



First Church Berkeley UCC

Tuesday, October 15, 2024

Dear First Church Friends,

It is an exciting time for First Church Berkeley, as we look forward to moving into our new Community Hall in just a few months! It will elevate every facet of our ministry: allowing us to gather, cook, offer pastoral care, teach, learn, dance, pray and do so much more effectively—a beacon of gracious invitation to our broader community and a place of celebration for ourselves (**save the date for 150th Anniversary/First Church Prom on February 15, 2025!**).

We are grateful to all who pledged support through our *Build. Gather. Grow.* capital campaign, and we thank you for honoring those gifts alongside your regular annual giving. We know it has been a stretch—and we are in a position of relative strength because of you. It is now time to shape our 2025 budget, including just compensation for our hardworking staff and support for our existing buildings & programs.

Our ancestors in faith, the laity of the Congregational Church, understood that supporting their church financially and fully participating in decision-making was both a blessing and their sacred duty. In our non-hierarchical tradition, every member has an important stake in the vitality of the church—a precursor to our modern democracy and an experiment in radical power-sharing.

This election season is a chance for us to exercise our power and responsibility writ small: in this very community. **We might only have so much control over the outcome on November 5, but right here we can build something healing and beautiful.** Each Sunday this month, you'll hear from members of the Stewardship, Finance and Administration ministry to better understand how money works in our church.

Our day-to-day operations are paid for largely by sustaining givers whose generous contributions allow us to devote the Sunday plate offering to causes that serve vulnerable populations near and far. We are committed to this compassionate ministry.

In 2024, sustaining financial support covers around 50% of our total budget. Facilities use covers another 25%. The deficit is being covered by a variety of sources, including borrowing from our Pastoral Housing Endowment Fund. But we can't keep borrowing from savings to pay the bills. Our affordable housing initiative will help sustain us long-term, but we also need to step up as members. **We are hoping to increase this year's sustaining gifts to cover 60% of the \$1.3m annual budget.** Perhaps you are finishing your capital campaign gift in calendar year 2025, and discover you can bump up your annual giving accordingly.

If you are already a sustaining giver, your year-to-date giving statement is included with this letter, along with next year's commitment card. If you find discrepancies or have questions about your giving, please contact our Director of Operations, Rev. August Laperche (alperche@fccb.org).

If you have not yet become a sustaining giver but enjoy the fruits of First Church Berkeley, we invite you to start with a regular gift in any amount, so that you can truly say, "We are in this together!" Please mail the enclosed commitment card or bring it to worship on **Commitment Sunday, November 3**, when we will dance our cards down the aisle and bless these gifts to our future.

With gratitude,

Ministry of Stewardship, Finance and Administration

Nick Kukulian (chair), Christopher Batson, Tim Culvahouse, Diana Graham, Bob Helliesen, Eunice Kwon, Robin Lucchese, Moe Wright