

A Report to the First Unitarian Congregation on the 2024 Pledge Campaign

The 2024 Pledge Campaign has ended. The results are mixed. I want to thank the many people who pledged, in particular those who told the team that they were unable to pledge more because of the harsh economic times we find ourselves in. Thank you for finding a place in your hearts and wallets for FirstU in this difficult year. Special thanks to the pledge team, Michelle Jackson, Maryan O'Hagan, Maury Prevost, and Chuck Shields for their wise advice, patience, and relentless buoyancy.

We raised \$330,000.00, an accomplishment in the face of economic uncertainty. We should congratulate ourselves. It was, however, about 5% short of the campaign goal of \$348K. On the one hand it's good to have an aspirational goal. On the other hand, we are indeed short of the pledge amount in the budget.

We hoped for 200 pledges, and we received 202. Including couples, this is about 250 people. Almost half the pledges remained the same as in 2023, while just under 30% were able to increase their pledges.

Twenty-five people felt they had to reduce their pledges. As well as I can judge, about 2/3 of this group did so for personal economic reasons, while 1/3, about eight pledges, were lowered to express unhappiness with some aspect of FirstU. We accept their decisions.

On the positive side, there were 12 brand new pledges, and eight more who returned after a year or more of not pledging.

There were 32 people or couples who pledged in 2023 but not in 2024.

- Eight of these are now deceased or in long-term care;
- 14 have either moved away or stopped contact;
- Ten were unable or unwilling to pledge, or who were thinking of pledging but have not yet done so.

The pay-it-forward initiative was a big success, about \$4500 from 28 people. As you might know, we pay the Canadian Unitarian Council about \$120 for each member. About **half** the amount raised is enough to cover the CUC levy of the ten people who pledged less than \$120 as well as several who were unable to pledge at all. So, **half** the amount raised this year will be put toward the CUC levy for 2024 and the other half held for the 2025 levy. Thus, the pay-it-forward initiative will be paused for 2025 and reinstated the next year. It is not just another way to get money. It is a way of being radically inclusive.

Administratively, there has been substantial progress. We now have a how-to manual, and a relatively simple system to track information. Sources of possible error in record keeping have been addressed.

The size of the phone team has been doubled, allowing more personal contact. We continued the practice of asking the caring committee to help in the pre-screening of the phone list. We asked the phone team to let us know after their calls of anyone who might benefit from a follow-up call from the caring committee, the membership team, or the minister. Those phoning sought to make the calls more of a general catch-up rather than just a request for funds.

Professional crystal ball gazers are saying that there will be an economic turnaround in the summer. I'm looking forward to the 2025 campaign. Again, thank you for your support.