

Our Mission:

The First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh provides an intentional, supportive, and inclusive religious community where individuals of all ages and diverse beliefs, sustained by the seven Unitarian Universalist principles, seek personal growth and strive to promote social justice within the congregation and in the world beyond.

An Invitation to Participate

First Unitarian Church

605 Morewood Avenue

Pittsburgh, PA 15213

412-621-8008

www.first-unitarian-pgh.org



January 1, 2008

Message from the Minister

To All Those Who Are Connected with First Unitarian Church —

This Invitation to Participate offers some practical information about how you can participate effectively and responsibly in activities at First Unitarian Church. Much of the information in this Invitation to Participate will be especially useful for newcomers, but continuing members and friends will most likely find plenty of helpful information as well.

First Unitarian Church offers many different opportunities for you to develop a sense of community and contribute to the life of the congregation. Simply attending Sunday morning worship services is a wonderful way to participate, but many individuals find that their experience at First Unitarian Church is much deeper and richer when they participate in an affinity group, a performing arts group, a covenant group, or a committee.

Additional information about First Unitarian Church can be found in the Groups Policy and the Personnel Policy.

Being part of a religious community can be a deeply rewarding experience. I hope that this Invitation to Participate will help make your experience more deeply rewarding for you.

Rev. David Herndon

January 1, 2008

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Questions about Worship

When does First Unitarian Church offer worship services?

During the regular church year, from the second Sunday in September through the second Sunday in June, worship services take place at 9:30 AM and 11:00 AM. For twelve Sundays in the summer, from the third Sunday in June (Fathers' Sunday) through the first Sunday in September (Labor Sunday), worship services take place at 10:00 AM.

Does the congregation have expectations regarding what clothing one should wear at worship services?

Some individuals prefer more formal clothes, while others prefer to dress more informally. We do not have a dress code.

Is there a place where I can go with a crying baby during worship services?

Yes. The Semple Room has comfortable furniture and a wall-mounted speaker so that you and your infant can hear the service. The Semple Room is accessible through a door adjacent to the last row of pews in the Sanctuary.

What is a typically Sunday church service like?

The order of the service is similar to other mainstream churches with hymns, readings, music, a sermon, and a meditation or prayer. The content is often somewhat different from Sunday to Sunday and encompasses a variety of beliefs and theological opinions. The service is approximately one hour long.

Does the church make provisions for individuals with hearing difficulties or low vision?

Hearing assist earphones are available in the Sanctuary for individuals with hearing difficulties. Large-print hymnbooks are available for individuals with low vision. Please ask an Usher or Greeter for earphones. Large print hymnbooks are on the table in the Morewood Avenue Lobby.

Can anyone say anything at Joys and Sorrows?

We ask church members and friends to observe the following guidelines for Joys and Sorrows:

- Please share personal joys or sorrows rather than announcements, political opinions, or critical comments about the church or individuals who are part of the church community.
- Please say your name.
- Please speak closely into the microphone.
- Please be brief.
- Please do not monopolize the time set aside for Joys and Sorrows. Please plan to share a personal joy or sorrow no more often than once every six to eight weeks.

Questions about Parking and the Church Building

Where can I park?

Parking is available along Ellsworth Avenue on both sides of the street. Parking is also available along Morewood Avenue next to the church. (On Sundays, parking is available along Morewood Avenue on both sides of the street.) In the evening and on weekends, parking is available in the drive-through parking areas at Winchester-Thurston School along both Ellsworth and Morewood Avenues. Limited parking is available on Shadyside Lane.

Although the four-space church parking area is reserved for staff during business hours Monday through Friday, these parking spaces may be used during the evening and on weekends, especially for individuals with mobility challenges and for individuals bringing supplies into the church.

Is the church building accessible for individuals who use wheelchairs and walkers?

Yes. The sidewalk that begins at the Morewood Avenue parking area provides level access to the church. An elevator inside the building connects all three levels of the church. A private, accessible restroom may be found on the lower level.

Is there a family restroom with a changing table?

Yes. Our accessible bathroom is available to any gender and has a changing table on the wall. There is also a changing table in the bathroom in the nursery.

Where is the church office?

The church office is located behind the Sanctuary. From inside the church building, you can get to the church office by going through the double doors near the chancel at the front of the Sanctuary. From outside the church building, you can get to the church office through the single wooden door adjacent to the Morewood Avenue parking area. You will need to press the buzzer and identify yourself for access to the church building through this exterior door. (See map on the back page.)

