

Mission Vision Ends

Vision:

A loving, spiritual congregation that lives our values through belonging, reason, and action.

Mission:

Like the nature that surrounds us, we evolve as a habitat for spiritual development.

- Our deep roots connect us to a wealth of resources that nourish our growth as a beacon for justice, inclusion, and liberation, especially anti-racism and gender and sexuality justice.
- Our listening cultivates diverse and multicultural relationships that bridge divisions, strengthen our communities, heal hearts, and foster safety for all.
- Our awareness of our interdependence inspires us to protect the shared environment and natural world in which we live.

Ends and Strategies

1. Our members grow in belonging by embodying our values and connecting with our spiritual lives.

Another way of putting this end is "I AM UU" or "WE ARE UU."

1A: Faith formation for all ages.

We use programs and resources that help people grow in Unitarian Universalist identity, faith, values, and active living.

1A1: Sustainable and Reliable Volunteers for Children's Religious Education. We have regular people who volunteer, forming relationships, nurturing UU identity, and sustaining a strong multi-generational ministry. By October 2025, we will have at least 3 regular people for an RE team and at least 20 1x/month teachers. These numbers are sustained with new folks joining as others rotate off. In addition to recruiting new folks, we thank and support our existing volunteers. In addition, a new nursery caregiver with OWL and admin responsibilities will support this program. Responsible: DRE, with assistance from RE team to recruit. Cost: Zero for volunteers; a stipend of 6K for a nursery/OWL teacher to make this work. Timeline: Oct. 2025 and ongoing.

1A2: UU Identity Development for All Ages. In Religious Education for Children and for Adults, and in worship and music, we focus on providing opportunities, programs, curricula, and resources that grow a sense of UU identity, commitment to the values centered in love, and how to live as a UU in daily life.

For Children's RE, the DRE selects programs, trains teachers, and assess success.

Throughout the 25-26 year, she looks for programs that focus on UU identity, pilots them, and implements, with continuous improvement, from *fall of 26* onward. *No additional resources needed.*

For Adult RE, the ministers select and develop programs. The Senior Minister will create and lead a 7-week "UU values and living" program in the *spring of '26*. The Assistant Minister will ensure that Wonderful Wednesday programs connect with UU identity. *No additional cost.*

For Worship and Music, the Senior Minister, Music Director, and Worship Associates will ensure regular focus on UU identity, values, and resources in their selections, themes, and messages. *This will begin with the 25-26 worship year. No additional cost.*

1A3: Soul Matters. We will use Soul Matters materials for small groups, worship, religious education, and outreach consistently and effectively. We will encourage more people to participate in Soul Matters Groups. Each current group will have 8+ people, and at least one new group will be started each year, in the *fall of '25, '26, and '27*. *Responsible: Assistant Minister and Soul Matters Facilitators. Cost: No additional.*

1B. Caring, Membership, and Belonging

We strengthen our ministries of caring and membership in ways that promote inclusive, meaningful, and authentic belonging and community.

1B1: Develop and sustain “Belonging and Membership” team. As part of the “Caring and Membership Team”, and co-led by the *Assistant Minister* and lay leaders, the Belonging and Membership team will help welcome and integrate new members, promote belonging and engagement, and build community and connection. *The team will be fully operational by fall ‘25 and sustained through the years to come. No additional cost, the professional expenses to consult with AUUMP (Association of UU Membership Professionals) can be used here.*

1B2: Develop and sustain a “Pastoral Care Associates” program. In addition to the existing Caring Team’s work to provide rides, meals, cards, and other caring ministry, we’ll restart a Pastoral Care Associates program where a select group of lay folks will provide lay pastoral ministry, focused on listening and affirming. *Led by the Assistant Minister and Caring Team. Beginning recruitment and training in 25-26, with the team operational by May of ‘26.*

1C. Diversity, Inclusion, Anti-Oppression, and Belonging

Our community practices inclusion, pluralism, love, justice, and anti-oppression. We widen the circle of belonging and people – especially younger people, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and LGBTQIA+ people –so all feel we/they belong in this community.

