First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa
Fall Congregational Meeting
Worship Hall
October 25, 2026

Minutes

A. Call to Order
Mary Ella Keblusek welcomed everyone to the Fall Congregational Meeting (FCM), introduced herself as the President of FirstU and brought the meeting to order at 12:32. She mentioned that Rev. Lara Cowtan, who had lived in Europe for many years, was on study leave, attending a European UU conference.

Carmen Contreras provided a land acknowledgement, and Maury Prevost lit the chalice and provided a reading.

B. Recognition of Life Events
M. E. Keblusek introduced a video that Rev. Lara had provided to recognize those who had passed away since the Annual General Meeting in April. Those recognized were:

- Nonna MacKenzie – March 24, 2026
- Ed Cuylits – April 28, 2026
- Peter Andrews – July 27, 2026
- Sam Wilmott – July 31, 2026
- Fred Cappuccino – August 6, 2026

C. Preliminary Motions
Amalilly Sullivan, the Head Scrutineer, provided her report that the congregation has 322 members and with 95 present in person or by proxy that quorum had been met.

M. E. Keblusek then reviewed the agenda.

MOTION: Be it resolved that the Agenda of this Congregational meeting be approved
Moved by Jonathan Dench; Seconded by Mike Fletcher unanimously approved

D. Opening Remarks
Minister's remarks by recording:
Rev. Lara began her recording by saying she wished she could have been at the meeting. She continued by remarking that at last year's FCM she had barely arrived and so had focused her comments on her hopes for the year. She remarked that the previous Sunday had included the Special Congregational Meeting at which she had accepted the congregation's offer that she be FirstU's settled minister. She reiterated that she is delighted to serve in that role, especially as there is so much to lean into as we go forward together. She said she's looking forward to working together, including regarding campus development, expanding the religious exploration program to embrace lifespan learning and increasing our intergenerational activities. She acknowledged that the FCM pays attention to the congregation's important stewardship work and wished the members well.

President's remarks:

M. E. Keblusek remarked that the past 6 months since she became president had been a whirlwind with many highlights:

- Membership has grown to 322, which has made FirstU the largest congregation in Canada;
- The congregation identified Rev. Lara as settled minister, with many thanks to the leadership provided by the Discernment Task Force;
- Rev. Lara's service as our settled minister will provide stability and a good foundation to develop a shared ministry;
- Board members and committees have been active:
    - The Governance Committee, now chaired by John Emond, is conducting a review of our governance documents;
    - The Personnel Committee, led by Lisa Boulay, will assist with human resource plans and with the search for a new Director of Religious Exploration; and,
    - A Generosity Liaison position, held by M. Prevost, has been created to provide oversite and linkage between the congregation's many fund-generating activities;
- Strengthening connections with Unitarian House of Ottawa:
    - Rev. Lara and Jenn Berntson have led regular services there;
    - Six leaders from UHO and FirstU have been meeting regularly since 2025; and,
    - Discussion about the UHO proposal to buy their property, which now includes consideration of a major lease extension, has been deferred to 2027;
- The board has begun to consider how to update FirstU's strategic plan;
- There has been work on expressing everything that is going on and presenting that in visual form through organization charts;
- Attendance has been strengthening at Sunday services.

She urged members to get involved. She pointed out the 'Getting Connected' document and recommended those interested contact Lisa Sharp, the volunteer coordinator, at volunteers@firstunitarianottawa.ca. She reflected that in her own experience she had found that getting involved helped her deepen her connection with the congregation. Those interested in contacting her are welcome to do so at: president@firstunitarianottawa.ca

E. Amend the General Operating By-Law for the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa

John Emond, the Chair of the Governance Committee, introduced this topic explaining that several changes to the FirstU's By-Laws were necessary. He identified those changes as:

- Lowering the minimum age of membership to fourteen (14) years of age and adding a Lifetime Member category, as recommended in the report from the Membership Task Force that was approved by the Board on June 19, 2024;
- Updating the term "Letters Patent" to "Articles of Incorporation" in compliance with the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010 (ONCA);
- Allowing flexibility in the number of elected directors (from "8" to a range of "7-9") as allowed by the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010 (ONCA);
- Further clarifying the length of service (terms) for elected directors to better allow for staggered terms;
- Harmonizing the language on length of service (terms) for members of the Nominating Committee with the updated language for elected directors;

- Updating the names of the roles of "President" and "Vice-President" to "President and Chair" and "Vice-President and Vice-Chair" in compliance with the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010 (ONCA);
- Making other minor changes in the document to improve clarity and to maintain compliance with the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010 (ONCA).

