



## **Board of Trustees & Nominating Committee: Expressions of Interests**



**Keith Abel**

**Why are you interested in being a member of the Board of Trustees at First Unitarian Church?**

I believe strongly in the mission and values of the First Unitarian Church and wish for the church to thrive. I especially enjoy the volunteer activities that partner with the community to end racial, social, and economic injustice.

**What part of the work of the Board are you most passionate about and hope to be involved in?**

I am most passionate about the work we do for the community and would like to get more younger people involved. When I look at the groups where I volunteer, most people are older than me; and I am nearly 70 years old. I wonder if the missions for the current ministries do not enthruse the younger members or if they just do not have the time?

I also have an interest in ensuring that the finances of the church remain solvent and the infrastructure solid.

**Describe your experience working to consensus, representing and helping to implement policies which may differ from your own original concepts.**

I have not served on formal boards of any organizations. Early with the Environmental Justice Ministry (EJM), we solicited the First UU's finance committee to have our investment funds use mutual funds that follow ESG guidelines. I am not certain of the results of this effort. The EJM works together to determine the projects we will address and then comes together to determine our plan of execution.

I recently joined a newly formed Color Rochester Green group. We had people submit ideas for projects and then voted on them. We chose a long-term and a short-term project for which I am lending support.

I spent the first 10 years of my career as an industrial engineer but most of it as a software engineer at Kodak. I am trying to think back to workshops where we had issues to resolve, but it has been too long. Our main efforts were concentrated on project implementations.

**First Unitarian uses a policy governance model of management to support its work on the mission and values of our congregation. The model defines the board's authority and responsibilities. Written policies, including outcome expectations, determine board conduct, expectations of staff, board delegation, and monitoring. Please address your ideas about working within such a framework.**

I understand the limitations of the Board. Although I am a member of the Environmental Justice Ministry and the UU/School Partnership, I understand that I am accountable to the interests of the church over the views of any interest groups. I have no issue with the policies related to interactions with the Senior Minister and Staff and the policy makes perfect sense to me. I would expect that board discussions are kept private and only approved communications are presented to the congregation.

**Describe your participation in this church (past and present) and other relevant community or work organization.**

My wife and I were married in the church in August 1987. We started attending services fairly regularly in 1988 and have made an annual financial commitment. We did not officially sign the book until around 2015 (I am uncertain of the date). I was involved with Kodak's 20 th Century learning challenge in the 1990s with School 22, so I also interfaced with the school partnership back then. After becoming a member, the Environmental Justice Ministry was re-formed, and I have been involved with it ever since. Upon retiring in February of 2017, I have been volunteering with the UU/School Partnership. I have been volunteering with the Bi-Fri's since November of 2021. I have also been involved with the UU Landscape Ministry, although my availability on Wednesday mornings during the summer has been spotty I help when I can.

**Which service do you regularly attend?**

Prior to the pandemic, we attended the 9:00 service. We now mainly attend via Zoom, but about come about once a month in person.



## **Emily Clasper**

**Why are you interested in serving as Clerk on the Board of Trustees at First Unitarian Church? What specific skills will you bring to this position?**

Since joining in the Board of Trustees last year, I have seen the ways in which the Clerk provides leadership within the group and helps to ensure that the duties of the Board are performed efficiently. I am hopeful that my professional experience and skills will help to keep the group running smoothly within our Bylaws and Policy Governance model, as well as provide the Church with an accurate record of the decision-making process and actions taken by the board.

**The Board is a Policy Governance model. What skills and strengths do you bring**

**to support this model?**

I am extremely comfortable and experienced with using policy governance as a model for advancing the work of a non-profit, values-driven organization. When used effectively, policy can be a powerful tool for empowering members of a community and supporting the work of the organization. Over the past year, I have gained experience with the particular applications of policy governance at First Unitarian. I also have significant experience with models for project planning, implementation, and assessment that may provide additional tools to use within this overall model of governance to we sure we meet our stated goals.

**What part of the work of the Board are you most passionate about and hope to be involved in?**

The part of Board work that I am most passionate about is ensuring that all voices are represented and stakeholders considered when working to achieve our Ends.

