

# Annual Report 2025 - 2026

FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF YARMOUTH, MAINE

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# About Our Church



## Our Mission

At First Universalist, our mission is to explore our faith, embrace this community, and engage the world as spiritual seekers. The themes of explore-embrace-engage permeate all we do as we each grow, learn, and serve.

## About Our Church and Our Faith

The First Universalist Church of Yarmouth is a self-funded and self-governed volunteer organization supported in our mission by a full-time minister and part-time staff.

We are an open-minded and open-hearted spiritual community of people who lead lives of justice, love, learning, and hope. Our church and our faith include people of every ethnicity, race, age, social background, ability, political affiliation, family structure, gender identity, and sexual/romantic orientation. As Unitarian Universalists, we are not interested in creeds and commitments of faith, but in right relations with one another and holistic ways of living on and with our planet. We welcome all who embrace our shared values.

We are a certified welcoming congregation and work to actively dismantle systemic racism and other oppressions. We are a member of the New England Regional and National Unitarian Universalist Association.

## A Shared Ministry

First Universalist is a church of shared ministry where the Minister and the Board of Trustees are each responsible for parts of congregational life. Our Minister oversees and is responsible for worship, pastoral care, religious education, and social justice engagement. There are four councils who assist the minister in these programs. The Board of Trustees oversees and is responsible for church finances, the upkeep of our physical spaces, and developing and growing our congregation. There are eight committees who assist the Board in these endeavors. Our staff assists the minister and Board in implementing these programs.

# About Our Church

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## Minister and Staff

Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick, *Minister*

Gwen Matthews, *Director of Congregational Life*

Sam Chandler, *Music Director*

Antonina Pelletier, *Office & Communications Coordinator*

Mack Jones, *Children's Teacher & Youth Facilitator*

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## Board of Trustees for the 2025 - 2026 Church Year

Dale Shields, *President*

Nancy Dix, *Vice President*

Sandra Stark, *Treasurer*

Beth Russell, *Clerk*

Debbie Starkel

Cindy Guernsey

Kirk Goddard

Emily Bogner-Williams

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## Nominations for the Board of Trustees 2026 - 2027 Church Year

*\*will be new to the Board*

Dale Shields, *President*

\*Luke Livingston, *Vice President*

Sandra Stark, *Treasurer*

Beth Russell, *Clerk*

\*Peter Kleinman

Cindy Guernsey

\*Courtney Ampezzan

Kirk Goddard

# Minister's Report

## What I LOVED this Year

### **Dinner Church potlucks.**

I think many of us can agree that Dinner Church is one of the best things that happen at First U.

Since we started offering Dinner Churches three years ago, I've watched on Friday nights as new folks meet long standing members, people of all ages laugh and share stories, and everyone seems to leave with a full belly and a full heart. On the Sundays following a Friday Dinner Church I notice the sanctuary always feels warmer; it's like more people know each other's names and have things to say to each other.

One of the priorities when we first hatched the Dinner Church vision was accessibility. We wanted to make attendance very easy. We'd provide the food, the ambiance, the activities - everything, all folks had to do was come. So, this past fall when we didn't have a working kitchen due to our Building on Love renovations and folks started expressing enthusiasm for Dinner Church we faced a conundrum: the people want a Dinner Church but how will we make the food? Would a potluck Dinner Church dash the vision of this being an easily accessible gathering? Only one way to find out. And find out quickly we did.



Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick,  
Minister

You all brought SO MUCH FOOD. Sides, mains, and desserts of all flavors, colors and dietary restrictions. It was one of the best Dinner Churches yet and a clear sign of what this gathering means to you and symbolizes for our community. Dinner Church is about being together and nourishing one another. What a beautiful table we set together. All are welcome.

*Dinner Church Potluck, Fall 2025*

# Minister's Report, con't

## What I LONGED FOR

### **For everyone to feel appreciated.**

I think I could easily set aside half the hours of my work week each week and just write thank you notes. I'd write thank yous to our staff, our Board, our committee and council members of course, but I wouldn't - I couldn't! - stop there. Our Ushers, Safety Team, Tech Crew, RE Volunteers, Choir and Sunday Strummers are also very, very deserving of thanks, as are the members of each weekly group who set up, brew coffee, prepare food, and clean up for each coffee hour. I'd also have to spend at least a week thanking all the people who make so much happen behind the scenes, without many of us knowing - I see you Order of Worship folders, postcard writers, office de-clutterers, kitchen cleaner-upperers, brick walkway weeders, pathway shovellers, general flotsam and jetsam put-away-ers and, of course.... Hillary-friendly baked good makers.

And then, my gosh - there's you.

Yes, you.

Maybe you fall into one or all of the groups I listed above here, maybe you're not part of any of them, but you know what, you're reading this so clearly you care about what happens here. This place wouldn't exist with you. You give ministry meaning and you make many lives better because you help to create and sustain this vibrant and important community.

Thank you. All of you.



*Kitchen Clean Up Crew, Fall 2025*

## What I LIFT UP

### **The congregational survey.**

Did you fill it out? Our Congregation Connections Committee created a survey we passed out on a handful of Sundays over the year. It was short and sweet and essentially consisted of a long list of interests and skills that you could check off if they pertained to you. Things like finance, baking, writing, fixing things, choral music, outdoor activities, and making art. Of course we also listed the many councils and committees that keep our church

*continued next page*

# Minister's Report, con't

humming along and invited you to check off any of those that struck your interest as well.

