



# The Power of **Possibility**

UUSGS CAPITAL CAMPAIGN



UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST

SOCIETY OF  
GREATER SPRINGFIELD



On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I invite you to join us in this long-awaited opportunity to give our dreams for the future a path to fruition!

The Board of UUSGS works, in some ways, like you might expect. We think about and join in the daily rhythms of the congregation, and we vote on key issues. But the work dearest to my heart – and vital in a different way from that practical governance – is helping UUSGS live out our Mission, Vision, and Ends.

During my time on the Board, this has meant two key things:

First, we conscientiously revised our “Ends” statements – the lofty yet practical goals of the congregation – to reflect the needs of this moment, grounded in our religious tradition. For example, we added to our Ends, for the first time, a commitment to sharing our faith with our children. This means we’re actively dedicated to creating a space where education and expression thrive – room for the creative endeavors of future generations.

And second, the Board is shepherding in what we initially called a “capital campaign” but came to realize was something that could be much bigger and more reflective of our values – what we now call Strategic Planning. We live in “a world of constant change” indeed. To strategically plan is to nurture the world we yearn to see.

That intentional shift reflects something much deeper about UUSGS and this current effort.

We’re not here for ourselves alone, but for our broader community, and for our future.

We are here to **“create space for the emergence of our whole, authentic selves.”** The wonderful projects and goals in these pages will be our physical fulfillment of this spiritual purpose.

We hear it already in the enormously improved sound system in the sanctuary, and I hope we’ll all hear its echoes in the generations to come.

Join us, as we give together,

Jaime Margolis  
President, UUSGS Board of Trustees





## ENDS STATEMENTS

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**Grounded within ourselves, among our congregation,  
and beyond in the larger world, we the people of UUSGS:**

- Experience the sacred and transform as we create space for the emergence of our whole, authentic selves.
- Develop spiritual practices that ground us in a world of constant change, seeking to find and keep our balance.
- Articulate our living Unitarian Universalist faith identity, teach it to our children, and share it with others.
- Support creative endeavors that transform and connect.
- Challenge oppression and othering as we practice living in right relationship.
- Nurture a deep and joyous connection to the interdependent web of life of which we are a part.
- Act on our values, rooted in friendship, mutuality, and love.
- Ask for, give, and receive care and support in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.
- Practice radical inclusion and collective liberation.
- Co-create the Beloved Community.

*We are committed to these Ends as we mutually endeavor to sustain our evolving congregation.*

## MISSION

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The mission of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield is to realize the free and unrestricted development of the human spirit for the good of all.

## VALUES

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- **Belonging:** a deep and joyous embrace of one another and the whole Earth community
- **Creativity:** open in approach, fostering individual gifts and talents
- **Transcendence:** transformation through experiences of the holy
- **Justice:** restoring wholeness by challenging inequality and collaborating in creating peace



**CASE STATEMENT:**

**Strategic Planning & Capital Projects**

**Where we're going**

UUSGS is a visionary community, building a foundation for the transformation of our world through authentic human and spiritual connection.

We affirm and grow our religious community as relevant, as accessible and as a powerful force for joyful, just, equitable and sustainable society.

Based on the 2018 Strategic Plan and updated to be relevant for today, we understand that delivering on our vision requires gathering spaces (virtual and physical) that are:

- Safe
- Accessible to everyone
- Welcoming, attractive and functional
- Flexible and supportive for a wide range of activities,
- Fully functional for full participation online and in-person

We recognize the urgency of this moment, not just for this institution but for the role it plays in our wider community and indeed the world. The world is in a critical state:

- Long term impacts of COVID isolation and losses
- Racial and social inequity
- Political and social unrest, and highly polarized and divisive rhetoric.

The people and community of UUSGS provide an antidote to this state. Our community is responding to the growing crisis in our world by gathering collaborative energies and becoming a counter-force of love, joy and justice to help heal the world.

At UUSGS we are a faith community which honors the past; is relevant in the present; and harnesses the power of possibility for the future.



Dear Friends,

We are excited to be this far in our capital campaign! We hope you find the following pages inspiring and compelling!

For over 200 years, our congregational forebears stood boldly for inclusion and justice. Now it is our time to renew and elevate our faith's commitment to being a force for transformation and transcendence in an ever-changing world.

Throughout the pandemic, our vision of what it means to gather in community expanded and deepened.

Our campaign envisions spaces where people have the freedom and the joy to be human together. Where people feel safe AND brave. Where they can be vulnerable AND strong. Where no part of themselves is left at the door.

