



2014 ANNUAL PLEDGE DRIVE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

What is the Annual Pledge Drive?

Every spring, members and friends of First Parish of Sudbury are asked to make a financial commitment to support the work of the church for the next fiscal year.

Why is our theme “*Living Abundantly*”?

Our congregation has existed for almost 375 years, and we remain financially solid. But our abundance goes beyond money: it includes the wealth of community as evidenced by the hundreds of volunteer hours we give to each other. It includes a spiritual wealth, nurtured by our Reverend Dr. Marjorie Matty and supported by strong religious education and music programs. Although money is important to support our vision, our abundance goes far beyond money.

Why should I pledge?

We make a financial commitment – a pledge - because this is OUR congregation and it is an important part of our lives. We pledge because this community supports us, helps us to live our values and challenges us to be our best selves. We pledge because our money helps to maintain this liberal religious community that works for social justice and a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We pledge because we want a secure financial base from which the Board of Trustees and staff can plan for the coming year.

What is the money used for?

Pledges and other revenue sources (contributions, fundraising events, building rental, and investment income) support our worship and music programs, our religious education program, programs for members and friends, community outreach, and connections to Unitarian Universalism. Our budget reflects our mission and vision.

Is pledging a requirement of membership?

We expect that those who benefit from the church and participate in activities will share in its financial upkeep. Some members are able to pledge more, others less, but we can all share in supporting our church.

Should everyone pledge the same amount?

We place a high value on diversity in our congregation—diverse views, backgrounds, and experiences. This includes diversity of economic circumstances. Each of us supports First Parish at a financial level we can sustain.

How much should I pledge?

One way to think about your pledge amount is to compare your financial commitment to First Parish with the amount you spend on other “non essential” items – theater and movie tickets, dining out, concerts, books, vacations. Only you can determine how much value these things bring to your life and how much meaning you derive from First Parish.

We estimate that average cost *per household* to support the congregation at its current level is approximately \$2,400 per year. In 2013 about one-third of First Parish households pledged \$2,400 or more.

What if my financial circumstances change during the year - if I lose my job or have a financial emergency? Or get a great new job?

Lives are not static. If your circumstances change, please contact the Assistant Treasurer to adjust your pledge amount – down or up.

In addition, last fall the Board of Trustees approved a policy of secured pledges to reflect our belief that we are stronger as a congregation if we care for and support each other during times of adversity. Any current member of First Parish who is experiencing serious financial difficulties may request a refund of all monies which have been paid as a pledge during the current fiscal year.

How sound is our overall financial condition?

Our financial health is good. We currently have a small budget gap which we hope to close in the coming year (to put it in perspective, if each household contributed an additional \$100 per year - or less than \$2 a week - the gap would disappear). Our building is in good condition and is well maintained and we have funds set aside for continued care of our historic meetinghouse. We also maintain cash reserves in keeping with financial best practices. Our infrastructure is sized for growth and we are able to support an increase in membership.

When and how is the congregation's annual budget determined?

Working with the minister, other staff, and committee chairs, the Finance Committee prepares a budget near the end of each fiscal year. The Board of Trustees reviews and approves the budget at its regular meeting in May. The Board-approved budget is then voted on by the Congregation at the annual congregational meeting in June.

What is our goal for the 2014-2015 pledge drive?

Whatever your pledge, our commitment is to use the funds wisely and be fiscally responsible. The congregational goals for 2014-2015 include: closing our current budget gap; funding initiatives such as our website, Living Our Faith, outreach, and stewardship; providing salary increases to our staff; and paying fair share UUA and District dues. Funding our goals will increase our budget by about \$25,000. As much as we've accomplished together, **there is more good work to be done!**

We ask you to think about your pledge in the context of *Living Abundantly*. What would that mean for your financial commitment to First Parish - a \$500 or \$1,000 increase? Or perhaps you might decide to commit to an extra dollar or two per day. Of course, for some people a pledge increase is just not possible this year and that's fine too. Taking care of each other is a core value of the First Parish community. So perhaps some members and friends will look at the benefits First Parish provides and decide to make a significant pledge increase – because going to the next level of support feels right.

Where can I get a copy of the First Parish budget?

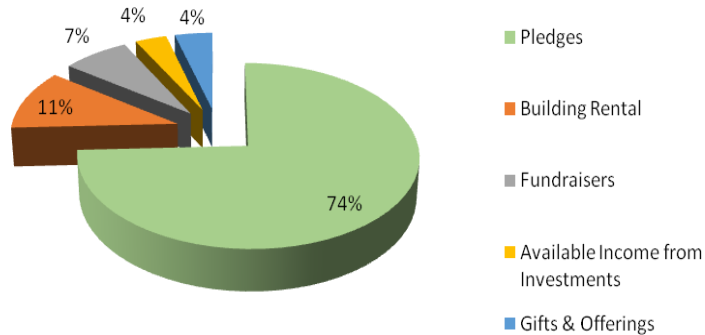
On the First Parish website, in the church office, or from any member of the Finance Committee.

What if I have a question that is not answered here?

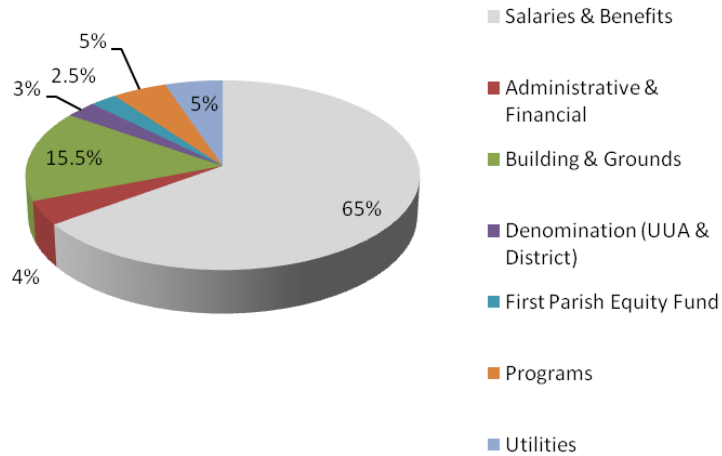
We want you to have all the information you need, so please contact Stewardship@FPSudbury.org.

First Parish Financials at a Glance

Where does our revenue come from?



How is our money spent?



Are there sources other than operating budget that can be used to pay for expenses?

Thanks to careful planning and the generosity of many people, FPS has approximately \$680K in funds to supplement some budget items and support certain extraordinary expenses.