The results were wonderful. So many new folks completed the survey and so many longstanding members shared interests that I didn't know you had! It has been a wonderful tool for getting to know people and finding ways to invite you - with no pressure! - to participate in things at First U that align with your interests. Already many folks have shared their gifts with our community because they were invited to do things that they like here.

## What I am LOOKING FORWARD TO

### **Sabbatical for all of us.**

So of course, my answer to this question is "sabbatical." And indeed, I am very much looking forward to my sabbatical; but I'm also looking forward to this sabbatical for First U. It's a really special time to play with what we have created and strengthened together in our shared ministry. I know it might seem daunting and a little untethered for a church to be without their minister for a chunk of time, but next fall need not be something our congregation has to "just get through."

During my sabbatical I encourage you to take the words of our mission statement to heart. Explore our faith through the words of the UU guest worship leaders who will bring all kinds of experiences and beliefs to our pulpit. And be sure to chat with these guests after our services. Let's widen our circle - we're all in this together.

Embrace our community by collaborating together and seeing what happens when you all plan and lead a program or run a meeting without me. You've got this!



Engage the world as spiritual seekers. You all are out in this wild wonderful world having your own meaningful experiences each day. Tell one another about it. See what meaning you can make of it all together.

It's gonna be great, and it's going to fly by. Let's all make the most of it and just stay curious and kind along the way.

In peace, friendship, potlucks, appreciation, skill shares, and sabbaticals,

*Rev. Hillary*

# Board Report

## What the Board LOVED this Year

- Pooling our respective skills and personal strengths as a Board to ensure that our church has a healthy financial base and solid foundational policies and procedures.
- Making sure our new Office and Communications Coordinator, Antonina Pelletier, found her stride in her position.
- Supporting the congregation and staff as they came together in the fall during Hillary's medical leave and then again for Gwen's maternity leave.



*Board of Trustees, Winter 2026*

## The Board LONGS FOR

- Continued energy, creativity and cooperation between Board, staff, councils and committees.
- Streamlined bookkeeping and membership tracking.
- More clarity in the benefit package we offer our staff.

# Board Report, con't

## What the Board wants to LIFT UP

- The Building on Love team and all the projects they have brought to fruition, making our building spaces safer and more accessible, useful, and energy efficient!
- The brilliant Congregation Connections Committee survey which allowed the Nominating Committee to recruit an amazing Board slate for our consideration!
- The Safety Team which continues to keep a finger on the pulse of our community and the world and to show up every Sunday.
- The HR Committee that completed a major revision of the Employee Handbook and committed to being an on-going supportive entity.

## The Board is LOOKING FORWARD TO:

- Continuing to offer our committed leadership to the congregation as we navigate the Rev. Hillary's fall sabbatical and welcome her back in 2027!
- Welcoming new members of all ages to First U!
- The Fall elections bringing the political pendulum back toward the center so we can all breathe a little easier and our friends and neighbors can feel a little safer.



*Christmas Eve 2026*



*Pancake Breakfast, Winter 2026*

# Current Financials and Proposed Budget



## Current Financials and Proposed FY27 Budget

	Prior Year July '24-June '25 Actual	Year End Estimate at 3/31/26 for July '25-June '26	Proposed Budget July '26- June '27
<b>Revenue &amp; Expenses</b>			
<b>REVENUE</b>			
Annual Campaign	\$ 189,025	\$ 215,000	\$ 236,790
Plate	\$ 11,799	\$ 12,500	\$ 14,000
Fundraising	\$ 9,880	\$ 11,661	\$ 13,500
Rental Income	\$ 47,151	\$ 43,300	\$ 44,650
Endowment Income	\$ 9,012	\$ 11,800	\$ 12,600
Other Income (gifts, grants, interest)	\$ 3,043	\$ 1,340	\$ 1,700
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 269,911</b>	<b>\$ 295,601</b>	<b>\$ 323,240</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>			
Board of Trustees (includes UUA Dues)	\$ 12,336	\$ 16,384	\$ 15,510
Building & Grounds for Operations	\$ 35,652	\$ 36,800	\$ 47,000
B&G Admin	\$ 14,518	\$ 17,907	\$ 19,100
Minister's Office	\$ 102,667	\$ 111,557	\$ 127,515
Office Administration	\$ 18,204	\$ 28,000	\$ 39,515
Music & Worship	\$ 27,426	\$ 25,000	\$ 29,187
Congregation Connections	\$ 584	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,000
Religious Education	\$ 50,859	\$ 58,000	\$ 43,298
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$ 262,246</b>	<b>\$ 294,648</b>	<b>\$ 323,125</b>
Net Operating Revenue	\$ 7,665	\$ 953	\$ 115
Other Expenditures (transfer to Bldg Fund)	\$ 7,500		
<b>Net Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 165</b>		