When is the church office open?

Church office hours are 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Friday, except for holidays. The church office is open on Sundays from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

Occasionally the church office may not be covered if office staff members are running errands or having lunch. To avoid disappointment, you may wish to call ahead just to make sure someone will be in the office when you arrive.

Where is the Children and Youth Ministry office?

The Children and Youth Ministry office is located in the classroom building along the left wall of the main hallway next to the large window across from the Schweitzer Room. (See map on the back page.)

How do I use the library?

Anyone is welcome to browse the library at First Unitarian Church, which specializes in books directly related to Unitarian Universalism. You may fill out the card inside the back cover of a book if you would like to borrow it. Please note that some books do not circulate.

Questions about Getting Involved and Membership

How can I learn about activities and events at First Unitarian Church?

You can learn about activities and events through the following communication channels: (1) the monthly church newsletter which is called The Chalice; (2) announcements in the weekly order of service; (3) the church web site, www.first-unitarian-pgh.org; (4) occasional all-church e-mail messages; (5) posters on the walls of the church; (6) bulletin boards; (7) information tables downstairs in the Undercroft Gallery; and (8) speaking with our Membership Coordinator, Devon Wood.

Must I be a member to participate in church activities?

Individuals who are not members of First Unitarian Church are welcome to participate in church activities.

How do I get to know other people in the congregation?

You can begin by talking informally with others during the social hour which takes place after every worship service, or, if you have children, by talking informally with other parents in the classroom area. However, you can begin to develop a real sense of community in one of the following ways: (1) taking part in an adult religious class; (2) volunteering for a project; (3) joining a performing arts group; (4) taking part in the activities of an affinity group; (5) becoming part of a covenant group; or (6) becoming a member of a committee. First Unitarian Church has intentionally created many groups where individuals can get to know others and build a sense of community.

Who should I talk with for pastoral care?

You could call the Minister, Rev. David Herndon. If you have a concern about your family, you could also call the Director of Ministries with Children and Youth, Jennifer Halperin. If you have a concern regarding a member or membership, you could call our Membership Coordinator, Devon Wood.

How do I become a member of First Unitarian Church?

The first step toward becoming a member of First Unitarian Church is to pick up a pre-membership packet, which is available at the Welcome Table downstairs in the Undercroft Gallery. After completing the forms provided in the packet, the next step is to sign the Membership Book.

Membership signing happens after church on the first and third Sundays of each

month. The minimum age for membership is fourteen. As a member, you may vote at congregational meetings if (1) you have made a contribution of record in the preceding year, or if (2) you have made either a contribution of record or a pledge in the current year.

What expectations does the congregation have of its members?

First Unitarian Church recognizes that different individuals may choose to participate in very different ways. However, allowing for these individual differences, the congregation has the following expectations of its members:

- We expect you to attend church regularly. Regular attendance at church enables us to connect with one another and with the spiritual life of this religious community.
- .We expect you to pursue your own personal spiritual growth. We believe that each of us is responsible for working toward our own spiritual growth, seeking our own understanding of our life's purpose and meaning within the context of a caring and thoughtful religious community.
- We expect you to offer service to this church and to the larger community. Each of us is encouraged to put our faith into action. When you become a member of this church, you become part of our shared ministry. Becoming part of our shared ministry includes caring for one another and caring for our religious community as a whole. Becoming part of our shared ministry also includes social justice ministry or social service ministry with the larger community.
- We expect you to offer generous financial support to this church. Membership in our religious community carries with it the expectation that all of us will make financial contributions reflecting our personal circumstances and the church's aspirations toward greater fulfillment of our mission. We ask that all members of First Unitarian Church aim toward making a "fair share" pledge of at least three percent of household income.

Questions about Religious Education

Are Sunday School or religious education classes available for my children?

During the regular church year, religious education (RE) classes are available for children from preschool age through eighth grade at the 9:30 AM service, while religious education classes are available for children and youth from preschool through high school at the 11:00 AM service. Informal classes are available on many Sundays in the summer. Religious education classes take place during the worship services, although children typically stay with their parents in the Sanctuary during the first fifteen minutes of the Sunday worship services. Nursery care is available every Sunday for infants and toddlers.

Should I register my children for religious education classes?

If you are visiting for the first time with your children, or if you are returning but have not yet decided that First Unitarian Church is your religious home, we encourage you to fill out the Religious Education Visitors form. However, once you have decided that you want to be part of this religious community, we encourage you to fill out a religious education registration form. Continuing members and friends of First Unitarian Church should fill out a religious education registration form at the beginning of the church year.