Our campaign envisions spaces where people meet each other faith to faith, accompanying each other on their spiritual journeys.

Our campaign sees dynamic spaces where people feel held and not confined, to experience mystery,ask questions,experiment,and disagree.

Our campaign envisions spaces where there is continued room for growth, perhaps not ever finished, where the Beloved Community can be built together.

Our campaign sees spaces where people bring their different skills together to remove barriers so that all can access what is offered regardless of ability and circumstance.

Our campaign dreams of spaces that never fosters obedience, fear, or silence. Instead, we dream of spaces that cultivate love, creativity, action, and laughter.

We'll see you there.

 Katherine 

John, Kathy, and Jon



Dear friends...

What a time to believe in the power of possibility!

Since our founding, our building has been referred to as “the Meetinghouse.” Personally, I love this description... for what more important work is there in the world right now than connection, or re-connection? The scope of this campaign, at least initially, is to improve the ability of our building and grounds to serve this most needed function: to become a catalyst of authentic human connection. We want to improve access. We want to update our mid-century design in ways that feel intentionally inclusive today. We envision a campus that serves – and connects – the wider community through arts, nature, service, and dialog.

This work feels important, especially now. There are headwinds, and many of our shared values – like love, or the inherent worth and dignity of every person – may feel counter-cultural in today’s society. That’s OK. It has been this way before, and people have responded in kind. This congregation was founded over 200 years ago as a departure from the ordinary. Our founders believed then in the power of possibility, and they sought to create a new institution founded not on orthodoxy or fear, but based on principles that endure today like hope, reason, fairness, and progress.

Some people have a hard time understanding Unitarian Universalists because we don’t all believe the same thing. I can understand why this may be confusing... but it also makes complete sense to me. Truly, we need not think alike to love alike. And, as we say every Sunday morning: Love is the spirit of this congregation.

Love isn’t one thing forever and ever. Loves asks us to respond, to show up, even to change and to challenge ourselves. Love moves us forward. Our founders were movers & shakers. They believed in human progress, and they saw their new institution as an engine of necessary and ongoing progress. Then and since, I hear something consistent in our history... a sturdy rootedness in love, sometimes in the face of traditional power... and a deeply-held and acted-on belief in the power of possibility.

Today, UUSGS is similarly deep-rooted and vibrant and alive. We’re exploring life’s big questions, together with open minds. We’re a hub of creativity, creating space for arts collaborations and community dialog. We are reliable community partners committed to co-creating a fairer, more loving world. And we’re still asking ourselves some of the questions that were present at our founding. What does love require of us now? In what ways do we need to grow and change to even better reflect our values? How can we ensure that this community can be a beacon of progressive religion for another 200 years?

I invite you to make this journey with us. I hope you will. What an important time to be believing in one another... to be building together, with love as our guide. What an important time to signal again our deep belief in the power of possibility.

Love to you & yours, always...

Rev. Dr. Jason Seymour



## Leadership

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield would like to thank the many individuals who have given generously of their time over the years. Together we have reached a truly momentous occasion in our history. Some of the individuals we wish to thank include:

### Board Of Trustees

Jamie Margolis, President  
Janaé Jackson, Vice President  
Jackie Shanti, Clerk  
Simon Brighenti  
Jack Kennedy  
Verne McArthur  
Ted Welsh

### Staff

Rev. Dr. Jason Seymour, Minister  
Elisabeth Weber, Director of Music  
Darcie Farber, Director of Religious  
Education & Family Ministry  
Denise Benoit, Director of  
Congregational Life  
Eric Boucher, Production &  
Communications  
James Wilburn, Sexton  
Allison Boucher, Teacher  
Willow Farber, Teacher  
Angela Mason, Teacher  
Jocelyn Moss, Teacher  
Alison Weber, Teacher

### Capital Campaign Leadership Team

John Benoit  
Kathy Mague  
Jon Todd

The Capital Campaign leaders would like to thank or remember those who have donated their time over the years in different ways, including strategic planning, building and design, technology, donor engagement, planning and visionary leadership.

Katy Biron  
Carolyn Bradley  
Peter Courtney  
Les Couture  
Bonnie Cox  
Kerry Dietz  
James Fiore  
Paul Gonzales  
Teresa Gonzales  
Edward Hernandez-Matos  
Mary Kapner  
Roger Kellman  
Amanda McCabe-Hernandez  
Kate LaPlatney  
Erin Placey  
Paul Provencher  
Jessie Ryan  
Harry Seymour  
Jim Scheffler  
Cynthia Sommer  
Mark Weber



## Some of What We Do

### Social Justice

- Anti-Racism
- Green Team
- LGBTQ+
- Pioneer Valley Project
- Refugee Justice & partner family support
- Springfield Climate Justice Coalition

Through our Sunday morning Offering, UUSGS has given away over \$150k to partner organizations, non-profits, and community groups.