**Describe your experience working to consensus, representing, and helping to implement policies which may differ from your own original concepts.**

My professional career has given me extensive experience in the areas of policy governance for nonprofits, as well as consensus-based decision-making strategies within a board or committee structure. My work with the public libraries of Suffolk County, NY, The University of Rochester libraries, the American Library Association, and the New York Library Association over the past twenty years have given me a strong background in building consensus and using policy as a tool for advancing the mission of an organization. In addition, as a certified Project Management Professional (PMP), I have

developed a robust skill set for ensuring that action within an organization is taken in a way that is efficient, aligned with organizational priorities and values, and measurably successful.

**Describe your participation in this church (past and present) and other relevant community or work organization.**

Our family joined First Unitarian in 2018 after moving to Rochester from Long Island. Previous to that, we were members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship at Stony Brook for eleven years, where we were extremely active members. I was a worship associate for that congregation and an active participant in many committees. At First Unitarian, I have been active as a coordinator for the Welcoming Committee, and often volunteer to assist with Church events. I have been a member of the Board of Trustees for the past year. Other relevant experience comes from my professional career as a library administrator, consultant, and speaker.

**Which service do you generally attend?**

My family most regularly attends the earlier morning service, when there are multiple services offered on Sunday.



**Erin Collier**

**Why are you interested in being a member of the Board of Trustees at First Unitarian Church?**

When Rev Shari first started, I asked her to help me get connected to the church. I started coming during the transition of ministers in 2018ish and was kind of lost. I would attend service and go home, that was it. Rev Shari has encouraged me to get involved in other ways over the years. The fellowship renewal team (FRT) , of which I was a member for the past 2 years, has recently disbanded. I really enjoyed that experience and would like to continue in a leadership role in the church. I'm also a PK (pastor's kid) and understand the importance of the BOT.

**What part of the work of the Board are you most passionate about and hope to be involved in?**

I will be interested (once comfortable) in addressing grievances within the church. Since growing up in a church, I realize this can be difficult, but I am a decent moderator and can usually help people find common ground.

**Describe your experience working to consensus, representing and helping to**

**implement policies which may differ from your own original concepts.**

I am a chemical dependency nurse and work every day on a multidisciplinary team to meet the needs of the patient. Sometimes my ideas differ from my colleagues, but I try to think of the bigger picture and overall goal.

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It is important to uphold expectations of ourselves and collectively to meet the needs of the congregation. I look forward to some training on this (possibly this summer) to be well-versed in this model. In my professional life, I have to work within my scope as an RN and up to standards that can be forever changing.

**Describe your participation in this church (past and present) and other relevant community or work organization.**

FRT from 2019-2022, Buddhist Meditation with Jan Cooke for several years, Narcan Training, volunteer with RE.

**Which service do you regularly attend?** 10am, holidays, etc



**Nicole Delgrosso**

**Why are you interested in being a member of the Nominating Committee at First Unitarian Church?**

Other than worship services, which I've been attending primarily on Zoom, I have not been very active in the church for a few years. The Nominating Committee is a great opportunity for me to reconnect with our congregation and perhaps get to know some folks that I haven't yet had the pleasure of getting to know.

**The Nominating Committee is charged with vetting interested candidates for open Leadership positions. What skills and strengths do you bring to support this role?**

I am naturally curious about other people. I have experience interviewing people in lots of different settings for lots of different roles, so I'm good at coming up with questions that elicit deep and meaningful responses without making people feel like they've been put on the spot.



## **What thoughts do you have about cultivating leadership among other church members?**

I want to help congregants understand that every one of us is important to the functioning of this church and that we all have unique skills to contribute. Participating in a church leadership role is not something that is reserved for those who have been here the longest or give the most money or have some set of “executive” skills that are required to serve. What’s important is that you care about our church community. I’d also like folks to know that serving in a leadership role is both a great way to gain a better understanding of how the church functions and an opportunity to form connections with fellow congregants that will last long after your time in this role is finished.

## **Describe your participation in this church (past and present) and other relevant community or work organizations.**

- Church member since 2009
- 10+ year volunteer of Connect and Breathe
- First Unitarian Board of Trustees 2016-2019
- Soul Matters Facilitator 2010-2019
- Second Minister Search Team 2020 and 2021
- Founding member & current president of Benevolent Guardians of Corvidae Rochester Ravens



### **Lynn Kinsman**

#### **Why are you interested in serving as President at First Unitarian Church?**

As I've been a Trustee for the last three years, and serving as Vice President for most of that time, I've come to understand the importance of the Board's roles in the health of the church. In addition to providing fiduciary oversight, the board also needs to articulate the hopes and ambitions of the congregation for the future so our called Sr. Minister and their staff can build programming and worship experiences that move us toward our stated Mission and Ends. In the coming church year, as we slowly regrow and emerge from the pandemic lockdown, and the Building for Our Future team makes their recommendations for an ambitious project we might attempt, it will be an exciting time for all of us to be a part of this community. I want to help drive that forward and be

witness to the growth and deepening we are going to experience. Stepping into the President role is the best way I can serve at this time, with the support of our amazing Board of Trustees, Officers, and Ministers, and Staff.