# Current Balance Sheet

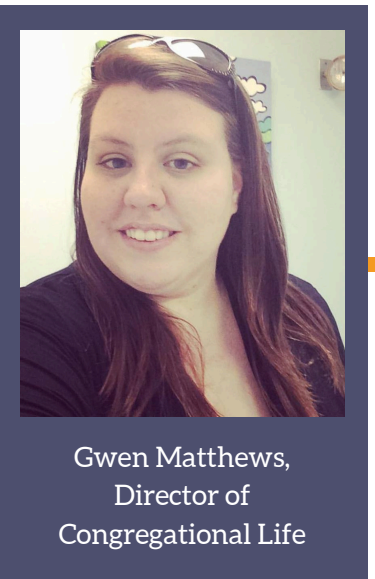


## Current Balance Sheet Information

Balance Sheet Information	Prior Year Actual at 6/30/25	Current Year of of 3/31/26
<b>Cash</b>		
Cash Available for Operations	\$ 2,392	\$ 23,841
Cash available July 1 for Ops	\$ 37,735	
Designated Funds (see *below)	\$ 337,117	\$ 248,942
Prepaid Pledges to be available 7/1	\$ 20,026	\$ 36,585
Total Cash on Hand	\$ 397,270	\$ 308,025
<b>*Designated Funds:</b>		
Building on Love Capital Campaign	\$ 292,254	\$ 163,037
Outreach Funds	\$ 31,888	\$ 39,666
Building & Steeple Funds	\$ 9,322	\$ 8,870
Worship & Sabbatical Funds		\$ 30,567
various other funds (5)	\$ 3,653	\$ 6,802
<b>Endowment Funds</b>	\$ 96,859	\$ 106,868

# Director of Congregational Life

*As a preamble, I want to share that this church year was unusual for me, given that I was on maternity leave from the beginning of February through the start of May. This year also brought some changes for me in other ways as my role began to shift, slowly, from Director of Education and Communications to Director of Congregational Life.*



Gwen Matthews,  
Director of  
Congregational Life

## What I LOVED this Year

A few things I loved this year included:

Being able to witness the growth and flourishing of both our Children's Chapel and Junior Youth programs. It was only a few years ago when some Sundays we weren't even sure if children or youth would be in attendance - and now it is such a more robust group! Collaborating with our neighboring UU churches to offer the Our Whole Lives program for 7th - 9th graders throughout the fall and winter. These partnerships help us offer this vital curriculum and ensure children and youth have access to life saving information. Continuing our tradition of Dinner Church, it's such a simple and joyous way to come together.



*Friendsgiving Prep, Fall 2025*

## What I LONG FOR

I long to revitalize our high school youth programs and hope that our current junior youth group grows into high schoolers who can find their spiritual home at First Universalist. I also long to continue to offer a welcoming space to all ages who need it, especially in times of stress and uncertainty in our world.

# Director of Congregational Life, con't

## What I LIFT UP

I want to lift up the incredible work of the Children & Youth RE Council - Jeanette Newton, Cathy McKenna, Sara Karam, and Debbie Woodbury - and of our Youth Facilitator, Mack Jones, who successfully and smoothly ran the children and youth programs while I was out on maternity leave. I also want to thank all of the parents, grandparents, and other church members who have been Children's Chapel helpers this year! We could not provide this programming without you.

I also want to lift up the good work of the Congregation Connections Committee - Cindy Guernsey, Sarah Witte, Cathy Walz, Janice Tooker, Lisa William, and Brenda McKee - who took over a variety of responsibilities while I was away and continued to offer wonderful ways for people to feel connected to our vibrant community.

I'm also forever thankful to have such incredible coworkers - Rev. Hillary, Sam, Antonina, (and a shout out to Mack, again!). They deserve so much credit for their hard work every day. I'm also thankful for the Board of Trustees and all the ways they support us.

## What I'm LOOKING FORWARD TO

Next church year, I look forward to seeing the ways we can grow and work together, even as Rev. Hillary is on sabbatical in the fall. I'm curious how we will meet the challenges and excited for the possibilities of what we can all do together. I'm also looking forward to more fully exploring my role as Director of Congregational Life and discovering what we can make happen together.



# Music Director



Sam Chandler,  
Music Director

## What I LOVED this Year

I found great joy in making music consistently at a higher level than I was capable of years prior. I particularly have found joy in rekindling my jazz chops and in developing skills in increasingly difficult classical repertoire. I have been deeply moved by the ways the music and music programs I run have helped and supported congregants.

## What I LONG FOR

I would like to improve my communication skills and long term preparation. My hope is I can find ways to do this while still being able to disconnect for a few days a week.

## What I LIFT UP

I had a number of the best services of my time here in my opinion, and hope to recreate some of those successes.

## What I'm LOOKING FORWARD TO

I'm not looking to greatly improve on any one area, instead I want to maintain the new skills I've developed, and grow into a comfort of working at a high level consistently.



*Left:  
Sam playing  
guitar alongside  
the Sunday Strummers,  
Fall 2025*

*Right:  
Sam with children  
in the Little Lights  
Music Program,  
Fall 2025*

# Music Director: Choir

## Members of the Choir

**Sopranos:** Cindy Guernsey, Brenda McKee, Kate Connelly, Ana Lazar, Cathy Walz  
**Altos:** Karen Carlisle, Anne Turner, Ann Swardlick, Joy Ahrens, Lisa Williams, Nancy Read, and Joanne Rawlings-**Sekunda:** **Tenors:** Marie Wendt, Sarah Witte, Joanna Landsman, Barbara Trentacosta, James Vasenka **Bass:** John Auble, Kirk Goddard,



## What I LOVED about the choir this year

It was great working with the choir this year and gradually building up knowledge and skills. I've particularly enjoyed getting to write and arrange more. I took on the task this year of doing more with lesser known hymns and I've found this practice to be very rewarding.

## What I LONG FOR the choir

This next year I'm hoping to bring in new members and to help get them caught up with all of the great developments the choir has made. I want to continue to write and arrange, and to bring in guest performers to enrich the experience for the choir as performers.

