

## How much does it cost to operate our church?

We have 321 formal members, and we have approx. 230 pledging units (i.e., economic units of individuals or families expected to pledge annually, including a few non-members). But only 188 of our pledging units actually made a pledge for the current year (2023-24).

While pledges are not the congregation's only income source, they do need to cover at least 80% of our expenses for the budget to be sustainable. And while our congregation includes people in many economic situations, the following averages can be helpful.

<b>2023-24 Total Expense Budget</b>	<b>\$649,122</b>
• Average Expense per member	\$ 2,022
• Average Expense per pledging unit if everyone pledged	\$2,822

**Total pledge GOAL for 2024-25: \$456,000  
(or a whole lot more!)**

## How do I know what is the right amount to pledge?

The right amount for each person or family to pledge is a personal decision. One way to think about this is to try to make your standard of giving reflect your standard of living. Consider your budget. What can you contribute on a weekly or monthly basis to the health and well-being of our shared ministry? We ask everyone to consider making a pledge that is both responsible and significant.

A pledge commitment in our faith tradition often ranges from 3% to 7% or more of household income. Some households already pledge at these levels. For those who do not, we ask you to consider working toward this goal over time. Calculate where you are now and see if you can go up 1% more of your income each year.

Please consider pledging an amount that reflects a serious commitment to the place you have chosen as your spiritual home — not simply making a donation to yet another charity. Together, we support UUSS. Some can afford a lot; some only a little. Many of us can afford more than we currently give. So if that's you, let's **Live Love Out Loud** and make that leap to support the congregation for everyone!

**For More Pledge Drive Information**  
plus answers to  
**Frequently Asked Questions,**  
go to:  
[UUSchenectady.org/stewardship/](http://UUSchenectady.org/stewardship/)



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**A**t the Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady, we are invited to bring our whole selves, just as we are. And when we come together, placing love at the center, we might just find ourselves transformed.

What does **Living Love Out Loud** mean? It includes how:

- ◆ We empower our children and youth by providing a **religious education program** that nurtures spiritual journeys, welcomes questions, teaches values, expands minds, and guides hearts.
- ◆ We **worship** together in multi-generational community, exploring our faith, drawing inspiration, and making meaning of our lives.
- ◆ We work together for more **justice**, as with UU the Vote, Downstream Justice water clean-up, and legislative advocacy.



- ◆ We **care** for one another, and in times of loss or challenge, we offer **support**.
- ◆ We offer our staff and ministers **fair compensation**.
- ◆ We honor our **denomination** through the Annual Program Fund, living into our covenant with other UU congregations.
- ◆ We **listen** deeply to one another's stories, drawing wisdom that shapes our evolving lives, beliefs and perspectives.
- ◆ We create a warm welcome and a clear path to membership to foster a sense of **belonging**.
- ◆ We devote time to **connection**, celebration and fun!



**2024 Stewardship Drive**

## What will your Generosity mean for our 2024-25 Goals?

There is a great deal at stake — in our nation and in our congregation.

Our very values — peace, justice, equity, multiculturalism, compassion, democracy, religious pluralism, generosity, interdependence, and love — are at risk. We need places like UUSS to ground and center us, to nurture and sustain us. But UUSS can't exist without the generous support of its members, friends and committed visitors. This year's Stewardship Campaign is a crucial one.

The Board has begun work on the 2024-25 budget and struggled to set a pledge drive goal that is both ambitious and achievable. They have named a **Pledge Drive Goal of \$456,000**. However, this goal will not cover all our expenses, and would mean drawing down our Operating Reserve Fund to cover significant gaps in the budget. We really need much more than \$456,000 to be sustainable into the future. Will you help UUSS Live Love Out Loud and achieve this?

If we reach or exceed the pledge drive goal, the Board's priorities are:

**1. Invest in our growing Religious Education Program.** Teaching our UU

values to upcoming generations helps transform the world. Coming of Age, OWL & other UU curricula matter!

**2. Live our values by compensating our staff with competitive, fair salaries & benefits** that are within the UUA's Guidelines.

**3. Support our growing Music Program** that provides joy, connection, and deeper experiences in worship and beyond.

**4. Fund the shared Ministries of the congregation**, including Lifespan Faith Development, Environmental protection, #UU the Vote, Anti-racism, LGBTQ+ and BIPOC support, as well as a Fair Share contribution to the UUAs' Annual Program Fund

**5. Increase the Co-Ministers position from 1.2 to 1.3 FTE.** Our congregation needs and is receiving more ministerial service than we are currently paying for. On behalf of the congregation, the Board created a five-year plan to bring UUSS into better alignment with this need.

**6. Improve our Energy Efficiency** by tending to our aging Buildings, Grounds & Infrastructure.



*A UUSS Downstream Justice event along the Hans Groot Kill.*

## Why YOUR pledge matters

Your level of generosity directly impacts what we can and cannot do both within our congregation and in the wider community. Pledges help us plan. Paid pledges help us minister to one another and beyond.

The cost of “doing church” has increased significantly and UUSS congregational giving has not kept pace with increasing costs. We have been fortunate to receive a few generous bequests in recent years, and to have co-ministers and staff who have been very careful (including foregoing raises) with UUSS resources. But our recent strategy of drawing upon our Operating Reserve Fund to balance the annual budget is not sustainable in the long run.

Whatever your situation, please think about what you can do financially to help UUSS goals come to fruition. Together, with our generous giving, we can increase compassion, justice and joy at UUSS!



*UUSS members photographed with UUA President Susan Frederick-Gray at the UUA General Assembly in June 2023 in Pittsburgh.*



*Some avid students enjoying a special RE Summer Stars program in summer 2023.*

You are invited to . . .

## Celebration Sunday!

A very special worship service on **March 17**. We will be inspired by a sermon from Rev. Vail Weller, UUA Congregational Giving Director and will celebrate in a number of ways.

The Celebration will include a small gift for everyone who pledges, live music, activities for kids, and delicious treats following worship. We will also take time to say “Happy retirement!” to outgoing Church Administrator Susan Marino.

Please plan to attend and please bring your pledge form with you.