all year!!
- Will begin the year with 82 students enrolled & 9 staff members
- 'Native Ohio History' school-wide, yearlong theme
- Financial Aid program opens July 2025
- Partnership with CRIS will move into it's 5th year
- Kids re-imagined play area design will begin to come to life!
- 8 students will graduate to middle school

Kehilat Sukkat Shalom (KSS)

The First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus is proud to partner with Kehilat Sukkat Shalom (KSS). Their Kehilah is affiliated with the Jewish Reconstructionist Movement, because of their approach to Jewish values and practice and egalitarian prayer language. We are honored to host them in our church, providing a welcoming and safe place for their community to worship and learn. KSS is a dynamic and evolving community of individuals and families seeking spiritually meaningful and interactive approaches to learning, prayer, and acts of loving-kindness. Through events, worship, educational programming, social action projects, holiday celebrations, and sharing in joys and struggles, KSS members are strengthened in their individual and collective Jewish journeys. Our partnership underscores our shared values of inclusivity, support, and spiritual growth.

The Paulist Community (Formerly: The Newman Center)

The First Unitarian Church of Columbus is proud to extend a warm welcome and support to the Paulist Society following their sudden removal from the Newman Center at OSU. Our congregation is committed to fostering a spirit of unity and collaboration within our community. By hosting the Paulist Society, we aim to provide them with a stable and supportive environment as they continue their important work. They meet once a month for discernment meetings and have multiple groups that meet weekly in our church for book clubs and Bible study. This partnership underscores our shared values of compassion, inclusivity, and mutual respect. Together, we look forward to nurturing a vibrant and dynamic spiritual community for all.

Contact Guide

In such an active community it can be difficult to know who should be contacted for any given thing. Below is a list of the primary staff contact for any of the sections included in this report. As always, any staff member will be happy to help you find the right person for your needs. There is also a summary of staff portfolios that can be found here at: <https://tinyurl.com/firstcolstaff>

Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley, Developmental Minister

Ministry, Pastoral Care
terasa@firstuucolumbus.org

Rev. Kelli McNeal, Minister of Congregational Life & Financial Manager

Membership, Stewardship, Small Groups
kelli@firstuucolumbus.org

Robin Lawson, Congregational Life Assistant

Sunday Morning Teams, Assistant Bookkeeping
robin@firstuucolumbus.org

Brian Hagemann, Director of Administration

Administration, Building and Grounds
brian@firstuucolumbus.org

Becca Morse, Office Manager

Announcements, Newsletter, General Inquiries
becca@firstuucolumbus.org

Myra Hartmann, Tech Coordinator

Sound or Video Equipment Needs, CUUPS
myra@firstuucolumbus.org

Rev. Amanda Hays, Justice Minister

JAM, JEDI, Anti-Racist Allies
amanda@firstuucolumbus.org

Amber Scott, Director of Religious Exploration

Religious Exploration, Adult Programs
amber@firstuucolumbus.org

Niki Ducey, Religious Exploration Assistant

Religious Exploration
niki@firstuucolumbus.org

Brandon Moss, Director of Music and Chalice Choir

Music, Choirs
brandon@firstuucolumbus.org

Christine Davidson, Volunteer Staff Assistant

Alternative Worship Team
christine@firstuucolumbus.org

Susan Roscigno & Amy Rudawsky, School For Young Children Co-Directors

School For Young Children
director@sycolumbus.org

Note:

Chat GPT was utilized to proofread and finesse parts of this report, the original message and intent of the human writings was not changed. Thank you to everyone who took time to contribute to this record of our church year.