## What the choir LIFTS UP

I've been impressed by the performance consistency the choir has reached.

## What I'm LOOKING FORWARD TO with the choir

I'm looking forward to digging in on the skills I've been developing, taking on ambitious piano accompaniment, doing collaborative arrangements with the choir, and working on harder pieces as the choir develops the skills to do so.

# Music Director: Sunday Strummers

## **Members of the Sunday Strummers (Instrumental Band)**

*John Auble, Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick, Bill Fellows, Stew Guernsey, Ana Lazar, Jeff O'Brien, Mark Read, Steve Thomas, Anne Turner, and Marie Wendt*

## What I LOVED about the Sunday Strummers this Year

The strummers had their second full year this year and it's been a blast. Learning great music, preparing a rock concert, and encouraging the Strummers members to take more ownership over the group have all been highlights.

## What I LONG FOR the Strummers

I would like to see a bit of growth in membership in the group, and would perhaps like to see the group start to meet weekly.

## What the Sunday Strummers LIFT UP

It's been a pleasure to be a part of a group that through its shared purpose of making music together has been able to provide respite from a variety of tough life events members of the group have gone through.

## What We are LOOKING FORWARD TO

Looking forward to seeing what happens next! I don't have too many aspirations other than seeing the group continue to gel and to provide great music.



*The Sunday Strummers, Winter 2026*



*The Sunday Strummers, Fall 2025*

# Committee on Ministry

## **Members of the Committee on Ministry**

*Christy Hayashida, Cathy McKenna, Jeanette Newton, Laurisa Sellers,  
and Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick (minister)*

*The Committee on Ministry (CoM) supports a healthy response as conflicts arise and works to keep a finger on the pulse at First U in order to assist the minister in responding to the needs of the Congregation.*

## **What the CoM LOVED this Year**

We loved getting to know and work with new people in a small and intimate gathering. We loved addressing issues and finding solutions. We loved working alongside Rev. Hillary to strengthen the life of First U.

## **What the CoM LONGS FOR**

What we long for is already happening: everyone has an opinion and a voice. We also long to hear that staffing is at an optimal level and that volunteer hours are robust.

## **What the CoM wants to LIFT UP**

We'd like to LIFT UP to the congregation, an awareness of the behind the scenes hard work and dedication put into motion for the ongoing health and wellbeing of the community. Particularly, the amazing amount of unseen work of the staff.

## **What the CoM is LOOKING FORWARD TO**

We look forward to learning from the sabbatical and to this congregation doing well during Hillary's absence. We're also looking forward to a new year with greater participation from congregants.

# About Committees



## Who are Committees of the Board?

At First Universalist, committees are created and overseen by with the Board of Trustees. Each committee is filled with volunteers and has a liaison to the Board of Trustees. Each committee is guided by First Universalist's mission, by their charge from the Board, and by the goals that they set each calendar year.

The **Stewardship Committee** promotes financial health and growth in dialogue with the Board. They keep watch over our church financial health, launch fundraisers for joy and justice, and connect with our renters.

The **Buildings & Grounds Committee** are stewards of our campus, the church, parsonage building, and surrounding grounds. They keep in mind present use and look to the future.

The **Congregation Connections Committee** offers radical hospitality, a path to membership, and connection opportunities for all friends and members. They also collaborate on outreach initiatives and communications and publications.

The **Nominating Committee** offers a path to committee participation and assists in nominating matters.

The **Human Resources Committee** ensures our staff is supported administratively, assists the Board with personnel matters, and is mindful of our legal responsibilities.

The **Safety Team** safeguards the physical health and wellness of our congregation.

The **Building on Love Steering Committee** is our comprehensive fundraising and management program to address facility needs.

# Stewardship

## **Members of the Stewardship Committee**

*Marge Titcomb (chair), Sandra Stark (treasurer), Debbie Starkel (board liaison), Jen Civiello, Phyllis Jones, Joel Presti, and Tom Settlemire*

## **What Stewardship LOVED this Year**

We LOVE fundraising for Justice! Working with others, we make good things happen such as the Maine Farm Suppers and Holiday Fair; this good energy is catching on! We LOVE supporting our First U mission and vision to Nourish and Flourish. We LOVE supporting the Board in raising funds for the Building on Love Campaign. We LOVE offering financial transparency and wider understanding of how First U works.

## **What Stewardship LONGS FOR**

We seriously LONG FOR new committee members, bringing new energy and new ideas to meet the expectations of our growing and evolving community. We meet only five times a year, but we brainstorm the future and bring new visions into reality.



*Above: Kitchen Renovations in Progress*

*Left: Maine Farm Supper, Spring 2026*

# Stewardship

## What Stewardship LIFTS UP

- Collaboration with the Board and others in a successful first year of the 3-year Building on Love Comprehensive Campaign projects! Commitments and projects are rolling in as planned - may it continue to be so. We have expanded and deepened our use of software systems to accurately reflect 3 concurrent years of activity, commitments, and payments.
- Supporting our Treasurer's first year updating several systems including admin and employee guides.
- Successful Giving for Justice – Maine Farm Supper.
- Living our Mission by collaborating with the Board, Faith in Action Council, Buildings & Grounds Committee, and our Minister.
- Our open door policy and transparency.
- Church Rentals – 10 events (weddings, bridal and baby showers, memorial, meetings, recitals, cast party) held at First U this year plus weekly Men's Group and Sangha Group! We've also already booked 5 events for the first few months of the new church year.
- Gratitude to Joel Presti who has joined the Stewardship Committee.
- Gratitude to Frank Read for his many years of service on the Stewardship Committee! Thank you, Frank!

