

This has been a year unlike any other as we finally reopened our doors (with precautions to protect the most vulnerable), and worked together to reengage and reconnect. On the global stage, this has been a year of increasing threats to limit the rights and dignity of our fellow humans based on gender, race, sexuality, and more.



The mission and strategic plans of UUCUC have never been more essential as beacons of hope for a better, more just, more whole world- not just today but for future generations. So, we invite you to recommit to our beloved community in this year's pledge drive, which begins February 12 and concludes March 12. Your annual financial pledge supports UUCUC's important work by funding minister and staff salaries, religious education, music, social justice, our building, our community partnerships, and so much more.

If you ever begin to question *why* we pour so much time, money, and effort into keeping the UUCUC lights on, please find one of our newcomers and we guarantee that hearing their stories will reaffirm everything you love about this unique community. In just the past five months, 24 people chose to join this congregation. Our newest members are thrilled to have *finally* found a place like this one. Whether they are longtime UUs happy to be among familiar practices, lifelong "nones" looking for the solidity of loving community, or religious wanderers finding a faith that allows questioning, all are excited to have found *us*. Our Religious Engagement and Exploration program is expanding as well with over 100 children, youth, and teens in Sunday morning and OWL classes, taught by many dedicated volunteers.

What we add to the world, and to our immediate community here in Champaign-Urbana, has immense value. There is no other place doing what we do, and no one sustains this but us – our pledges collectively pay for all we do. UUCUC continues to take great leaps into a future that holds unguessable possibility. Grab hold and join us on the journey, reconnecting and deepening our community with your presence, and making our mission possible with your promise of financial support.

A pledge is your best prediction of what financial contribution you plan to make over the next church year (July 2023 - June 2024), and it is the total of our promised pledges that the Board uses to allocate funding for the coming year. As UUs, we prize the democratic process, and our proposed budget will be discussed/voted on by members of the congregation at our Annual Meeting, but that's only made possible by all of us participating in the pledge process now.

Consider what our faith community adds to your life, to our community, and to the wider world, and make your pledge a commitment that reflects that value.

We are *not* standing still. Join us, won't you, in *leaping onward into a shared future*.

Sincerely,
Rev. Karen Bush and Rev. Sally Fritsche