What opportunities are available for adult religious education?

We offer a wide variety of adult classes and lectures throughout the year. Most are held on weekday nights and on Sundays after services. Please visit the Adult Religious Education table during our social hour on Sundays to sign up for a class. Sometimes there is a nominal fee to cover supplies or materials. Additionally, the Sunday Morning Forum, an hour long lecture on a wide range of topics, is held most Sundays in the Schweitzer room at 9:30 AM. Please see the Chalice newsletter for the schedule or look at the bulletin board outside the church on the Morewood Avenue.

Are there specific religious programming for young adults or college students?

Our campus ministry group, Unitarian Universalist Community on Campus, is open to any college student or recent graduate. The group meets weekly at the church at 8 PM on Wednesdays when school is in session. Also, all of our adult religious education offerings are available to adults of all ages as well as high school youth.

Questions about Communication, Rites of Passage, and Events

Can I receive the church newsletter via email?

Yes. Please contact Business Manager Rita Gates if you would like to receive the church newsletter via email as a pdf attachment.

How can I submit something for inclusion in the newsletter or the order of service?

Submissions for the newsletter can be sent to Melody Platz at chalice@first-unitarianpgh.org. The deadline is the fifteenth of each month. Submissions for the order of service can be sent to Jennifer Parsons at jenparsons1@verizon.net. The deadline for the order of service is Wednesday at noon. Church communication channels are intended for notices about activities and events. We do not make any provision for expressions of personal opinion, letters to the editor, complaints, suggestions, or business advertisements in church communication channels.

Is there a church directory?

Yes. Copies of the church directory are available in the church office for members and friends of the church. The church directory is updated from time to time.

How can I find out more about rites of passage such as child dedications, weddings or unions, and memorial services?

First Unitarian Church has informative booklets about all of these rites of passage. If you contact Business Manager Rita Gates or Office Assistant Alex Rose if you would like to receive one of these booklets by mail.

How can I schedule an event?

If you are a member of a committee, an affinity group, a music performance group, or the Board of Trustees, and it is your responsibility to schedule an event on behalf of that group, please contact Business Manager Rita Gates or Office Assistant Alex Rose in the church office.

If you are not affiliated with a committee, an affinity group, a music performance group, or the Board of Trustees, you have two options: (1) you may contact some appropriate group (for example, the Adult Religious Education Committee, the Social

Justice Committee, or the Music Committee) and ask for their sponsorship or assistance; or (2) you may rent a room at the church for a private event. First Unitarian Church makes no provision for individuals who are not affiliated with a committee, an affinity group, a music performance group, or the Board of Trustees to organize church events.

Questions about Contributions and Finances

Are financial contributions to First Unitarian Church tax-deductible?

Yes, financial contributions to First Unitarian Church are tax-deductible, and each January the church sends out a contribution statement to every individual who has made a financial contribution during the preceding year. However, your contributions will appear on your statement only if the office staff can identify you as the contributor. Thus, for example, if you simply place cash into the offering plate, the office staff will not know the source of your contribution. If you write a check or use a contribution envelope, the office staff will be able to identify you as the contributor.

How can I contribute to one of the church endowments?

First Unitarian Church welcomes contributions to the General Endowment, the Social Justice Endowment, the Music Endowment, the Campus Ministry Endowment, and the Endowment for Ministry with Children and Youth. To contribute to one of these funds, make your check out to "First Unitarian Church," write the name of the program endowment to which you wish to contribute on the memo line, and send it in to the church office. A cover letter from you will provide additional assurance that your gift will be credited to the proper account.

How large is the church budget?

The 2007 operating budget was \$492,213. The 2007 capital budget was \$8,129.

Are there sources of income other than pledges from members?

In addition to pledges from members, which cover about seventy-seven percent of our operating expenses, First Unitarian Church relies on rental income and investment income.

Can I direct some portion of my pledge toward one specific part of the church budget?

Members, friends, and groups are not permitted to make contributions toward specific line items in the annual operating budget. The Board of Trustees understands this practice to be contrary to the general principle that the Board has sole authority to set the budget. Contributions toward the annual operating budget as a whole are always welcome.

How can I make a major gift or bequest to First Unitarian Church?

Please talk to the Treasurer or the Minister.

Questions about Church Governance

What are the responsibilities of the Board of Trustees?