## What Stewardship is LOOKING FORWARD TO

We LOOK FORWARD to continuing Giving for Justice, and collaboration with the Board and others as First U continues with the second phase of capital projects Building on Love!

# Buildings & Grounds

## **Members of the Buildings & Ground Committee**

*John Auble, Joe Dreher, Charles Herman, Debbie Starkel (liaison), Arnie Shore, Jim Tait, Pete Titcomb, Ben Tupper (chair), and John Vogt*

## What B&G LOVES this Year

There's no love of our work to be found here. Nobody loves fixing toilets or shoveling crushed stone. It is a task that is handed from one generation to the next. That's all it is. But B&G work requires something of a biological marvel - a bifurcation of the eyes. Two independently focusing eyes trying to blend the information each discerns.

One eye gazes upon the structures we have been gifted by those who came before us. This is the TODAY eye. The TODAY eye is looking for the problems of the now - the unwelcome guests (is uttering such sacrilege in a UU church?) such as ants, leaks, cold, birds, heat, mice and the even rare cantankerous citizens. The TODAY eye is forever seeing a door needing to be closed to save heat, other doors to open to prevent freezing and yet more doors to be locked through which we welcome, ironically, the stranger. The TODAY eye hardly sees the church at all as it is so busy looking at the weeds, the crumbs, the finger prints and the peeling paint. The TODAY eye does not love its work; it is just a duty that needs the dutiful.



*Left: Tech Crew in New Booth, Fall 2025*

*Bottom: Families at Coffee Hour, Spring 2026*



# Buildings & Grounds

The other eye keeps a close watch on the horizon; this is the TOMORROW eye. It scans the old roof when it arrives, contemplates the time we have before we need to repaint the steeple and wonders about the price of heating oil in June. The TOMORROW eye scans the stairwells and wonders what the fire marshall will say about those storage boxes piled at the landing; it scans the kitchen and wonders when the mice will get into that box of crackers. It scrutinizes the overhanging trees and gullies carved by water cascading off our extensive roofs, and worries which will be our undoing someday. The TOMORROW eye checks the forecast to see if it is time to polish the shovel or charge the mower. The TOMORROW eye frets over the exit lights, and panic buttons, wet floor under the feet of the dancing kitchen crew, the sprinklers and their aging pipes and the mystery of our endless supply of burned out lightbulbs. The TOMORROW eye does not love its work; it, too, is just a duty that needs the dutiful.

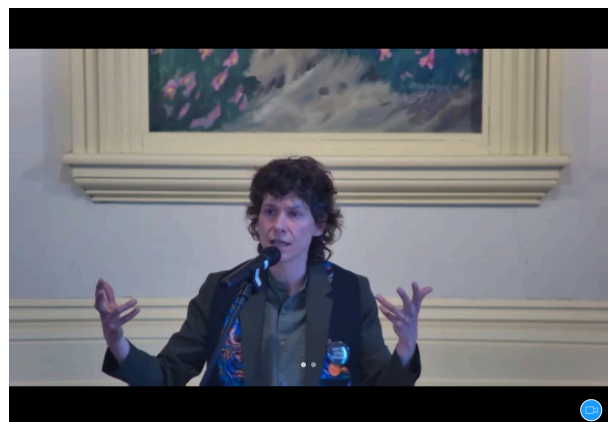


Oh, sure, we love each other and the time we share. It is a sisterhood and brotherhood burnished by sharing physical labor and getting things done. We love the brief satisfaction of seeing a clean floor. We love seeing the lightbulbs that turn on. Such simple pleasures to share among brothers and sisters who answer the call of duty.

*Church Grounds Clean-up, Spring 2026*



*Left: 95 & 97 Main Street, Fall 2025*



*Above: Hillary on Zoom, Fall 2025*

# Congregation Connections

## **Members of the Congregation Connections Committee**

Cindy Guernsey (chair, liaison), Gwen Matthews (Staff), Brenda McKee, Janice Tooker, Cathy Walz, Lisa Williams, and Sarah Witte

## What CCC LOVED this Year

CCC loves meeting new members, hosting dinner church, holding the successful Saturday morning new member retreat, hosting the newcomer luncheon, and helping out with the staples for Sunday coffee hours.



## What CCC LONGS FOR

CCC longs to add a few more members to add to the committee and to increase the budget for CCC.



*Top Left: Junior Youth Group at Maine Needs, Fall 2025*

*Top Right: Pi(e) Sunday, Spring 2026*

*Bottom Right: Pi(e) Sunday, Spring 2026*



# Congregation Connections, con't

## What CCC LIFTS UP

CCC would like to lift up the connection cards for getting connected with church events, etc., having Antonina join the church office staff, reorganizing spaces in the church, and offering the all church survey.

## What CCC is LOOKING FORWARD TO

Next year, CCC looks forward to creating more postcards, banners, signage, etc., continuing to improve our welcoming spaces, strengthening and welcoming new members of our community (continuing this while Hillary is away on sabbatical), FUN-raising, and perhaps the creation of a First U artwork gallery night event.