MOTION: Be it resolved that the GENERAL OPERATING BY-LAW, dated October 25, 2026, approved by the Board of Directors of the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa at their meeting on October 8, 2026, and included in the meeting package for members, be sanctioned (approved) by the membership to replace the GENERAL OPERATING BY-LAW dated May 1, 2022. The new GENERAL OPERATING BY-LAW, dated October 25, 2026, shall be the sole BY-LAW of the Congregation once sanctioned (approved) by the membership.
Moved by John Emond; Seconded by Guy Belleperche passed with two abstentions

F. Treasurer's Report / 2027 Budget
G. Belleperche, the Treasurer, began his comments with an appeal to members to consider serving on the board to help correct its current status of being 'too old and white'.

He thanked Michelle, the FirstU Manager of Finance and Human Resources, for all her help, calling her 'an amazing resource'. He also thanked the current (Michelle, Chuck Triemstra, Eric Ranger and Randy Hardy) and recently retired (Margaret Linton and Phil Nagy) members of the Finance Committee for their hard work and sage counsel.

He began his remarks by stressing that income from the Odayanhaway project is essential to the congregation's long-term future. He noted that income should begin to flow to the congregation in about 5 years. He reviewed the approximately $2M in the congregation's reserves, what funds are available for general support of operations, and concluded by saying that there are sufficient funds to last 5 years. Investments have done well and there have been several large bequests, but he stressed that annual pledging and donations are still critical.

G. Belleperche explained that although there is a $232K projected operating deficit for 2027, that is before any transfers. After including expected investment income, the deficit drops to $85K. He added that now that we have a settled minister and a growing membership, our financial outlook is improving. He invited questions.

Eva Berringer observed that bequests show as operating income, but that there is a board policy that instructs that bequests be added to our Legacy Fund, and that 20% of bequests of more than $10K be added to the congregation's maintenance reserves. She said she found the current depiction in the financial statements to be misleading as to the congregation's actual revenues. G. Belleperche acknowledged her point but added that the presentation of bequests in the financial statements had been recommended by the auditors. He agreed to take this issue up with the auditors.

Paula Theetge asked if, in situations like 2026 when the congregation's finances are much better than anticipated, whether the budget is revised. G. Belleperche said that it is.

Glenys Elliott questioned whether there is confidence that when income begins to flow from the Odayanhaway project that the LRT will be operating. G. Belleperche agreed that it is impossible to know when the LRT will

begin to serve the area passing by the congregation, but felt the city had invested too much for it not to become operational.

Marc Brunet asked whether, once income begins to flow from the Odayanhaway project, some of it will be used to rebuild the congregation's reserves that will have been depleted to support the congregation until the Odayanhaway income begins to flow. G. Belleperche said that future boards will be deciding how to allocate that income and that rebuilding the reserve will be one of them. He encouraged M. Brunet and other, younger, members of the congregation to be part of those boards.

J. Dench thanked everyone for their encouragement and enthusiasm, but stressed that he wants FirstU to be around for many years. He said that coming to the congregation is a joy and that everyone needs to continue showing up. He urged all to look at their pledges and 'remember how much we love this place'.

Motion:
Be it resolved that the Congregational Budget for 2027 be accepted by the Congregation.
Moved by Guy Belleperche; Seconded by P. Theetge passed with 3 abstentions.

G. Campus Planning Update
Terry Kimmel, the Chair of the Campus Planning Committee, provided an update regarding the Odayanhaway project, covering several points:

- The project has two components:
    - A 6-storey, 60-unit building being constructed, owned and operated by Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services on land donated to them by FirstU; and,
    - A 16-storey, 160-unit building, of which at least 80% will be affordable, called Aspire Riverview Homes, which is a corporation formed by FirstU, which owns 73%, and Theia Partners, which owns 27%.
- This has been a long process. The site plan has been submitted, and approval is expected in November.
- Construction is now expected to begin in March 2027.
- The timing of the construction start depends on the long-term bond rate and securing a favourable interest rate, much of which is impacted by geopolitical events and is currently a balancing act.
- The team has run many forecasts. The current bond rate is in the vicinity of being workable, but it keeps shifting.
- A construction delay won't affect availability of the contractor.
- The congregation received a bit more than $1M in loans from individuals, many from the congregation, and from two other Canadian UU congregations.
- The project has also received a $2M loan from Build Canada Homes (BCH), a federal entity. FirstU would have approximately $1.5M of the total. This loan strengthens the project's position.
- FirstU was also approved for a loan from Kindred Credit Union, but it may not be needed due to the BCH funds. However, FirstU is investigating other ways to be involved with Kindred because they share many of our values.