UUSGS is committed to pluralism and interfaith engagement. Rev. Jason has served as President of the Interfaith Council of Greater Springfield since 2019.

### Community Arts — collaborative, relevant, open to the public:

- Adult Choir
- Children's Choir
- Improv, for adults & children
- Special projects/collaborations (Missa Gaia, Messiah)
- Unity House Concerts
- Unity House Players (community theater)

### Activities — spirituality & human connection

- Alliance
- Afternoon lecture group
- Mindfulness meditation
- Lifelong religious education/exploration
- Soulful Supper (community meal every Wed night)
- Tai chi
- Youth & young adult

*"Justice is what love looks like in public."*

— Cornell West

*"I am ashamed of my government for failing to act so as to make it unnecessary for men to march and stand against police brutality in order to demonstrate that freedom is being prostituted."*

— Rev. George Pennington

*"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."*

— Martin Luther King, Jr.



# Some of Our History

- 1636** First Church in Springfield is established (Court Square)
- 1818** 54 members of First Church, including Jonathan Dwight, leave to form Third Congregational Society
- 1819** Funds raised, new church built at corner of State and Willow streets
- 1825** American Unitarian Association is founded in Boston, MA.
- Jonathan Dwight of Springfield is among those present
- 1826** Rev William BO Peabody and Jonathan Dwight sign a petition for slavery reforms and the return of free Africans
- 1869** Church of the Unity is built on State Street.
- The design was an early commission of renowned architect HH Richardson
- 1873** Rev. Amory Dwight Mayo backs the equal suffrage movement” and contributes to “The Una”, one of the earliest publications owned, written, and edited only by women.
- 1879** Women recognized as voting members (40 years before the 19th Amendment)
- 1880s** Springfield College is founded by the YMCA. Unitarians (as well as Jews and Catholics) were not allowed to be admitted as students, faculty, incorporators, or trustees. Church of the Unity minister Rev. John Cuckson, called on his congregants and fellow Unitarians to boycott the college.
- 1890s** Tiffany & LaFarge windows are installed in memoriam of church members
- “The Lightbearer” currently resides at the George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum
- 1894** Afternoon Alliance/Women’s Alliance was formed (and still meets today!)
- 1910s** Church of the Unity sponsored, organized, and hosted the first Boy Scout and Girl Scout Troops in Springfield.
- 1919** Free pew system goes into effect, against the common practice of paid seats
- 1922** Church adopts sister congregation in Kalouk, Transylvania, sends funds through the Depression into the 1930’s
- 1924** Church of the Unity begins broadcasting Sunday services on WBZ Springfield (which would continue into the 1950s)
- 1928** St. Paul’s Universalist church (founded 1827) merged with Church of the Unity (becoming Unitarian-Universalist 35 years before the denominations formerly merged)
- 1935** Aeolian Skinner organ installed (currently in use at UUSGS)
- 1947** Second Universalist Church (founded 1895) merges
- 1959** Church of the Unity relocates to 11-acre parcel in Forest Park
- Architect Robert Hotvedt also created the acrylic art pieces in the sanctuary and the wood design in Friendship Hall, each “to show that individual, separate parts can make a working unity.”
  - Mid-century modern design, built with no overt religious symbols to emphasize the spirituality of humanity/community and Nature.
- 1960** Rev. William A. DeWolfe of the Universalist Church of Sixteen Acres chairs the Hampden County ACLU chapter
- 1964** Active in voter registration
- 1965** Name changed to The First Unitarian Universalist Church in Springfield (following the merger of the Unitarian and Universalist denominations in 1963)
- 1965** Collected funds to send minister to Selma; held a memorial jazz concert for Rev. James Reeb, killed in Selma; Rev. Pennington active in local CORE
- 1967** Rev. Pennington expresses public support of birth control and sex education, with equal access to all people
- 1972** Unitarian Church of Chicopee (founded 1841) merges
- 1972** Universalist Church of Sixteen Acres (founded 1953) merges
- 1970s** UUSGS joins Interfaith Council of Greater Springfield
- 1977** Springfield Gay Alliance meets regularly at UUSGS; Rev. Tom Ahlburn advises
- 1983** Rev. Charles Slap publicly supports “gay marriage”
- 1980s** Memorial Garden
- 1990s** Capital campaign to replace roof
- 2015** Unity House Players founded to provide inclusive community theater
- 2018** UUSGS co-creates and supports interfaith sanctuary coalition
- 2019** Rev. Dr. Seymour named President of Interfaith Council of Greater Springfield; responds publicly to anti-Semitism and Islamophobia
- 2020** UUSGS responds to pandemic by moving online, supporting hospital workers, combating isolation, offering drive-thru holidays