*Dinner Church, Fall 2025*

# Human Resources Committee

## ***Members of the HR Committee***

Nancy Dix (Chair, liaison), Sandra Stark (Board), Leslie Livingston, Joanne Rawlings-Sekunda, Barbara White

There are three Human Resource issues the Board has slowly been working on over the past couple of years: salary levels, Paid Time Off (PTO) and benefits. We have a good grasp on salaries now as is reflected in the draft FY27 budget. We invested in an HR consultant to help us get a better understanding of our HR policies and update our employee handbook.

We are close to finishing the handbook and have some simple PTO updates we'd like to put in place going forward. The next step, hopefully in the Fall, will be to study our benefits package (health and retirement).

# Building on Love Steering Committee



## ***Members of the Building on Love Steering Committee***

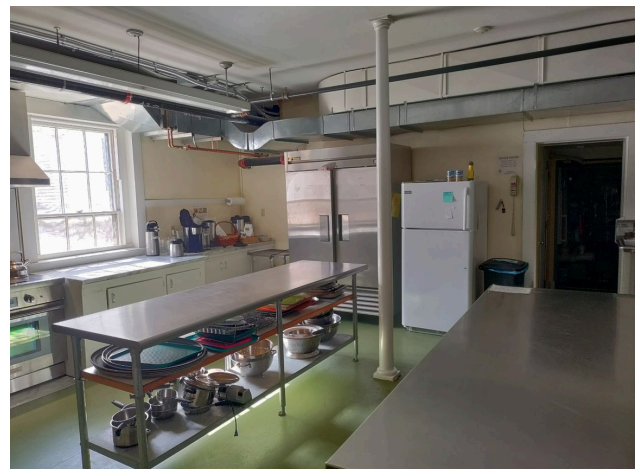
John Auble (Chair), Kirk Goddard, Marge Titcomb,  
Pete Titcomb, Ben Tupper, Sarah Witte,  
and Rev. Hillary Collins Gilpatrick (ex officio)

*A note: Beth Russell stepped down from her official role with BOL in order to increase her efforts with other committees, and remains available as needed.*

## What did you LOVE doing as a council/committee this church year?

BOL loved how our church family embraced the renovated kitchen. Many hands contributed to a long, thoughtful process to discover our needs, weigh alternatives, then implement a design that has transformed this important social center. We love knowing our renovations help all of us who use the kitchen work in a safer and more effective cooking space. And we love how it helps all of us create amazing memories with every dinner.

We love that each of our projects have challenged us and given us opportunities to work as a team to problem solve and implement new creative solutions that make our church stronger.



*Kitchen Renovations, Spring 2026*

# Building on Love Steering Committee



## What do you LONG FOR for your council/committee?

BOL longs for the continued support of our wonderful members. We could not approach the success we've had without the generous giving and keen interest of our members. It's been an amazing journey to have the congregation behind us every step of the way and know this same support will continue to move us forward project by project.

## What do you want to LIFT UP as a council/committee?

BOL wants to lift up our physical infrastructure so that UU's can continue to gather at the end of Portland Street for another 160 years. We think of 97 Main and 95 Main as members of our community that deserve the love and care that all members enjoy. We lift up ourselves as we lift up our sacred spaces.



## What are you LOOKING FORWARD TO for next church year?

BOL looks forward to the upcoming interior and exterior transformation of 95 Main. And we look forward to the amazing love that drives our work and supports our beautiful community.

*Street View of the Parsonage at 95 Main as it is currently known, spring 2026*

# Safety Team

## **Members of the Safety Team**

*Emily Bogner-Williams, Jen Civiello, Nancy Dix (Liaison), Christy Hayashida, Lea Hopkinson, Leslie Livingston, Jeff O'Brien (Volunteer Coordinator), Deb Rice, Dale Shields*

The Safety Team, which began during Covid, has continued to focus on the physical safety issues at First U. Leadership attended a UUA Regional Training and we are solidly in line with UUA recommendations. Sunday morning safety measures remain in place, and we added the position of Coordinator to focus on volunteer management. As part of BOL, our front door has an updated locking system, which makes our front door more secure. Specialized training is anticipated for the new church year with the addition of an AED. We may want to coordinate with the Yarmouth Fire Department on the AED training and a scheduled fire drill. Recruitment of several more team members continues to be a goal.

## **What did you LOVE doing as a council/committee this church year?**

The safety team volunteers love being the first person to greet people on Sundays. Seeing everyone coming up the walkway, smiling and happy makes standing outside in the rain or snow totally worth it.

## **What do you LONG FOR for your council/committee?**

We would love to have more volunteers to share this work. Volunteers should be the type of person who can remain calm in a situation.

## **What do you want to LIFT UP as a council/committee?**

We would like to lift up and shine a light on the fact that we have had no safety issues. We are a safe space in more ways than one. No one has slipped on the steps. For all the candles we light, or maybe because of all the candles we light, we have not had a single incident. Hooray for us!

## **What are you LOOKING FORWARD TO for next church year?**

We are looking forward to another safe year.

# About Councils



## What are the Program Councils?

At First Universalist, councils are overseen by and in relationship with the minister, Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick.

Each council is guided by First Universalist's mission, by their charge, and by the goals that they set each calendar year.

The **Faith In Action Council** offers active justice partnerships that align with UU values with the belief that justice for all will help heal our world. They offer education, participation in justice activities, activism, and decide on half-plate contributions.

The **Worship Council** assists the minister in creating high quality worship services. They are a collaborative and creative group who support Sunday services, including developing services on Sundays when the minister is off.