J. Dench commented that he loves how FirstU is living its values and supporting affordable housing but wonders how much income will be available to support housing subsidies and other worthy objectives. T. Kimmel

responded that past modeling had shown that $400k/year would be available, but that the actual amount will depend on the eventual interest rate secured for the project.

Stephen St. Denis asked if all the paperwork had been done so that construction could start. T. Kimmel responded that all the approvals will be in place by the time of targeted construction start.

P. Theetge asked when construction work will happen along Cleary. T. Kimmel answered that this work, which is to install a new hydro and 2nd water line, would be the first step in the project and would, therefore, likely be in March, 2027.

P. Theetge also asked if the OAHS construction is connected with the Aspire construction, or would they be able to move ahead independently. T. Kimmel explained that the two projects are linked because they will share a common foundation and parking garage

M. Fletcher asked that if there is no financing there will be no construction and if so, would further self-financing be possible. T. Kimmel responded that if the financing wasn't available the construction would not be able to begin. To the question regarding further self-financing he said that although FirstU has been successful with this, that it wouldn't be possible to cover the total financing needs.

Alex Campbell asked whether there would be a construction entrance for the project through the old Kristy's property. T. Kimmel responded that yes, a 2nd entrance would be possible, and that the project team has been in regular contact with the Kristy's property owner.

H. Trivia Break
Andrew Drake led a trivia session.

I. Secretary's Report

MOTION: Be it resolved that the Members approve the Minutes of the 2026 Annual General Meeting, included herein.
Moved by C. Shields; Seconded by Amalilly Sullivan unanimously passed

MOTION: Be it resolved that the Members ratify the Acts of the Board included herein.
Moved by Maury Prevost; Seconded by Mike Fletcher unanimously passed

J. Election of Members to the Nominating Committee
M. Prevost, the board liaison to the Nominating Committee, reported that one position on the committee had been vacant for the past year; that M. Fletcher, who has served as chair had served two full 3-year terms and was, therefore, stepping down from the committee; that Katherine Gunn had completed a 3-year term and opted not to continue on the committee; and that Eva Berringer was stepping down after serving for 2 years. He added that Mike Lloyd and Lisa Sharp would continue in their second 3-year terms through 2028 and that the board had identified C. Shields as the chair of the committee. He then presented the following motion regarding proposed members of the committee:

MOTION: Be it resolved that the Members elect the following people to the Nominating Committee:

- Chuck Shields to serve for one year, completing the 3-year term that has been vacant;
- Brent Nicolle to serve for one year, completing the 3-year term started by Eva Berringer;
- Carl Sonnen to serve for three years, replacing Mike Fletcher.
- Ally Hobson to serve for three years, replacing Katherine Gunn.

Moved by M. Prevost; Seconded by Lisa Boulay unanimously passed

Glenys Elliott asked if Ally Hobson could be identified in the meeting participants. It was determined that she was no longer present as she had had to leave. M. E. Keblusek mentioned that A. Hobson had been one of the members of the Discernment Task Force that had led the recent process that confirmed Rev. Lara Cowtan as FirstU's settled minister.

K. Election of Director

M. Prevost introduced this item saying that it corrects an oversight in the 2026 Annual Meeting agenda. John Emond was appointed by the Board as a Director following the 2025 Annual General Meeting to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of Nancy Cloutier as a Director. Because Nancy was serving a 3-year term ending in 2027, John will finish that term and then be eligible for re-election.

MOTION: Be it resolved that the members elect John Emond as a Director serving until the 2027 Annual General Meeting.

Moved by M. Prevost; Seconded by C. Shields unanimously passed

L. River Parkway Children's Centre Lease Renewal

M. E. Keblusek reviewed the background of FirstU's connection with the RPCC and noted that the FirstU Board had approved the terms of the lease renewal and the motion to present to the congregation.