# Campaign History

Between 2012 and 2018, the congregation was growing at approximately 5-10% per year. We saw this somewhat as a success itself, but even more we felt it was affirming the work we were doing in the world. People were feeling inspired and connected. Our work in the community felt relevant and effective. We needed to make room for more people to participate.

So, a Strategic Planning team was organized to begin some long-term planning. The resulting plan identified a number of factors critical to continued growth:

- Capacity
- Access and accessibility
- Deferred maintenance
- Staffing
- Publicity & communications

The plan recommended that teams be formed to explore:

- Immediate actions to increase capacity: physical space & programming
- Long-term needs: capital projects & fundraising
- A name change: aligning our legal name with our public name

Considerable progress was made:

- Our legal name was changed from the Third Congregational Society of Springfield to the Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield (UUSGS).
- A Capital Projects team developed preliminary plans, cost estimates and priorities.
- The Chalice Lighters leadership team developed a preliminary plan for a capital campaign.

With the onset of COVID, UUSGS made the values-driven decision to not begin the campaign as it had been planned... but rather to shift immediate focus to safety and survival, and to learn from frequent and ongoing adjustments and societal changes. The shape of the campaign shifted, but it still retained its core values. (For example, sanctuary technology became more of a priority.)

Returning to Strategic Planning post-COVID, the UUSGS Board of Trustees approved a reprioritized project list and re-chartered a capital campaign team to move forward, building on the work of the previous five years.

All of which is to say that this campaign has not been a traditional capital campaign. Needs have evolved, as has the campaign. Things have, at times, moved more slowly than we might have originally hoped. What remains, however – what has never been pushed aside for the sake of expediency or convenience – is a commitment to integrity and dialog throughout the process.

Sometimes, the power of possibility means moving quickly. Sometimes, it means trusting the process enough to listen, to pause, to do what is needed, and to begin again.



### **What is a capital campaign?**

A set of fundraising and outreach activities to raise money for a specific need – in this case, improvements to our facilities to ensure gathering spaces which are safe, flexible and supportive for a wide range of activities, accessible to persons of all ages and abilities, welcoming, attractive and functional, and fully functional for full participation online and in-person SO THAT we may continue to be a force for transformation and transcendence in an ever-changing world.

### **Why is it important?**

For over 200 years, our congregational forebears stood boldly for inclusion and justice.

Now it is our time to renew and elevate our faith's commitment; **to gather our collective energies as a force of love, joy and justice in the world.**

Vist our website for more information, testimonials, and perspectives from the Board of Trustees and individuals from the congregation about why this is important.

### **Does the capital campaign commitment replace the annual pledge?**

No, it does not. We ask all members and friends to consider making two financial commitments:

1. Annual Pledge
2. Capital Campaign Commitment

### **What is an Annual Pledge?**

Together, we invest in our vision so that UUSGS can continue to be a place of Connection, Creativity, Growth and Justice.

The annual pledge is paid yearly to support the ongoing operating expenses of the congregation. It is the foundation for keeping UUSGS functioning. Full funding for our programs and staff is essential to sustaining and growing UUSGS. Your annual pledge helps us provide the programs and services we cherish.


Please do not lower your annual pledge to make a larger capital campaign donation. It is critical to continue annual giving.

### **How is a capital campaign different from annual giving?**

A capital campaign is in response to a matter of significant need and therefore takes place only when necessary.

- It is over and above annual giving.
- It seeks much larger amounts of money than an annual planned budget can meet
- It invests its returns in long term improvements, not year to year expenses.
- It schedules payments over a longer period of time; donors select a giving plan convenient for them.
- It requires planned and inspirational effort, often involving gifts of annuities, real estate, trusts, life insurance, IRAs, securities, or other assets.

**Through capital giving, many individuals and families  
experience the joy of deepening their commitment to  
UUSGS and their legacy in this community.**



Love calls us to elevate how  
we gather so as to create  
a relevant and accessible  
community; a powerful force of  
transformation and transcendence.

Together... this is possible!

Connect with us: [uuspringfield.org](http://uuspringfield.org)



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