



**First Unitarian Universalist Church of
Houston, Thoreau Campus in Stafford**

November 2017

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If you have questions about something that is not covered in this guide or corrections to offer, please contact the church office: (281) 277-8882 or nikki@firstuu.org.

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WELCOME!

We are happy you have chosen to explore First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, “One Church in Three Locations”. This information guide provides information about First Church, as well as the Thoreau Campus in Stafford.

Do You Want Help?

Promoting Love & Acceptance– of all people?

Extending your values into the world– with like-minded folks?

Creating a caring community of open-minded children & adults?

Advancing social justice?

Nourishing your human spirit?

Then consider getting to know us better. We’re all about– Liberal Religion for Diverse Families.

We’re committed to accepting each other as we are now, and encouraging each other to become the people we aspire to be. We are atheist, agnostic, Christian and Jew. We are of different backgrounds, and gender orientation.

We provide the opportunity for you to have a life-changing experience every weekend through authentic worship, a practical message, and an opportunity to go deeper. So, whether you’ve just begun your spiritual journey or you’re to take your next steps, there’s a place for you here at First Church.

In this information guide, you will learn about some basic information about Unitarian Universalism, the Mission, Vision, and Ends of First Church, and how to engage with us on a three-step spiritual journey:

- 1. Connect**
- 2. Grow**
- 3. Serve**

While this guide is chock full of information, we encourage you to reach out to others and ask questions. The Welcome Team and our staff are available to help you find your way at First Church, Thoreau/Stafford campus. Contact information can be found on the last page.

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UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PRINCIPLES

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote **Seven Principles**, which we hold as strong values and moral guides. We live out these Principles within a “living tradition” of wisdom and spirituality, drawn from sources as diverse as science, poetry, scripture, and personal experience.

As Rev. Barbara Wells ten Hove explains, “The Principles are not dogma or doctrine, but rather a guide for those of us who choose to join and participate in Unitarian Universalist religious communities.”

1st Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

2nd Principle: Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

3rd Principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

4th Principle: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

5th Principle: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

6th Principle: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

7th Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOURCES

Congregations affirm and promote **Six Sources** of our Living Tradition:

Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;

Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;

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Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;

Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;

Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

The seven Principles and six Sources of the Unitarian Universalist Association grew out of the grassroots of our communities, were affirmed democratically, and are part of who we are.

HOW FIRST CHURCH IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD: OUR VISION, MISSION, ENDS AND VALUES

Vision

Firmly grounded in our Unitarian Universalist principles, we join together on the path of spiritual and intellectual growth to promote and celebrate community, diversity and social justice for a healthier and more equitable world.

Mission (Global End Statement)

First Church is a spiritual community for all: advancing justice and embracing diversity with love and acceptance.

Ends

Promote Love and Acceptance

- Members and friends feel welcomed here.
- We are known throughout the greater Houston area as a place where people can bring their whole selves to connect with others with love across differences.

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- We are known throughout greater Houston for bringing the values of love and acceptance into the public square.

Extend Unitarian Universalism

- An increasing number of people find and stay at First Church to build their spiritual lives.
- Members are engaged; they are generous in their intentional commitment of time, treasure and talent to the work of the church.
- We are connected to other UU churches and to the denomination, offering our strengths and skills to build a strong Unitarian Universalist movement.
- People in the larger community see First Church promote and affirm the principles of Unitarian Universalism.

Create Community

- Members and friends feel part of a loving, supportive, and inclusive spiritual community.
- Members, friends, visitors and guests have access to multiple, diverse, and novel opportunities to connect with one another.
- Our campuses are engaged with their local communities to advance our mission.
- Our campuses work together as one church to advance our mission.

Advance Justice

- The lives of underserved people are improved through our social justice programs.
- Members, friends and visitors are motivated, trained and fulfilled by their contributions to a variety of social justice initiatives.
- The unique needs of our campus neighborhoods are met by our social justice programs.
- We are known for our engagement with a variety of community partners to advance justice throughout the greater Houston area.

Nourish Spirituality

- Members, friends, visitors and guests feel spiritually nourished, are emotionally moved, and their lives are transformed.
- We grow and deepen in our faith through experiences appealing to diverse ages, life styles, theologies and learning preferences.
- We support one another's spiritual growth, though our individual paths may differ.
- Through our spiritual journeys, we are equipped to live out our Unitarian Universalist principles within and beyond the walls of First Church.

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Values

First Church values and affirms the inherent worth of each person. We value personal spiritual growth through lifelong education in this free religious tradition. We value active participation in the local, national and world communities. We value our connection to the interdependent web of life.

FROM GUEST TO MEMBERSHIP TO LEADERSHIP

While you explore this spiritual community, we ask you to make the following commitments:

Connect, Grow, Serve... What does that mean?

Connect: Show up on Sundays. Be curious and open minded. Get to know a few people, let them get to know you. Make a connection. One of the things we offer you is an opportunity to really get to know some people who are enough like you to be comfortable, but different enough to be interesting. These people you see on Sunday morning probably have different beliefs from each other and from you. Some are atheist, others theist, a couple of pagans, some have a Buddhist practice. We are interesting folk!

Grow: Accept the invitation to an ongoing journey of spiritual depth through participation in Worship and Religious Education. Our church uses multi-week themes to help you on your spiritual journey. Your regular participation leads to important results. Our leaders provide inspirational stories, readings, and songs – both ancient & modern. Our sermons give you something new to think about, move you emotionally, and inspire you to live out your values. As you broaden and deepen your own journey, make and keep a financial commitment to the church.

Serve: As you might have guessed, our church is set up to help you live out your values. You have an opportunity to become involved in life-changing ministry in the community. Serve on one of our many ministry teams. Get involved in a Social Justice project. Accept the invitation to an ongoing journey of charitable depth. As you can, give of your time, talent, and treasure, to truly demonstrate your values. Living out your values is an essential part of becoming a person of spiritual depth.

