



The First Unitarian Church of Oakland

Shared Ministry: Stewardship and Pledging

Frequently Asked Questions



Why should I pledge my time, talent and treasure?

As a member, friend or ally of this church you are part of a spiritual community that seeks to put faith into action for the benefit of the church and the wider community, as well as the web of life, of which we are a part. Ministry happens when we act on the belief that our good works and volunteerism; our money and our passions are what bring the mission, vision and ends of our church alive. In short, we, all of us, are the church.

We are all Sowers of the dream of a *spiritually alive, radically inclusive and justice centered world*.

And what are the fruits of our gifts of time, talent and treasure? We believe that right here, on the corner of 14th and Castro; we reap in abundance the gifts of spirit, love, healing, joy and community. With open hands and hearts we share this bounty within, among and beyond our walls. And there is still much more work to be done to create the world of our dreams....



How much should I pledge? Church members are expected to make a meaningful financial contribution *within their means*. This year, an extraordinary dream is about to come true. In this year's Stewardship Campaign we will act to fund the ministry of Rev. Jacqueline Duhart (Rev. Jacqueline) at the First Unitarian Church of Oakland. And we will be successful.

We are asking everyone to be a part of this joyous action. *Every dollar of your pledge, in excess of a 5% increase of your pledge from the prior year, will go directly to fund Rev. Jacqueline's ministry.*

Attached, you will find your pledge total from last year, along with what a 5% increase would look like. And, as stated above, anything over that increase will go directly to funding Rev. Jacqueline's position.

What if I'm a new pledger or wish to revise my pledge amount? We all have different financial means, challenges, and abundance. One tool to use to determine giving *where we are all giving on an equal basis* is called the "Giving It All I've Got" guide (see page 3). Generally, a good starting point is 3% of whatever you determine your baseline to be.

Please note: How you calculate your income or starting base is up to you. The Bay Area is very expensive so many of us use after-tax income minus any large expenses that we find challenging. We then take the appropriate percent of the amount left. Most of us find that the amount calculated that way is more manageable due to the high cost of where we live. And many of us find we actually end up increasing our pledge as a result of this approach. The First Unitarian Church of Oakland has developed a great pledge calculator that takes into account individual circumstances. Please see the "Giving It All I've Got" guide on page 3.

What does it take to sustain our church? Our operating budget for 2014 is anticipated to be close to **\$650,000**. This includes building maintenance, minister and staff salaries, denominational contributions, and payment on our mortgage. Funding our community is necessary for its viability.

How can I learn more about our church's finances? First Unitarian's Ministers, Executive Team (ET), and Board are entirely committed to sharing with any and all members of the congregation our church's financial picture, including operating budget, past expenses and revenues, debt (mortgage), and plans for the future. The ET is working, with our Board Treasurer and church Accountant, on a series of monthly reports that will be available in the church office to members of the congregation. The ET and Board Treasurer give a financial report at every Board meeting, which members of the congregation may observe.

We believe that shared financial ownership of our church is part of our shared ministry, and believe that a better understanding of our organization's financial situation will help our congregation more fully participate in our church, including prioritizing our activities, going through our discernment process to understand our vision for ministry going forward, and, yes, sharing their personal financial assets.

What does it mean to be a Voting Member? Section 3 of the church bylaws states: *Any Member shall be entitled to vote at any meeting of the membership duly called pursuant to these Bylaws, provided that the Member has recorded contributions at the minimum rate of \$100 per annum in the preceding six months. In specific circumstances any Minister, in his or her discretion, may waive the financial contribution required for voting eligibility.*

It is the Stewardship Team's goal to have our entire membership be eligible to vote.

What if I can't give \$100 per year but still want to be a voting member? You may not be able to give the minimum rate but we ask that you give any amount, whether it's one dollar or five per year, and then obtain a ministerial pass for the rest. Your contribution, however small, is meaningful and means that you are sharing in the support of our community. This contribution, combined with a ministerial pass for the remainder, will allow you to be a voting member. If you find that you need a full ministerial pass, please talk to a minister as soon as possible.

My Commitment Level

We invite you to spend some time discerning your commitment level by reading over the following table. If you find that your commitment level does not yet match your pledging ability, that's okay. Every gift counts. When times are better, you can reassess your pledging level using the "Giving It The Best That I've Got" guide (see page 3).

Pledging Circles	My Commitment Level	Pledging definition One or more may apply to you
Visionaries Circle	As a visionary, I am making a very large gift to the church to ensure its future viability as a community that will forever seek to stand on the side of love.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endowment, large donation, property, will
The Sower's Circle	I believe in the mission, vision and ends of my beloved community and am committed to sowing seeds for the present and future growth of UU Oakland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pledgers who increase their pledge 5% above last year's pledge and make a donation to fund Rev. J's ministry. Some pledgers may increase more than 5% of their determined baseline as well as make a donation to fund Rev. J's ministry. All gifts above 5% of the prior year pledge will be used to fund Rev. J's ministry. Pledgers who are already giving 10% or above of determined baseline have the option to keep their pledge at its current level and make a donation to fund Rev. J's ministry.
Sustainer	I am committed to sustaining our programs within, among and beyond our walls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pledgers who are maintaining their current pledge level and are either on or working toward a fair and equitable pledge of 3% or higher (see pg. 3, Giving It All I've Got Guide).
Supporter	The church is a significant part of my life and promotes my spiritual growth. I am committed to supporting this nurturing community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pledgers of at least 100.00 per year (this allows you to be a voting member).* Pledgers who can afford less than 100.00 per year and receive a ministerial pass for the difference (this allows them to be a voting member).* Pledgers who receive of a full ministerial pass (this allows them to be a voting member).*

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“Giving It the Best that I Got” - Pledge Calculator

Starting Point:

You get to define your starting place! Start with your income - take home pay, extra abundance you have. Start with an amount that you can be comfortable with.

Subtract:

Expenses that are stressful (perhaps so stressful that it is difficult to think about giving because there is worry that these can't be covered if you do give.) This might include childcare or elder care, rent or your mortgage, college loans, medical costs, etc. You get to decide what is out of bounds when calculating your giving.

Add:

Special items that increase your abundance if you do have them. This can include stock/bond dividends and income or gifts from wills and family members. You decide if there is anything extra to add.

Starting Point	\$
Subtract	\$
Add	\$
My Baseline =	\$

Pledge rate suggestions after you've arrived at your Baseline: The recommendation for a beginning just and equitable pledge is 3% of whatever you have determined your baseline to be. We ask that as your situation changes, you work toward a full tithe of 10% of your baseline. If you need help making a determination, please contact the Stewardship Team at stewardshipteam@uuoakland.org.

Percent (____) that I am willing to support the mission of our community.

Calculate your yearly 'Pledge' commitment. \$_____ (percent X total)

Thank you! Please fill in the attached pledge form, sign and turn in.

What if I Can't Contribute with a Pledge now? That's OKAY! Not everyone can contribute monetarily, but please talk to a minister about receiving a ministerial pass so that you can be a voting member.

I've heard the phrase "Time, Talent and Treasure." What does that mean with regard to pledging?

We value everyone in our community - your **time and talent** are equally as important and valued. On the back of the pledge form you'll find a place to pledge your time and talent!

