



Act with Courage Transform Our World

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

–Margaret Mead

WITH LOVE FROM REVEREND REBECCA

Dear FRS members, supporters, and friends,

Glorious things are happening in the lives of individuals, among members of our congregation, and beyond our walls in the wider community.

Please join me in affirming your commitment to our work by making a financial pledge in this year's Annual Campaign.



We celebrate all that has been done over the last twelve months, including transforming the Parish Hall into temporary housing for the eleven members of the Mirzayee family from Afghanistan, with special thanks to more than 100 people in our congregation and the larger community. This collaboration of churches, the city, schools, state, settlement organizations, and private citizens is being lauded as a model to other cities and towns.

Our staff, volunteers, and church leaders have demonstrated perseverance, ingenuity, and stamina. The combined energies are creating a collective hum when all our voices, minds, and hearts work together for the good of our country, community, and church. We see this in the livestreaming on Sundays, within the Zoom programming, and through a willingness to come to worship in person, even as we mask and distance ourselves across our historic pews, in our beloved sanctuary.

We mourn those who have died this year, welcome those who have joined us, and embrace those who have returned. We learn from our mistakes and challenges as much as from our achievements and joys. We are human and holy, together, as individuals and a spiritual family.

When we talk about courageous action transforming our world, we are talking about the inner world where meaning and peace are found; where the health and well-being of our church community are made real in the riches of our diversity; and where there are the real changes and movement toward justice in our local communities and beyond. This kind of transformation is more than important. It makes a life worth living.

Doing these things requires the support of many people, their time, talent, and treasure. Our goal this year is \$530,000. So every gift matters, and we appreciate every gift. Thank you for your generosity in all these ways and for making your pledge today. It is my great honor and joy to be your minister.

*Yours in faith, love, and community,
Reverend Rebecca*

In the previous church year, our congregation unanimously voted to support our Values, Mission, Ends (VME). Our Values are *wonder, authentic connection, love, and courageous action*. Our Mission is to *come as you are, journey together in love, act with courage, and transform our world*. And over the past two years, through partnership and collective action, we have transformed our Values and Mission into our Ends. This is what it means to “**Act with Courage**” and to “**Transform Our World**.”

Worship

Our worship service provides both in-person and online experience to expand our minds, stir our souls and lead us to a better understanding of the UU Principles. We live each day with intent guided by the Affirmation of Our Faith:

*Love is the doctrine of this church,
The quest of truth is its sacrament,
And service is its prayer.
To dwell together in peace,
To seek knowledge in freedom,
To serve humankind in fellowship,
To the end that all souls shall grow
into harmony with the Divine—
Thus do we covenant with each other
and with God.*



Music

Our music program remains a cornerstone of Sunday worship. During pandemic lockdown, our Adult Choir recorded virtual anthems and transitioned to recording in person in the sanctuary during the fall. From the Adult Choir, to community musicians, to the Wilson Music Series, there are many opportunities to experience and participate in music at FRS.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR 2021-2022 CHURCH YEAR

Offering visits and pastoral care to members and friends through our nine **Pastoral Care Associates**

Providing comfort and support such as rides, sending cards, and providing meals during challenging times through our **Parish Friends**



Transforming Parish Hall as a temporary home and providing extensive support to resettle an Afghan refugee family

Exploring Elderhood Together and what it means to grow older in the 2020s to build a greater sense of belonging

Building fellowship through social gathering opportunities like the Sunday Socials following service and the **FRS Fall Festival**



Stepping up our anti-racism efforts through **Living The Pledge** and exploring anti-racism beyond our doors

Providing ongoing **parishioner-led programming** on social justice, community, and ways to build faith and spiritual connections

Establishing an inter-generational **Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA)**

Starting the process to renew our **Welcoming Congregation Designation**

Cultivating shared ministry opportunities such as **summer lay-led Sunday worship** services



Working in partnership within the greater community to learn about local **indigenous people** from history to present and honor indigenous people



Opening a **Little Free Diverse Library** for all ages to learn and enjoy



Becoming a teaching congregation and welcoming our ministerial intern, David Livingstone

Working toward **Accessibility and Inclusion Ministry Certification (AIM)** to guide our parish in being able to better welcome, embrace, integrate, and support people with disabilities and their families

Advocating for **climate action**, engaging Young Church and intergenerational connections

“It has been a huge gift to collaborate with FRS to offer 8–9th grade OWL to a group of young people who almost missed it due to the pandemic. When congregations come together to help our young people act courageously, the world is well on its way to a transformation.”