The **Religious Education Council** and the **Adult Religious Education Council** present opportunities for people of all ages to develop in their faith, encouraging lifelong spiritual seekers, and lifelong Unitarian Universalists.

The **Spiritual Care Council** provides care for members and friends of First Universalist in celebration and in sorrow.

# Faith In Action

## ***Members of the Faith in Action Council***

Sue Ellen Bordwell, Mary Chaney (Liaison to Worship),  
Betsy Mahoney, Jane Makela, Cathy McKenna (liaison to RE),  
Dale Shields (liaison to the Board), Debbie Starkel, Steve Thomas,  
Marge Titcomb (chair), Pete Titcomb, Lisa Vicens, Marie Wendt,  
and Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick (minister)

## **What FIA LOVED doing this Year**

- We LOVE Money Gardening: This year we distributed \$30,000 to Justice with Love. We celebrate how generosity grows at First U through our First U congregation and our Outreach Endowment Fund.
- We LOVE showing up around Town (e.g. Yarmouth Community Alliance for Racial Equity YCARE and Yarmouth Indigenous Awareness Group YIAG), at the State House with MUUSAN (Maine UU State Advocacy Network), Portland Love is the Point gathering, and where we can be of use (e.g. Greater Portland Multi-Faith Feed Your Neighbor program during the SNAP crisis).
- We LOVE that our meetings and our work fill us with HOPE.



## **What FIA LONGS FOR**

- We LONG FOR wider active engagement with our Justice projects as we seek to make change.
- We LONG FOR continued sharing of our gifts – time, talent, treasure – to make change.

*Love is the Point Gathering,  
Spring 2026*

# Faith In Action

## What FIA LIFTS UP

- We LIFT UP our UU Values as we address Equity, Climate, and Democracy issues.
- We LIFT UP that Justice is embedded throughout First U – in worship, RE, dinner church and more, including identifying several of the 4th Sunday guest speakers representing Justice organizations.
- We LIFT UP the Justice opportunities we organized or sponsored this church year including:
  - Events: Yarmouth PRIDE, YCAN Thanksgiving food collections, Riverfront Woods walk
  - Half Plates (\$12,000): selected and distributed funds to 17 Maine justice organizations
  - Gifts of \$3000 each to: Maine’s Solidarity Fund and Pink Haven, supporting at-risk organizations
  - Gifts of \$1000 each to: MANA and NMAP for food gift cards during ICE crisis.

## What FIA is LOOKING FORWARD TO



- Lifting up our UU Values in policy and practice. We are here to do the work!
- Encouraging wider engagement for Local, State and Federal issues by offering participatory guidance.
- Offering occasional announcements during worship highlighting one specific action.
- Supporting Adult RE’s offerings: speakers, panels, all church book reads, and out-and-about opportunities.
- Investing Justice dollars in our future.
- Strengthening our connections with area organizations.

*World Fish Migration Day, Spring 2026*

# Worship Council

## *Members of the Worship Council*

John Auble, Sam Chandler (staff), Mary Chaney, Joanna Landsman (chair), Gwen Matthews (staff), Laurisa Sellers, Anne Turner, Debbie Woodbury and Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick (minister)

## What We LOVED doing this Year

- Working in partnership with Hillary, Gwen, and Sam to help create and support meaningful services.
- Collaborating together to make the Worship Council, and each of our experiences within it, creative, meaningful, and fun.
- Inviting members of the congregation to take part in a themed service through creative forms of expression that reflected their experience with, and interpretation of a topic.
- Partnering with Faith in Action to invite guest speakers who reflect our church's values and priorities and can share their work and stewardship with the congregation.
- Continuing to listen and to discern what matters the most in worship, protecting certain sacred cows while aiming to keep things fresh.
- The process of pulling together a full service together through many hands and being willing to take some chances sometimes.
- The Worship Assistant model, and how we switched to two people sharing the responsibility each month.



*Blessing of the Animals, Fall 2025*

# Worship Council

## What We LONG FOR

- An organized orientation process and procedure for on-boarding new worship council members that makes bringing on new members consistent and smooth.
- Mentoring new council members and partnering them with experienced members for each calendar month.
- Being receptive to opportunities for council members or congregants to participate in services through poetry, readings or a short homily on occasion.
- Balancing the volunteer work among council members so no one feels overburdened.
- Expanding the Worship Assistant role in planning and delivering more service elements.
- Finding the right balance: trying not to take on too much during Hillary's absence while still keeping services rich and meaningful.

## What We LIFT UP

- Our leadership, and our organized, efficient, and productive monthly meetings.
- The way council members support one another. We process suggestions and possibilities and are willing to float ideas and discuss them thoughtfully.
- The creative ways we have collaborated to bring in speakers and to spotlight the talents of our congregation.
- The music! Thanks to Sam, the Choir, The Sunday Strummers, and guest and congregant musicians.
- Special services including Solstice, Christmas Eve, Music/Movement Sunday with Sam and Dev to name just a few.
- Supporting our staff by planning and leading post-holiday services, including the Sharing Our Voices service and the popular Pancake Breakfast Sunday.
- Tweaking some parts of the service that had become a bit rote or stale, and shifting toward more individualized greeting scripts.
- Recognizing that some of our "longing for" answers from last year have come to fruition and are now being "lifted up"!
- Pulpit Swaps with other Maine UU churches.
- The enthusiasm with which folks who were invited to join the Worship Council considered and accepted!