1C1: We deepen our cultural work on anti-oppression, anti-racism, and multiculturalism, with a focus on communication, membership, and becoming aware of subtle forms of white supremacy culture. We follow up on the Change Team report and work with coaches and trainers to do this work together. Multiple trainings, conversations, and experiences are offered each year. *The Board, in alignment with the Racial and Economic Justice team, and support from the ministers, holds this responsibility. Cost - up to \$1000/year for trainers/programs, from the REJ or Leadership Development budget lines. Timeline: at least two events/programs in 25-26, and at least three in 26-27 and 27-28. At least 15% of the congregation (60 people) participate in these programs. Redo the matrix in spring 27 to assess progress and next steps.*

1C2: Start and sustain a DRUUMM Chapter. Working with UUANI (Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of Illinois) and DRUUMM (Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries), we will start and sustain a DRUUMM Chapter for BIPOC members and friends. *The Assistant Minister, with support from the Senior Minister, will recruit a “catalyst”(s) for this. Cost: \$500 a year in stipend (DRUUMM adds funds). Timeline: Summer 2025 recruitment, begin in fall ‘25, and ongoing after that.*

1C3: Sustain and grow the UU 20/30 group. Support the facilitators and recruit more members and friends in their 20s and 30s to participate in this program. Retain existing participants. *Goal is to have*

10 regular participants by March '26, and 15 by March of '27. Responsible: Facilitators and Assistant Minister. Cost: No additional.

1C4: Worship and Music that widens the circle of belonging. We will intentionally include worship resources, including music, ritual, and texts, which resonate with wider circles of people. In particular, we will focus on diversity of race, ethnicity, and age/generation in the materials we select, examples we use, and programs we plan. *Responsible: The ministers, Music Director, and worship team. Timeline: beginning with planning in Spring '25, and really ramping up in fall of '25. Do an assessment, perhaps with an outside consultant, in the 26-27 year. Cost: Up to \$1000 for the consultant, other costs in the existing budget, though we may need to increase the guest musician budget beginning in '26-27' by at least \$1000.*

1C5: Justice and inclusion for LGBTQAI+ people. We grow as a community of many genders and sexualities and we grow in our practice of genuine inclusion and solidarity. Folks expand their understanding and skill at welcoming, we celebrate our diversity, promote community, and act in solidarity. Training Sessions and inclusive language and practices are the norm. *Responsible: The Sex and Gender Justice Team, the Ministers, and the Membership and Belonging Team. Cost: No additional. Timeline: ongoing.*

1D: Generosity

We embody our UU value of generosity.

1D1: We have a strong annual campaign. Over the next three years, a) every member receives at least one one-on-one stewardship visit, and b) our average giving gets within \$15/month of the UUA average (currently \$25 below). *Responsible: The Senior Minister, Office Manager, Finance Committee, Board, and Generosity Team. The finance team holds prime responsibility. Cost: nothing additional unless we decide to work with Stewardship for Us to support this, cost tbd. Timeline: Will recruit at least 15 stewards by Jan '26 for a three-year term. Will divide the congregation in 1/3rds and do one-to-one visits with that 1/3 and selected others. The other 2/3rd will get emails, etc. Repeat in '27 and '28 with the other 1/3rds, while adding new folks.*

1D2: We will regularly volunteer. Create and implement volunteer plan after a thorough audit of current members, volunteers, and volunteer opportunities. Opportunities to volunteer will be made clear, and we'll create easy-on-ramps to participate, and thank volunteers often to encourage more service. *Responsible: Board and Staff. Timeline: A volunteer plan will be created in fall '25 and implemented. Cost: minimal, for a party and/or thank you gifts.*

1D3: Leadership Development. We will spend time on intentional leadership development and onboarding, as well as continuing the Roundtable of team and committee leaders. The ministers will offer leadership development experiences and share opportunities through the MidAmerica region for leadership growth. Ensure annual board retreat to determine intentional leadership development and onboarding plans for the upcoming fiscal year. The Leadership Roundtable will identify leadership needs. A team-leader and committee-leader's orientation will happen yearly. *Responsible: Board, Leadership Roundtable, and Senior Minister. Cost: existing for retreat facilitator.*

2. Our members widen the circle of belonging and advance justice and equity by practicing right relationships with our neighbors.

Another way of putting this is “WE SHOW UP AS UUs.”

2A: We are accountable and effective coalition partners.

2A1: Our Faith in Action (FiA) teams receive increasingly robust support and participation. Members join in the activities of the teams and volunteer for events with partners in larger numbers (at least 60 unique participants). The FiA teams receive staff support and have regular, sustainable, programs. Note we are not asking the FiA teams to do more – but for the congregation to join in what they are doing. *Responsible: The congregation, with support from FiA teams. Timeline: ongoing. Cost: existing.*

2A2: UUANI Partnership and GRACE Training. We nurture our covenant with UUANI (Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of Illinois) and other Illinois UU congregations, providing a liaison to the statewide Action Council of congregations and supporting their actions of the week. FiA leaders and others participate in their GRACE training for justice leader (at least 2 per cycle). We raise money for UUANI. *Responsible: Faith in Action Core team and Senior Minister. Cost: Existing FiA budgets. Timeline: Ongoing, with at least 1 UUANI focus Sunday per year.*

2A3: We continue to use our building and resources to support our partners. We open our building to partners at low or no cost, we advertise their events, and offer our support, expertise, and connections to our key partners. We are of service and they can count on us. *Responsible: Office Manager, Senior Minister, and Faith in Action Teams. Cost: no additional (some opportunity cost from lower rent). Timeline: ongoing.*

2B: We Show Up as UUs

We live out our values in our lives as a congregation and as Unitarian Universalists, proudly claiming our identity with respect for the pluralist world we share with our neighbors.