**What skills and strengths do you bring to this role?**

My longevity as a member here and have completed a full three-year term on the board have set me up well to serve as President. I've experienced our recent history and a few decades of our past history. I've met and grown to love many, but certainly not all, of you, the ever-evolving congregation. In addition, I've been told I'm one of the more organized people around, so setting the agenda for the board, leading meetings, and following up on the details and bits and pieces of execution is in my skill set. I am very comfortable with technology, so the administrative parts of the role are well in my comfort zone also. I am not afraid of a microphone, so "spokesperson" is a new role I'm sure I will be able to take on. I look forward to the personal growth I'm sure I will experience in this role.

**What thoughts do you have about cultivating leadership among other church members?**

My leadership style is one of collaboration and consensus-building, which seems to fit well with how this board operates within our UU values. I know the President doesn't do anything alone and relies on the gifts and talents of the whole Board to do our Work.

And the Board doesn't work in isolation either, but rather by deliberately creating chances to link directly with the congregants so we can speak with their collective voice. Everyone who joins our community is asked to be an active participant in their faith journey. My goal is to help everyone embrace the idea that UUism isn't a passive faith and find how they can lead with love. We need everyone's gifts.

**Describe your participation in this church (past and present) and other relevant community or work organizations.**

I am a lifelong UU and a part of this congregation since 1987. I have been a Trustee on the board since 2020 and stepped into the Vice President role in Spring 2021. Most of my involvement has been in the music and arts ministry: the adult choir (over 35 years); FirstLight Players (current co-chair); Handbell choir; the Crescendo Fund; and in my earlier days, the dance choir, the creative worship team, and canvass entertainment shows. I am currently active with the Welcoming Congregation renewal team and the "Me and White Supremacy" anti-racism book discussion group. I was an RE volunteer for 20 years as my two children went from birth through youth group in this congregation. I worked on the Music Director search advisory team in 2022 and I served three years on Dick Gilbert's Ministerial Relations Committee. I am looking forward to attending GA 2023 in Pittsburgh in June as a delegate from our congregation when we vote on the new President of the UUA and the first vote on the UUA Article II bylaws changes.

Outside of church, my career has been as an IT Systems Analyst for Eastman Kodak and Kodak Alaris. I recently left there to pursue other interests, so I am happily between jobs as I write this. I spent many years as an officer and board member of the Woman's Forum of Kodak Employees, where I led a major revision of our bylaws and created our first social media policy, back when Facebook was a new thing. I also spent several years as a board member and president of Rochester Community Advocates as a young adult.

**Which service do you regularly attend?**

I have been enjoying the in-person services on Sunday mornings. Occasionally I attend online or I watch the YouTube video later if I am away. I always stay for the Connections time after the service to participate in various groups, so I hope to cross paths with you there! We had multiple services Pre-pandemic - I attended the later Sunday service (11:15 am) or twice if the choir was singing at both Sunday services.



**Craig Lending**

**Why are you interested in being a member of the Board of Trustees at First Unitarian Church?**

I am interested in becoming a member of First Unitarian's Board of Trustees at this time in order to give more of my time and talents back to the Church in the coming years. In the eight years I have been involved with the Church (six years attending with my wife and the last two years since formally becoming a member), I feel like I have found a spiritual home. I have met many wonderful people through Soul Matters and my volunteering with Café Veritas. I can offer a unique skill set and perspective and would like to enter more of a leadership role.

**What part of the work of the Board are you most passionate about and hope to be involved in?**

The Committee that I would be most excited working on, and which aligns most with my skills and passions, would be the Linkage Committee. I have a very strong background in various survey tools (SurveyMonkey, Mailchimp, Google Forms, QuestionPro, Doodle and Qualtrix). I have done large surveys for SUNY Brockport, The Department of Transportation, SUNY System Provost's Office and the National Association of Biology Teachers. I have also exported survey results into Excel for data aggregation, analysis, and presentation/publications. I also enjoy interacting with other members of the congregation, which also makes this a great committee for me to join, as I understand one of the functions of the Committee is to conduct focus groups. I have used several different online tools to create Word Clouds from long answers from both written and oral comments. Word Clouds help to highlight the most frequent words that are used in aggregated survey results, and can provide useful insights into survey responses that might not otherwise be apparent.