# Worship Council

## What We are LOOKING FORWARD TO

- Our summer retreat and planning the new year. With Hillary away until January, our 'lift' may be heavier but all are excited about working together to keep our services meaningful and enriching.
- Orienting new Worship Council members and encouraging them to use their gifts and talents
- Planning a fabulous line-up of guest ministers and speakers while Hillary is on sabbatical and broadening our own connections.
- Welcoming Hillary back, refreshed, recharged, rested, and ready to rejoin in shared ministry at First U!



*Flower Communion,  
Spring 2025*



*Blessing of the Animals, Fall 2025*



*Winter Solstice, Fall 2025*

# Spiritual Care Council

## ***Members of the Spiritual Care Council***

(chair), Tom Carlisle, Mary Chaney, Joe Dreher, Joanna Landsman, Cheryl McGilvery, Jeff O'Brien (Co-chair), Sarah Witte (co-chair), Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick (minister)

## What SCC LOVED doing this Year

We loved working with Rev. Hillary to figure out how we could best support her and the pastoral needs of First Universalist. This year we alternated with the minister in leading the Time for Candles of Joy and Sorrow, and also took notes on the joys and sorrows so that when needed we or Hillary could follow up after the service or reach out later.

We loved creating some special times for people to gather and share areas of experience, with the after-worship workshops. This year we had two: one on hospice care vs palliative care, and one on childhood anxiety 'in a world on fire', which turned into a great conversation on parenting. We also hosted a drop-in vigil on the night of the Winter Solstice which was well attended, and held a screening of "Come See Me in the Good Light" about the poet Andrea Gibson.

## What SCC LONGS FOR

We hope people know we're here. We know we're not Hillary (!) but we can provide a kind, quiet listen. All confidential, all in the spirit of love.

We certainly don't wish for anyone to experience deep loss and thereby feel the need to attend the Grief and Loss Support Group we offer once a month, again we only hope that anyone who's living with grief will know we're there.

We'd love to hear from congregants with ideas for events, speakers, workshops, or even simple little ways that we can help out, or possibly collaborate with other groups, committees, etc.

# Spiritual Care Council

## What SCC is LOOKING FORWARD TO

We look forward to these things, and more:

- Welcoming new members to the SCC: John Auble (returning), Ruby Parker, Catherine Mayo
- Renewing our mission and methods with a pastoral care training workshop later this summer, led by Rev. Angie Arndt.
- Creating more opportunities for congregants to explore/embrace/engage, perhaps with after church sessions on topics such as: Writing Your Own Obituary, Aging Solo, and the Big Experience of Cancer - for all survivors, persons living with, and loved ones.
- Working with Rev. Lara Campbell to respond to the spiritual needs of individuals during Rev. Hillary's sabbatical.
- Holding space for grief and loss at our monthly support group.
- Knowing that Rev. Hillary is 'out and about' getting some free-range R&R, and then welcoming her back to Yarmouth with infinite gratitude and appreciation!

Extra note of heartfelt thanks to Mary Chaney who helped create the SCC and is now stepping away. Mary, we loved working with you. Peace.



*Flower Communion,  
June 2025*

# Adult Religious Exploration

## **Members of the Adult RE Council**

Cathy McKenna (chair), Courtney Ampezzan, Debbie Woodbury, Dale Shields, Sara Karam, Barbara Trentacosta, Gwen Matthews (staff), and Rev. Hillary Collins-Gilpatrick (minister)

## What Adult RE LOVED this Year

- Brainstorming ideas together as a council
- Talking about what we're reading and watching together
- Participating in the World Fish Migration Day event
- Hosting the Circle In workshop
- Collaborating with the Faith in Action and Spiritual Care Councils to offer events and programs

## What Adult RE LONGS FOR

Adult RE LONGS for an increased budget, to offer more events and programs, to engage more fully with other UU churches as well as other faith traditions, and to increase participation among the congregation, particularly with men.

## What Adult RE LIFTS UP

We want to lift up two new members of the Adult RE council - Sara Karam and Barbara Trentacosta. And we want it to be known how much fun we have together.



*World Fish Migration Day, Spring 2026*

## What Adult RE is LOOKING FORWARD TO

We are looking forward to increased collaboration within and outside of First Universalist. And to continue to work creatively and take advantage of outside opportunities.

# Children & Youth Religious Exploration

## **Members of the Children & Youth RE Council**

*Jeanette Newton, Cathy McKenna, Sara Karam, Debbie Woodbury, Gwen Matthews (staff), and Mack Jones (staff)*

## What Children & Youth RE LOVED this Year

The Children & Youth RE Council loved seeing the community pull together in Gwen's absence – and also loved when Gwen came back from maternity leave! We loved helping out with Children's Chapel - getting to know the children and getting to know families. We loved seeing the creativity of the adult volunteers. We love that our time with children and youth offered kids/families broader relationships and helped to build relationships among children and youth.

## What RE LONGS FOR & is LOOKING FORWARD TO

Children and Youth RE LONGS to expand our membership, to recruit more creative, energetic people to support our children and youth programs. We also long to continue to welcome all the new children coming to First Universalist!



## What Children & Youth RE LIFTS Up

Mack's incredible work with our junior youth group program. Thanks to Mack, the junior youth program is robust, lively, and engaged in justice work! We also want to lift up the Children & Youth RE Council's hard work to maintain programs while Gwen was on maternity leave. They succeeded wonderfully, creatively, and with passion.



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