



Unitarian Universalist Church of Reading

2023 Pledge Drive ***“Forward Together”***

Dear Members and Friends of UUCR,

For the past three years, our congregation has focused on meeting the challenges of the global pandemic, staff turnover, financial deficits, and the reopening of our church campus. It's taken a tremendous amount of time and energy, but by working together we have kept things going. **And now we are finally at a point where we can begin looking forward again - recommitting to our mission, reconnecting with each other, and welcoming new friends.**

Our Pledge Drive Theme is “Forward Together”

As we begin our annual pledge drive, we ask for your support to help sustain our beloved congregation. Our mission - to create a welcoming place to explore individual spirituality, build a committed and loving community and help heal the world - **depends on the generosity of individuals like you.**

While many of us have resumed a “new normal” life, there are still those among us who must remain hyper-vigilant because they are at an increased risk of being severely impacted by COVID.

So we have chosen “Forward Together” as our Pledge Drive theme this year, because as a community **we are committed to making sure we leave no one behind as we begin moving forward again.**

There's Lots of Positive Energy!

- Rev. Laura is bringing fresh ideas and new energy to UUCR and has been providing engaging Sunday Services with thought-provoking and inspiring sermons. Her contract has now been extended through June 2025 and her hours increased from ¾ time to full-time. Yay!
- More people are attending church in person, and our dedicated Tech Team continues to provide both live and pre-recorded online options for those that are not yet able to join us in the sanctuary.
- We have had a number of new families and individuals join us on Sundays.
- The Christmas services were amazing, complete with the return of the Living Nativity Pageant, luminarias, and the Hallelujah Chorus. The pews were packed on Christmas Eve!
- A successful Kris Kringle Fair last fall and plans for an in-person Starlight Soiree Auction in March.
- We have a new Office Administrator, Donna Gargiulo.
- Our dedicated Property Committee is working year-round taking care of our beautiful campus.
- Our largest EVER Share the Plate collection during the month of December to enable our Bread and Roses team to provide a monthly meal for the vulnerable populations of Lawrence.

There's Lots Going On!

- Programs and activities almost every day of the week: Book Groups, Liberal Ladies, Men's Group, Buddhist Meditation, Social Crafty Fun, and more!
- A vibrant K-6 RE program, plus Building Bridges, Our Whole Lives, and Coming of Age programs for the older kids.
- Living our commitment to Help Heal the World through Social Justice activities, Undecorate the Tree, the PFLAG Support Group, Green Sanctuary, Share the Plate, the relaunch of the Welcoming Congregation Committee, and more!

- The creation of the “CommUUnity Collaborative”, a new adult religious education program for UUs across the state, developed by Rev. Laura and colleagues from area churches.

Our Goal: \$385,000

During our most recent Strategic Planning process, the congregation expressed a strong desire for the church to achieve financial stability. **Your pledge will help make that happen!**

Our goal this year is to have the participation of ALL our members and friends, and to raise \$385,000.

We are on track to have a balanced budget this year for the first time in several years. And we are doing it without any COVID relief funds and without touching the very limited reserves that we have left. And now we want to keep that momentum going!

The Finance Council has developed a preliminary FY24 budget. In order to balance it **we need to raise \$385K in pledges. It's a real stretch, but reaching that goal is essential to getting our finances back on a solid footing.**

Here's What We Ask:

- **If you are already pledging**, please thoughtfully consider increasing your pledge by 10%-20% percent or more to help keep us moving forward. If that is not possible for you, please consider an incremental 3-5% increase. For a \$2,000 pledge, that would be an increase of \$60-\$100 per year, or just \$5 to \$10 per month.
- **If you haven't started pledging yet**, now would be a great time to begin! Knowing how much you plan to contribute during the coming year helps us plan responsibly for the future. So please - pick an amount that works for your budget and make a pledge! For more information about pledging please see our [Pledge Drive FAQ](#).

It's Easy - Pledge Online!

We ask that you make your pledge by Commitment Sunday, March 26. You can [submit your pledge online](#) anytime by visiting UUCR's website. **Why not do it right now?**

Your contributions are essential to keeping our doors open, our programs running, and our community thriving. Every pledge, large and small, will be gratefully received.

Thank You for Your Support!

Whether you are a long-time member or a newcomer, **making a pledge shows your commitment to our shared values and vision.** Your generosity will help get UUCR moving forward again, so together we can work towards fulfilling our mission during the coming year.

Thank You!

A.J. Heidkamp (Chair), Ryan Sillers, and Tracy Sopchak
2023 Pledge Drive Team