

THE FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

OF ESSEX

59 Main Street, P.O Box 156
Telephone 978 768-3690

Essex, Massachusetts 01929
Email: Info@UUESsex.org

Dec 19, 2020

Dear Friends and Members:

I am writing once again to ask you to make a pledge to support the church for our current fiscal year. This has been a most challenging year for all of us and that has made it challenging for the church as well. I hope that you will continue to support us so that we can come back strong following this pandemic.

Today I came across a quote by Fred Rogers (of Mr. Rogers Neighborhood) “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping’. That’s a terrific bit of advice for finding the glimmer of hope, and for finding inspiration. I realize that “the helpers” at our church have been inspiring me this year. I see people digging in to make sure that food is gathered for those who need, that gatherings happen for meditation, writing, crafts, music, protest and worship. Our RE program continues as does our youth group. Our building committee has continued to tackle projects while our home is empty. I see people reaching out to provide support to one another. Covid is discouraging in many ways, but the church encourages us to seek new ways to be together and I’m impressed by “the helpers” who I am watching.

The church uses an annual pledge system to help with planning and budgeting. It is time once again to make a pledge for the current fiscal year, which began Sep. 1 and runs through next August. We are asking all members and friends to think carefully about what they can contribute to the church for the year, and to commit to that contribution by returning the enclosed pledge form. Please return the forms by January 8th to help me complete a forecast of finances for the current year.

We do need to increase our revenues to cover our annual expenses. As we become a thriving organization we increased our investments in paid staff, which helps us to continue to grow. At the annual meeting in the spring the congregation voted to increase the general compensation that we pay by 2%. Our budget for the current year is about \$130,000. We need to raise this through member contributions and fundraising events. We can reach this amount through membership growth and commitment of increased contributions from current members and friends. Please consider increasing your contribution.

Contributions to the First Universalist Church of Essex are deemed charitable contributions under the internal revenue code. The IRS now requires more documentation to take these deductions. If you use donation envelopes, or donate by check, we will keep a record and can send a summary to you at the end of the year.

If you wish to donate stock directly the UUA provides great assistance and I can help you with the process.

We ask that you be as generous as you are able, recognizing that people contribute more than just money to the church. Whatever you can contribute will be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions about this program, or about the church finances, please feel free to discuss them with me.

Sincerely,

Thomas Duff
Treasurer

Enclosed: Pledge Form, Q&A

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Answers to Common Questions

What do the pledges pay for?

Your annual contributions are used to meet our annual operating expenses. These include basic items such as the minister's salary, cleaning, heating, insurance, and repairs. We would like to be able to meet all ongoing expenses through annual pledges.

What isn't covered through this?

We are not spending the operating funds on flowers, hymnals or other improvements to our facilities. Some fundraising occurs occasionally for special improvements such as these.

Why is a pledge drive important?

There are two good reasons to have a pledge drive. The first is that church members will give more money to the church when supported by a formal pledging process. It provides an annual chance to review the value the church provides, and to review your ability to contribute to it.

The second reason is that the pledging process allows the Finance Committee to provide the trustees with better advice on expenses. Without pledges, we would need to be cautious in our expenditures. With pledges we can better estimate the income and can make investments that help the church to grow.

What are others giving?

Our community has many members with different financial circumstances and there is a broad range in the donations that are made. This table shows the number of families making donations at different levels. The column labeled "Regular Contributions" includes the regular pledged amount. The column labeled "Total Contributions" includes special contributions and fundraising contributions which helped us meet 2018-19.

Contribution Size	Families Contributing	
	Regular Contrib.	Total Contrib.
\$ 500 - 1000	15	9
\$ 1000 - 2000	11	16
\$ 2000 - 4000	12	9
\$ 4000 - 6000	4	5
\$ 6000 - 11000		4

How much should I give?

