

2025–2026

Annual Giving Campaign



“In necessariis unitas; in non necessariis libertas;
in utrisque caritas”

In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty;
in both, charity

—Reverend John Lowell *First Minister, FRSUU, 1726–1767*



First Religious Society
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

With Love from Reverend Rebecca



Dear Members and Friends,

This year's annual campaign theme, **Be the Light: Make Love Real**, is a call for all of us to do our part in reminding the world and ourselves of the power of love. Love that is tender and caring, tenacious and brave. Love that works to upend the abuse of power and end violence.

Being the light helps us to remember what matters—family, friends, and this church and community. Being the light means being present for those in need, including ourselves. Being the light looks like collaborating with community partners who share our commitment to the values of peace, love, and justice.

Making love real empowers us to share the workload of this beloved congregation so that no one need ever walk alone or burn out with too heavy a load. Your support is vital to help ensure our church community is healthy and able to carry on the work of justice and love.

I hope you will choose to pledge. Every pledge counts! No pledge is too small or large. Our collective generosity ensures our campaign goal is met.

Consider what FRSUU means to you and decide what you can faithfully do to support our future. Together we can be the light and make love real.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart,
Reverend Rebecca
Senior Minister

Honorary Chairs | Florence and John Mercer

The Mercer family has been an integral part of First Religious Society Unitarian Universalist for more than one hundred years.

John Mercer has called this church home for the entirety of his seventy-seven years, minus a few years in his early twenties. Like his father before him, John served as head usher for years in between many other things, including singing in the choir, serving on the Parish Board, helping to raise money in countless annual appeals, documenting FRSUU with his writings and photography, and even serving as the Church Administrator during an earlier time of church growth. In one of his latest acts of service, John was chair of the search committee that brought Rev. Rebecca to our church in 2018.

Florence joined the church fifty years ago when she and John were married by the Rev. Bert Steeves.

Though she was raised in the Episcopal Church, Florence felt right at home in the Unitarian Universalist Church. She loved the building and appreciated the freedom of thought and religious belief. Over the years, Florence has led the Adult Education Committee, Parish Friends, and the Parish Board. She has been a part of the Hospitality Committee, Women's Alliance, and a UU prayer circle which was appreciated by all.



“...let you and the journey and nature be one,
as you most certainly are.”

John Mercer
Preparing to Take a Hike (2014)

A Hopeful Past

From the very start, there was something different about the people and the church that would become First Religious Society. These people, whose families were immigrants from Europe, living on the ancestral lands of the Pennacook Peoples, wanted their independence from the First Church of Newbury.

However, very quickly, a different kind of community was being born. Reverend Lowell would introduce organ music to the services, and later ministers would add flowers to the sanctuary,



a church picnic, musical performances, and social outreach to the broader Newburyport community. Our ministers would challenge members to live into their faith's tenets and independently examine their consciences. All these elements transformed our church and deepened its connections with the community.

Throughout our church's 300-year history, the members have played active roles in virtually every phase of our community's and country's history. From the Revolutionary War to the Civil

Rights Movement to the fight for LGBTQ+ rights, our members have been willing to serve in the call for a wide range of democratic and justice causes.



Today, First Religious Society Unitarian Universalist is a vibrant and diverse community. Members come together from many backgrounds and faith traditions and from various locations. Their identities reflect the full spectrum of the human experience to forge a true community of communities, committed to our mission of:

Come as You Are • Journey Together in Love
Act with Courage • Transform our World

This audaciously welcoming mission is centered on **Making Love Real**.

The kind of Love that sees and celebrates our differences and shared humanity. A Love that is strong enough to see our place in the interconnected web of life with whom we share our planet. It is a

Love that acknowledges the many roads we have taken to arrive here today and the roads we will travel together in the future. The kind of Love that gives us the strength to face loss and not fall into despair. It is a Love that creates the possibility of space for Beloved Community to come to fruition, a space for all our communities to **Be the Light**.



Addiction Ministry • Accessibility Inclusion Ministry • Anti-Gun Violence • Anti-Racism • Chalice Circles • Environmental Justice • Exploring Elderhood • Housing Justice • Memorial Services Team • Music • Meditation Group • Pastoral Care • Parish Friends • Refugee Resettlement • Stewardship • Welcoming • Worship Associates

And many community partnerships.

It is the Love that is needed to transform our world.

In loving memory of three women whose ministries brought light and love to the FRSUU!



Maxine Steeves
(1929–2024)
Wife of Reverend
Bertrand Steeves



Barbara Owen
(1933–2024)
Director of Music
1964–2002



**Reverend
Helen Murgida**
(1943–2024)
Affiliate Minister
2019–2024

A Soaring Future

As our fourth century dawns, the need to **Make Love Real** is as essential as it has been in our lifetime. There are forces afoot once again that risk the welfare and lives of many within our church and wider community. It can be easy to feel despair when faced with these forces. But by putting real Love in action we can collectively stand up for the inherent worth and dignity of all humanity and seek justice for those whose existence and identity are being denied, for other forms of life, and for the environment.



This work of Real Love is nothing new to the members and friends of FRSUU. The echoes of this Love ring out in the acts of those who have been welcomed through our doors for generations. Those who have done the quietly radical work of community building for three centuries. This work cannot be done on our own as individuals; it takes a community—a community of Love.

An Invitation to Serve in Love

As we move into our future together, it will take all of us working together to build the Beloved Community. This church—our church—needs you to answer the call of Love. That answer comes in countless ways. We need you to **Be the Light** and to **Make Love Real**. Please join us.



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While each Annual Giving Campaign is about securing the funding necessary to support the coming church year, this year we also want to know where your passion lies in supporting your church.

The QR code on the back cover will take you to a pledge form and a questionnaire about how you, personally, are called to **Be the Light** in our broader commitment to **Make Love Real**.



Here are a few things to remember as you consider your pledge for next year:

- Pledges represent approximately 67% of FRSUU's annual income. Although several new initiatives have helped reduce our dependence on pledges, your contributions remain the church's most significant and essential source of support.
- The average pledge for the past church year was more than \$2,100. Last year, pledges ranged from \$100 to more than \$25,000. However, a pledge of any amount is deeply appreciated.
- Our goal for this year is to raise \$590,000 in pledges. This is a 2.6% increase from last year's goal of \$575,000.
- Last year, we had 274 pledges. This year, we aim to reach 300 total pledges. Our goal is not simply to celebrate our 300th anniversary but to broaden the support from our members and friends.

It takes all of us to **Be the Light** and **Make Love Real** for our church, our community, and the world.

Please join us in this effort.

Thank You!



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“Being a Unitarian Universalist means promising to live a life rooted in love. But we don’t do this alone—we combine our light, because being a people of covenant means that we live out this promise of love together.”

Reverend Laurel Gray
Assistant Minister of Congregational Life



Missing Staff: Katie Lamie and Rev. Jane Tuohy

“Leonard Bernstein once said that in response to troubled times we must ‘...make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.’ In music we experience emotions in unnamable ways. This is how we spread our light and love to our community and the world.”

Nick Place, Director of Church Music



We Need Everyone’s Participation

How to Make Your Pledge



Online at **www.frsuu.org/pledge**



Email your pledge to **diane.carroll@frsuu.org**



Mail your completed pledge form to FRSUU
at 26 Pleasant Street in Newburyport, MA 01950



Call Diane Carroll at **978.465.0602 x1**



Scan this QR
code to make
your pledge.



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FRSUU.ORG

Thank You for Your Generous Support!
*With Love, The Parish Board and
Annual Campaign Committee*