Clare Fortune-Lad,
Director of Religious Education,
UU Church of Haverhill

Finding ways for our congregation to **worship in person**, while ensuring that our buildings comply with the latest recommendations for safety during the COVID pandemic



Expanding our ability to provide both in-person and online worship and music programming, reaching **400 YouTube subscribers**

Faith Formation & Spiritual Exploration

Participation in our 2021 adult faith formation ministry reached an all-time high, with several new programs. Writing Your Journey of Faith, Forest Walks and Meditation, and the FRS Film Forum brought members and friends together in a continuing search for truth and meaning. Weekly Spirit Groups held informal discussion on deep questions. Foundations of Unitarian Universalism provided the opportunity to learn about the history and principles of Unitarian Universalism, while getting to know other congregants. Weekly or biweekly programs such as book discussions, meditation, and spiritual practice all offer ways for parishioners to engage.



Young Church

Young Church builds joyful connection with all ages, our faith, and our community. Our children's programming fosters respect for ourselves and others, a deepening awareness of our interconnectedness, and social justice engagement as an expression of our faith and love. This year we shared in ritual, stories, art, and games with continued learning about and working for justice in our community.



“The rainbow tape on the Black Lives Matter flag outside our church is a sacred testament to this community’s integrity. We repaired the flag... with rainbow bandages, beautiful badges of perseverance... Everyone, and everything, has the capacity to rebuild and to be rebuilt. No one is beyond the limits of love. We did not give up on that torn flag—why should we give up on our torn world?”

David Livingstone
FRS Ministerial Intern

ACT WITH COURAGE, TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

The work we have done this past year and through COVID lays a strong foundation for the upcoming year. The future of our church looks bright. Together next year, we will envision the future of the Parish Hall and long-term renovations, vote to become an anti-racist congregation, and hire a second minister. Help us make these dreams a reality!

Our Annual Giving Campaign For 2022–23

Your annual pledge provides the chief financial support for all the important works of our church, as we move ahead toward our 300th Anniversary in 2025. If you are a faithful long-term supporter, please consider increasing your pledge this year as our church Values, Mission and Ends (VME) goals continue to grow. If you’ve never pledged before, please join your fellow congregants in being as generous as possible.

Our March FRS Sunday services will give members and non-members time for reflection and planning your annual pledge. For guidance, see www.frsuu.org/pledge, where you can find useful Unitarian Universalist Association information about choosing a pledge level based on your personal circumstances. UUA suggests that you base your pledge on 2-10% of your income. Annual support levels among our own congregation range from \$25 to \$22,000 with the current year average of \$1,714.

While our projected budget expenses for next year have increased by just 5%, the need for pledge income is greater due to ongoing reduced revenue from other sources and general inflationary pressures. Again, we continue to build a strong foundation now and for the future.

Please give as generously as you are able. The pledge you make today propels us forward into our next fiscal year starting in July 2022 and ending in June 2023. While we always appreciate receiving these gifts early, you can complete your pledge anytime up to June 30, 2023. We aim for 100% participation and engagement in the campaign to reach our goal of \$530,000.

Thank You

“The FRSUU congregation and leadership are an invaluable resource in creating sustainable change here in Newburyport and working to make our community a more welcoming, inclusive and diverse place to live, work and visit.”

Tina Los, MPH
Associate Director,
Essex County Asset Builder Network
Newburyport DEI Alliance

2022–23 ANNUAL GIVING CAMPAIGN

We Need Everyone's Participation

Every pledge, in any amount, matters, and it matters even more if you choose to make it a continuous gift, as described on your pledge form.

How to Make Your Pledge



Online at www.frsuu.org/pledge



Email your pledge amount to Diane Carroll at diane.carroll@frsuu.org



Mail your completed pledge form to FRS
at 26 Pleasant Street in Newburyport, Massachusetts 01950



Call Diane Carroll at **978.465.0602 x401**

“We are so very pleased to have been asked to lead FRS’s Annual Giving Campaign this year. When we moved to Newburyport in 2018 and found FRS, it was as if pieces of a puzzle were falling into place. From the beginning, we were welcomed with warmth and love and genuine connection. It is a joy to continue to get to know new friends through the campaign and to be part of this place that brings out the best of who we are.”

*–With gratitude and love,
Tina and Greg Benik*



 **First Religious Society**
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT

Sincerely, The Parish Board and Annual Campaign Committee