The Board of Trustees is responsible for articulating the outcomes toward which the ministry of the congregation should be directed. The Board of Trustees works with the Minister to ensure that the resources of the church are being used as effectively and efficiently as possible to achieve the outcomes specified by the Board.

What is the Program Executive Team?

The Program Executive Team coordinates the program life of the church.

What is the Operations Executive Team?

The Operations Executive Team coordinates church finances and building maintenance.

Questions about the Denomination

What is the Unitarian Universalist Association?

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) was formed in 1961 by a merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America. In North America, the Unitarians trace their origins back to the early 1800s, while the Universalists trace their origins back to the 1790s. The Unitarian Universalist

Association encompasses about one thousand and fifty congregations throughout the United States.

What is General Assembly?

General Assembly (GA) is the annual business meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association. It takes place in late June, each year in a different city.

What is the Ohio-Meadville District?

The Ohio-Meadville District (OMD) is one of about two dozen regional associations of Unitarian Universalist congregations. It was formed in 1961 by the merger of the Ohio Universalist Convention and the Meadville Unitarian Conference. The Ohio-Meadville District includes about fifty Unitarian Universalist congregations in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and New York. The Ohio-Meadville District employs a District Executive, a Religious Education Consultant, a Youth Programs Coordinator, a Campus Ministry and Young Adult Consultant, and an Office Manager.

What is District Assembly?

District Assembly is the annual business meeting of the Ohio-Meadville District. It takes place in April, each year in a different church.

What is Summer Institute?

Summer Institute (SI) a week-long intergenerational gathering of Unitarian Universalists from churches in the Ohio-Meadville District. It takes place each year in July on the campus of Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. Approximately six hundred people attend Summer Institute, and newcomers are always welcome.

Are there other Unitarian Universalist churches in Pittsburgh?

The Greater Pittsburgh Cluster of Unitarian Universalist Churches includes the following five congregations, each of which has a distinctive style and size:

- First Unitarian Church (Shadyside/Oakland)
- Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church (North Side)
- Unitarian Universalist Church of the North Hills (Franklin Park/North Hills)

- Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills (Mt. Lebanon/South Hills)
- East Suburban Unitarian Universalist Church (Murrysville/Eastern Suburbs)

What is the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee?

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) advocates for justice and human rights in many countries around the world. Although the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee often works closely with the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee relies entirely on individual memberships for financial support.

What is the Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Action Network?

The Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Action Network (UUPLAN) provides opportunities for Unitarian Universalists in Pennsylvania to promote our values in the state legislative process. The Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Action Network relies entirely on individual memberships for financial support.

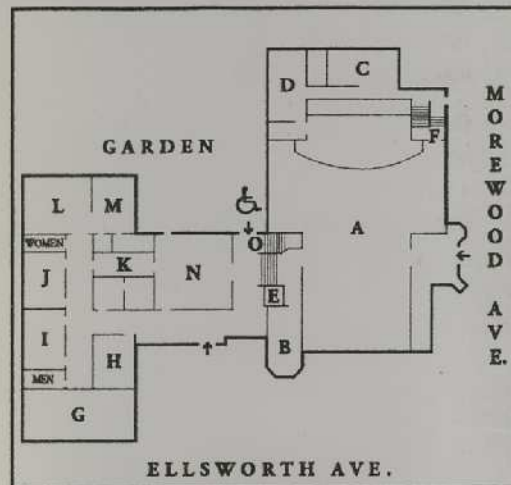
Questions about Additional Topics

Who should I talk with if I have a question not covered in this document?

You could start by talking with a church staff member or a member of the Board of Trustees. You might also check the Groups Policy or the Personnel Policy. Additionally, many more general questions regarding Unitarian Universalism can be found in the book, 100 Questions That Non-Members Ask about Unitarian Universalism by John Sias (<http://www.uunashua.org/100quest.shtml>). The Welcome Table on Sunday mornings often carries copies which you can borrow or purchase.

Welcome to First Unitarian Church!

Map of the First Floor of First Unitarian Church



- A Sanctuary
- B Semple Room
- C Church Office
- D Minister's Study
- E Elevator
- F Stairs to Church Office, Minister's Study, and Undercroft Gallery
- G Priestley Room
- H Religious Education Office
- I Eliot Room
- J Gandhi Room
- K Kitchen
- L Fahs Room
- M Nursery
- N Schweitzer Room
- O Stairs to Restrooms, Undercroft Gallery and Main Kitchen