This is the most difficult of the common questions to answer, but it is frequently asked, and it is tremendously important. It is also a fact that without any guidance, most members (of all churches) will give less than their share. To help answer this we will provide three different perspectives:

Expense Comparison

Compare the cost of church with other household expenses. Consider your other annual expenditures and evaluate how the benefits of church for you and for the community compare. One family's list of expenses might include:

Subscription to the Boston Globe	\$ 1,250
Family membership at the YMCA	1,320
Week vacation at Disneyworld	3,600
Church	?

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Simple Financial Summary

Our current operating expenses are roughly \$ 129,000. If we have 80 contributing members and friends, we could meet the expenses with an average contribution of \$1,612. That translates to an average of \$31 per person per week. We have some members who must contribute less; we will need to balance that through some members who can contribute more. This is better reflected in the Suggested Share Giving Guide below.

Suggested Share Giving Guide

Below is a suggested share giving guide prepared for another UU church. It encourages increasing contributions with increasing means. It also recognizes that we each may want to participate at a different level, from Helping up to Sustaining.

Adjusted Gross Income	HELPING			SUPPORTING			SUSTAINING		
	Percent	Annual Amount	Weekly Amount	Percent	Annual Amount	Weekly Amount	Percent	Annual Amount	Weekly Amount
10,000	1.00	\$104	\$2.00	1.50	\$156	\$3.00	2.00	\$208	4.00
20,000	1.50	312	6.00	2.00	416	8.00	2.50	520	10.00
30,000	2.00	624	12.00	2.50	728	14.00	3.00	884	17.00
40,000	2.25	884	17.00	2.75	1,092	21.00	3.25	1,300	25.00
50,000	2.50	1,200	24.00	3.00	1,500	29.00	3.50	1,800	34.00
75,000	3.00	2,200	43.00	3.50	2,600	50.00	4.00	3,000	58.00
100,000	3.50	3,500	67.00	4.00	4,000	77.00	4.50	4,500	87.00

This table uses Adjusted Gross Income as defined by the IRS for determination of taxes.

Our current annual ongoing expenses are roughly \$ 129,000. One theoretical congregation of 100 members could meet this with 60 Helping, 33 Supporting and 7 Sustaining members. Models like this help us think about what we need to achieve as a congregation to continue.

What does my contribution support?

Your contribution to the church provides benefits to you and to your community. Our welcoming and inclusive religion is particularly important today. In one month this winter we fed the hungry in Gloucester, celebrated a birth and marriage, held lectures on world religions and current concerns. Children were educated, the congregation met in worship, in support, and in fun. Our minister is committed to community service. Supporting the church supports this as well.

Where can I obtain more information on the church finances or on the pledge process?

A financial statement of the church finances will be posted periodically on the Bulletin Board in the Basement.

For additional clarification or information, contact Moderator Debbie Frontiero (DebFrontiero@gmail.com) or Treasurer Tom Duff (Tom.Duff@WillisTowersWatson.com). Other Board members may also provide information.

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Pledge of Support

I (we) hereby pledge support for the operations of the First Universalist Church of Essex for the September 2020 fiscal year through

A one time donation in the amount of \$ _____ in the month of _____

A repeating donation of \$ _____ once every Week Month amounting to a total of \$ _____

While this is my (our) considered intention, I (we) withhold commitment commensurate with legal recourse to this pledge.

Signed _____ Date: _____

Printed _____

Signed _____ Date: _____

Printed _____

It is important to plan a payment strategy to make your pledge. Members who make their contributions only when they are in the church are likely to fall short of their total for the year. Please check boxes that apply for you:

- I'll contribute in regular planned quarterly or monthly payments to meet my pledge.
- I'd like to further discuss my pledge with a Board Member.
- I'd like help with setting up automatic payments with my bank.
- I'll setup automatic payments through "donate now" on the church website.

Please mail your completed form to:

First Universalist Church of Essex Pledge Drive
P.O. Box 156
Essex MA, 01929

Or email: TomDuffEssex@Gmail.com with your pledge information.

Contributions to the First Universalist Church of Essex are deemed charitable contributions under the internal revenue code. Contributions are eligible for use as a tax deduction in the calendar year in which they are made.