**Describe your experience working to consensus, representing and helping to implement policies which may differ from your own original concepts.**



I have made it a priority on all of the committees on which I have served (either as Chair or as a member) to listen deeply to others, and to express my ideas and opinions, but to allow other members to come to a consensus. In cases where I was not in the majority, I have always supported and adhered to the majority opinion (even when I was unhappy with that opinion). I believe that every committee or board is enriched by the diversity and varied backgrounds of its members and that everybody's opinion is valuable and needs to be taken into consideration in identifying solutions and coming to Consensus.

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I have read the Governing Policies of The First Unitarian Church of Rochester, NY. I fully support the policies laid out in the document. I find those pertaining to conduct and responsibilities of members of the Board of Trustees to be well thought out, clear and reasonable. I foresee no problem adhering to the guidelines. Having this structure so well-articulated is a great asset.

**Describe your participation in this church (past and present) and other relevant community or work organization.**

- I have been in Soul Matters groups for the last two years, which I have found very enriching and thought-provoking.
- I have been volunteering with Café Veritas for the last year.
  - a. I post and update all of the information about the upcoming artists on the website (Weebly)
  - b. I set up and monitor the pre-concert ticket sales through ShowClix.
  - c. I send e-mails with information about the upcoming concerts using MailChimp two weeks and one week before the show.
- I serve as a Zoom Hospitality at least two Sunday services per month, and also have helped hosting a memorial service.
- I have volunteered, along with my wife, Jan Miller, for the Church's Take-them-a-meal and Soup Delivery.
- Volunteer Tutor for the School 22 Partnership for the Spring, 2021 semester.
- Board member for the Rochester Spinal Association.
- Chair of the Faculty Access to Computing Technology (FACT) Committee for 6 years. This Committee was formed by the SUNY-wide System Administration's Provosts Office. As Chair, I was responsible for setting agendas and organizing monthly meetings. The Committee was also responsible for coordinating the yearly Conference for Instructional Technologies, which occurred at different SUNY campuses (either University Centers, Colleges or Community Colleges within the 64-Campus SUNY System).
- Attended innumerable faculty meetings and Campus-wide meetings during my 30 years in the Biology Department at SUNY Brockport. Additionally served as Chair of several Department committees, including Curriculum, Assessment and Appointment, Promotion and Tenure

Committees (APT). As the spouse of a non-profit leader, I have volunteered for the National Kidney Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and The Genesee Land Trust.

**Which service do you regularly attend?**

Since there is only one service at this time, I either attend the service at 10:00 Sunday, or help run the online Zoom Service at that time.



**David Pinto**

**Why are you interested in being a member of the Board of Trustees at First Unitarian Church?**

As a member of First U of Rochester for nearly 20 years, I have benefitted in many ways both from the covenant and the comradery that we all share. I was honored to be invited to serve on the Board of Trustees so that I might use whatever skills I can offer to further build and support this community that has had such a profound influence on who I am.

**What part of the work of the Board are you most passionate about and hope to be involved in?**

I am still learning what exactly it is that the Board does.

However, my hope during my term of service is to help the church extend its reach both outward and inward. Looking outward, I hope to see our church play a larger and more visible role in social justice issues that we hold dear and that are a huge part of our shared heritage. Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI), Poor People's Campaign, ImageOUT, Urban League, Ibero – are all local organizations with whom we should be cultivating strong and visible alliances.

Looking inward, I hope to foster work already underway to expand opportunities for personal connections within our congregation. Building on the success of Soul Matters and other groups, I would like to see even more gatherings where people can find their church home and feel connected – gender-based circles, UU Singles, OWL for adults, Writing from the Heart, poetry slams, inter-generational gardening groups, faith-based circles, and countless other ways for us to share Who We Are with each other.