2B1: We identify ourselves. We make it easy for folks who choose to do so to identify themselves as Unitarian Universalists out in the world. We run programs so folks can order clothing, stickers, and other materials that can be displayed at and beyond events. We use local and ethical businesses and sources for these materials. In addition to witnessing to our values, the materials can be shared with others to invite them to explore the church. Branding and messaging is relatable to the wider public. *Responsible: Office Manager, with support from staff and Membership and Belonging Team. Cost: existing (minister’s discretionary fund to pay for items for those who cannot afford to buy their own). Timeline: starting with Homecoming ‘25 and ongoing.*

2B2: We communicate opportunities to show up, and show up together. We curate the many opportunities from our partners and others, and find ways folks can gather and/or travel together to events and have formal or informal UU presence. *The Office Manager, Senior Minister, and Faith in*

Action leaders develop a plan to do this in the fall of '25 and implement in Jan. '26, with improvements going forward. Cost: existing.

2B3: We do our work in faith, grounded in our values, and with respect. We train, teach, practice, and preach about how to do our justice work in ways that are faithful and inclusive. We use materials from the UUA's Side with Love campaign to improve our skills. See also 1C1. *Responsible: Ministers, Faith in Action Teams. Timeline: Ongoing. Cost: Existing.*

2B4: We celebrate how we show up - in many ways. We "shine our light" and provide exemplars and examples by naming the ways we show up. We celebrate folks who live our values. This includes diverse ways – activism, parenting, professional, service, witness, kindness, and much more. We recognize that many ways are needed and valued and name these. *Responsible: Ministers, Board of Trustees. Cost: existing. Timeline: ongoing.*

3. Our members are transformed by our interdependent relationship with our planet, the universe, the web of life – the sacred as we understand it.

Another way of putting this is “WE ARE INTERWOVEN” or “WE ARE CHANGED BY CONNECTING”

3A. As a congregation, we care for the earth. We take collective action to repair, nurture, and be responsible citizens of planet earth.

3A1. We care for the land upon which we sit. We nurture, heal, restore, and help our 10 acres of land thrive. The Eco-Justice Team and the Building and Grounds team remove invasive species, nurture the prairie, work to reduce our carbon footprint, and make connections with our neighbors who share these woods. *Timeline: ongoing. Cost: Add \$1000 each year to the grounds budget beginning in ‘26 for professional support in Buckthorn removal and other measures. Add’l: Building and Grounds continues to assess opportunities to reduce energy use, and schedules needed projects. Cost: from capital maintenance reserves. Timeline: yearly by May of each year, a plan for the coming year.*

3A2: We use our funds in ecologically responsible ways. We continue to invest our legacy funds in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) funds, and seek to improve the sustainability of our regular spending. *Responsible: Finance Team and Endowment Panel, and office manager. Timeline: Ongoing. Cost: no additional.*

3A3: The congregation engages in eco-justice work. At least 4 dozen people in the congregation regularly participate in the programs, events, and meetings of the eco-justice team and its partners. *Responsible: Congregation and Eco-Justice team. Cost: no additional. Ongoing.*

3B: Our members are good stewards and citizens of planet Earth in their individual lives.

3B1: Members are inspired and equipped to live eco-just lives. With respect for the context of different lives, folks make choices that are more sustainable and just and promote relationships. The ministers and eco-justice team provide useful tools and connections for folks to do this, and there is a spirit of engagement on these issues. *Timeline: ongoing. Measured with an annual survey. Cost: no additional.*

3B2: We are a hub of action for eco-justice and relationships. Community organizations and projects share their events with us, we host events, and folks know they can connect here with their longing to be in healthy relationships with the web of life. *Responsible: Eco-Justice Team, Office Manager for communications and building events. Cost: none. Timeline: ongoing.*

3C: We cultivate awe, wonder, and an ethic of care for the interdependent web of life.

3C1: In worship, music, and faith formation we encourage, invite, and inspire connection and healthy relationships with the earth and all life. We provoke, heal, and inform folks in ways that lead to more hope, action, and sustainability. *Responsible: ministers, music director, DRE, and eco-justice team. Cost: no additional. Timeline: ongoing.*

3C2: We support the Woodsong School. The Woodsong Nature Preschool has as its core mission to nurture this connection with nature in healthy ways. *The Board and Minister continue to support this*

*program as core to our mission, and the Building and Grounds team provides needed support as well.
Cost: included in tuition. Ongoing.*