MOTION:

WHEREAS

There is a long-standing relationship between First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa (FirstU) and the River Parkway Children's Centre (RPCC) (formerly River Parkway Preschool Centre - RPPC), in that members of FirstU had identified establishing a pre-school as part of their vision for the campus when it was created in 1967 and RPPC occupied space in the congregation's building from shortly after that time until 2007– a total of 38 years,

WHEREAS,

The close link between FirstU and the RPCC has been maintained by the RPCC having FirstU members on its board,

WHEREAS,

The RPCC project for a children's daycare program has a strong social outreach component by providing quality, non-profit childcare with a high percentage of its spaces being subsidized, thereby making care available to low-income families and physically and mentally challenged children,

WHEREAS,
FirstU voted on March 26, 2006, to authorize the Board to have a legal lease agreement drawn up between the Congregation and River Parkway Preschool Centre on the basis of the provisions of the "SUMMARY OF PROPOSED LEASE AGREEMENT WITH RPPC", dated March 25, 2006, and to authorize the Board to approve, sign and implement the lease on behalf of the congregation and

RECOGNIZING
That FirstU has supported RPCC through favourable rental agreements since its inception,

Therefore, be it resolved
That the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa authorize the Board to approve, sign and implement on behalf of the congregation a lease amendment agreement with RPCC in accordance with the provisions in the document "SUMMARY OF PROPOSED LEASE AMENDMENT AGREEMENT WITH RPCC", dated October 8, 2026.

Moved by G. Belleperche, Seconded by Marlene Campbell and unanimously approved.

Anne Nagy asked whether the lease rate to be paid by RPCC would continue to be favouable. C. Shields responded that it would and that the RPCC leadership are happy with the amount.
Alexandra Devine, who identified herself as the President of the RPCC Board until the end of the month, commented that the City of Ottawa provides the funding that allows RPCC to pay its lease.

M. Parking Task Force
M. E. Keblusek provided background regarding the establishment of the Parking Task Force, which is led by Lisa Sharp, who provided a summary of the task forces work:

- did a survey of the congregation (with 98 responses) regarding their views about parking, especially during the period of Odayanhaway construction;
- half of respondents said they would work out their own parking needs;
- they are planning to create zones for parking, such as for families and those with mobility issues;
- they are planning to create a few more parking spots near the west side of the building;
- they would encourage people to carpool;
- they are planning to create temporary parking places that could be used for Sunday mornings and other events
- they are exploring other options

In the course of her presentation L. Sharp mentioned that the City of Ottawa has said the LRT would be running by the summer of 2027. She also noted that the main difficult period for parking would be for the first year. After that the CPR Strip (the parking lot across from RPCC) would become available for parking, which, along with other parking would meet most parking needs.

M. Campbell noted that snow piles need to be accommodated in the winter. M. E. Keblusek said that Jen Brennan, the Operations Manager, was working on this issue.

Alexis McKenzie suggested that to assist carpooling, sign-up sheets could be placed in the congregation building and online. She also noted that it would be important to plan for Para Transpo access. M. E. Keblusek thanked her for her suggestions and said that plans were underway to accommodate Para Transpo buses.

M. Fletcher suggested enquiring with the city as to whether the frequency of Route 11, which passes by the campus, could be increased.

Pat McDonald asked whether we might be able to use the 747 Richmond lot that the LRT-related construction is currently using. M. E. Keblusek said that FirstU had been able to arrange use of that space during the Fall Fair and other use might be possible, but not on an ongoing basis. P. McDonald added that with more congregants needing to walk the final distance to the congregation building from where they have parked off campus, it will be important to ensure that sidewalks are kept safe. M. E. Keblusek agreed that this would be important and added that some sidewalks would be improved in the course of construction.

Joy Sallans asked if plans were being made for some who need to get to the building early for a Sunday service, like those handling Hospitality Hour. L. Sharp said that the Task Force was working on that and also to ensure there was parking for staff.

N. Announcements

M. E. Keblusek reminded participants that the Annual General Meeting would be held on April 25, 2027, at 12:30 in Worship Hall. She added that there would be a farewell celebration for Jodi McIntosh on November 8 to recognize her contributions that have led to a resurgent Religious Exploration program.

O. Questions from Congregants

An online participant asked what would be done regarding parking for events held at the congregation. M. E. Keblusek responded that some events may not be able to be accommodated but that work is on-going to find ways to accommodate some events.

P. Adjournment

Jane Lindsay provided a closing reading.
The meeting adjourned at 2:21.