**Describe your experience working to consensus, representing and helping to implement policies which may differ from your own original concepts.**

As part of my regular job at St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center, I work with colleagues and volunteers having wildly different backgrounds, perspectives, and belief systems. Initially, I found navigating so

many viewpoints to be daunting and a bit exhausting. However, I've come to realize how brilliant many of my work friends are, even when I can't begin to understand how differently their minds work compared to mine. More importantly, working with such a diverse group has enabled me to grow both in my job and as a human being. It has taught me patience and humility. It has taught me how to express, question, and hone my own beliefs and perspectives. And it has shown me how the strength of diversity can ensure that we arrive at the very best policies and practices for the benefit of the people we serve.

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It's often said that Unitarians are a people of Covenant; that we are bound together by a promise to each other. That promise is often expressed as a shared belief in our 8 Principles. But I've never felt this description to be quite right. Believing in our 8 principles is too easy. Indeed, they seem harmless and almost self-evident. Instead, I've always thought of them as our 8 shared aspirations. Our promise to each other to aspire to live by those principles every day, in all that we think, say, and do. That is something much harder.

Authority, responsibilities, policies, expectations – indeed, all the work of the Board or, in fact, of any group of Unitarians, happens within our “Covenant of Aspirations”. I believe that our Board members share a deep commitment to that Covenant. I also believe that the intentions and underlying spirit of the structures and guidelines our Board lays out represent their best efforts to help our entire congregation honor that Covenant and to do the hard work together in support of our shared mission and values.

**Describe your participation in this church (past and present) and other relevant community or work organization.**

Early in my membership I was fortunate enough to be included in one of the first Soul Matters groups, meeting together and sharing monthly for well over 10 years. Later, at the encouragement of our then head minister, I founded the “Writing from the Heart” story circle where we practiced “spinning the stories of our lives into golden words on the page.” I've also had a chance to learn the nooks and crannies of our church building during several RAIHN overnights. More recently, I've served for the past several years on the organizing committee for Unirondack and led the “Unirondack @ Home” events when the real one was closed for the pandemic. Finally, without a doubt the greatest gift I've received from our church has been the opportunity to serve our children and youth in the RE program, having participated over the years as a parent helper in nearly every capacity (including a few that I think Sheila made up on the spot). Outside the church, I decided some years ago on a major shift in my career from Biomedical Research to Community Service – leaning fully into the precept of “Right Livelihood”. Today, I serve as the Director of Analytics, Technology, and Operations at St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center, where I work behind the scenes to ensure that our volunteer health care providers have the support they need to provide quality care to the uninsured and underinsured population in the Finger Lakes Region.

The remainder of my time as a Community Volunteer has been as a leader in Scouts BSA (formerly known as Boy Scouts of America ... before girls could join. Yay!). I am pleased to share that both my sons chose our church as the beneficiary of their Eagle Scout projects. During the pandemic, my son Harley led the church in the UU Eco Challenge 2020, providing practical actions we could take right now to help fight climate change. Today, my son Wyatt is working to build a new Meditation Trail in the lower garden, encouraging all of us to connect with nature and to explore our 7th principle more deeply. (Still time to check it out at [uutreehab.org](http://uutreehab.org)!)

**Which service do you regularly attend?**

I wish I could say that I've attended our Sunday service regularly over the 20 years of my membership. However, the truth is that I've spent most Sundays in the nursery, playing with the toddlers, or upstairs as a K-5 traveler or themed room leader, in the garden with the Spiritual Survivors, or talking about sexuality as an OWL instructor, or helping with Coming of Age credos or taking hikes with the Youth group. On the other hand, I'm forever grateful to have been blessed with the gift of following my two boys through Sheila's brilliant RE program, ensuring that they received a "strict" Unitarian upbringing.



**Gabe Siftar**

**Why are you interested in being a member of the Nominating Committee at First Unitarian Church?**

Joining the Nominating Committee would allow me to glimpse into an area that I've not understood much about to this point, even though I've been a member for close to 20 years. I'd like a chance to hone my leadership skills in a way that helps the church.

**The Nominating Committee is charged with vetting interested candidates for open Leadership positions. What skills and strengths do you bring to support this role?**

I am an open-minded, somewhat articulate, and disarming communicator.

**What thoughts do you have about cultivating leadership among other church members?**

I acknowledge a church's need for strong leadership, and I hope to be able to learn about the various needs within the organization such that I can match those willing to contribute to leadership roles.

**Describe your participation in this church (past and present) and other relevant community or work organizations.**

I have served as an AV volunteer for nearly 20 years and have contributed and/or co-lead several special projects, including AV and IT upgrades.