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CONNECT

How is Unitarian Universalism different from other religions? What do you believe?

Newcomers can find our church a little puzzling at times because so much of what we believe is almost the 'opposite' of traditional religion.

- We have no creed, but we do have shared Principles.
- We are not as concerned with the *hereafter* as we are with the "here and now."
- We find wisdom not in a single scripture but in many.
- We believe in deeds, not creeds: actions speak louder than words.
- We expect people's beliefs to change over time.
- We expect different members to believe different things about God.
- We expect to be respected for our individual beliefs.

Why attend this church?

- You want healthy, supportive relationships in your life.
- If you discover you are a religious liberal (not necessarily a political one!), you may find your values and beliefs in the minority everywhere you go. This community helps you connect to others with love across differences.
- You'll thrive where you can use your gifts. You have gifts, some well-developed, others less so. As one of our hymns puts it: we have "gifts in differing measure, and hearts of one accord." Church is a place where you can find a place to develop your gifts in service to your values and ideas -- in a concrete way.
- You support our mission and vision and want to make a difference in the world.

What are the expectations of Visitors?

- Bring an open mind.
- Dress as you feel most comfortable
- Provide us with your contact information if you would like to remain connected
- If the fit feels right, come back next Sunday.

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So, how do I get connected?

We are **one** church in **three** locations. Our core curriculum is the same on all three campuses; each has volunteer team that works with the staff to carry out our mission. While the core is the same, enrichment activities vary quite a bit from campus to campus.

First Church has a monthly newsletter and a weekly email that describes what is happening each week.

You can get the latest information on our campus Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/ThoreauStafford/> and/or website

<http://firstchurchnow.org/thoreaustafford/>.

The weekly blast and monthly newsletter are distributed by email. Fill out a guest information card to be added to our distribution lists. If you have a question about receiving the newsletter or weekly update contact nikki@firstuu.org.

Please let us know if your mailing address, phone number or email address changes. We want to stay in touch! For questions or information contact the church office, at nikki@firstuu.org or (281) 277-8882.

Sunday Services

Worship

Our campus worship services on are Sundays at 10:15 a.m. lasting approximately one hour. The sermon may be preached live by one of First Church's ministers, or it may be delivered as a video. The rest of the worship service is conducted live by our Campus Minister or one of our Worship Associates, so you will always feel a part of an authentic spiritual community.

There is no dress code. People wear what they are most comfortable in -- it varies from "Sunday Best" to shorts and sandals, or anything in between. During the service, there is child care for infants and toddlers in the nursery and religious education classes for 4-year-olds through 12th graders . Parents, including nursing mothers, are invited to stay with their babies in the sanctuary, or use our A.V. area in the back as a "cry room" if they wish.

Each Sunday, children and youth are included in the opening part of the worship service. After "The Big Idea", they leave for their classes with their teachers. (If you are new feel free to accompany your child

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to class, then return to the service.) Parents and children will be reunited after the service in the Fellowship Hall.

We collect Outreach items for a community partner and share half of our plate cash offering with a nonprofit organization each Sunday. For details see our Facebook page each week.

Hospitality and Fellowship

We welcome you to join us for hospitality after the service in the fellowship hall. We share light snacks, see what the children have learned, and connect with one another. This is a great way to meet new people and discover First Church. Often, there are growth groups, adult enrichment or social justice events after hospitality. A few times a year, we have a holiday celebration that includes a special lunch. A Greeter will help you find your way and meet people.

Special Sundays

Unitarian Universalism and First Church have special celebrations, each with its own history and tradition.

Unitarian Universalism includes aspects of many of the world's religions. Holidays from various religions are celebrated in Unitarian Universalist congregations. Many congregations recognize or celebrate Christmas and Easter, Passover and Yom Kippur, and the Winter Solstice, among other holidays. In addition to these traditional religious holidays many of our congregations also honor secular holidays including Earth Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday, Mother's Day and Father's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Thanksgiving. While these are not traditionally spiritual holidays, Unitarian Universalism finds spiritual meaning and affinity with our principles in the ideas behind these and other secular holidays.

Circle of Life: On the first Sunday of each January we look back at the year just past to celebrate many of the important moments of that year. We name new births and also celebrate child dedications, and we recognize significant anniversaries, and finally name loved ones who have died.

Standing on the Side of Love Sunday: We celebrate the many ways our church inspires and encourages us to work for justice and toward Beloved Community. Our faith is about doing the work that brings even a little more heaven to reality in our world.

Flower Communion: Every Mother's Day we bring a flower to the worship service, placing it in a shared arrangement. Bringing a flower represents our uniqueness. The flowers are blessed by the congregation during the ceremony. At the end of the service each person takes home a flower other than the one that he or she brought, reflecting our appreciation of the uniqueness of others.

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Water Communion: Celebrated at the beginning of the new church year in early September, we bring a small amount of water from a place that is special to us. We pour our water together into a large bowl. The combined water is symbolic of our shared faith coming from many different sources. Each year some of the water is saved and brought to the next year's ceremony, linking the present to our past. The water is also used for child and building dedications.

Día de los Muertos: Our annual "Day of Remembrance" service is celebrated simultaneously at all three of our campuses in late October or early November. Bring a photo or memento of a departed loved one to church for our memory table. The children attend this multi-generational service.

Bread Communion: The week before Thanksgiving we bring bread or other baked goods that usually represent our heritage and share our stories and our bread with the congregation. This is a multigenerational service that is uniquely Unitarian.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service: On the evening of December 24 members and friends, visiting family members and newcomers gather together to enjoy singing carols and reflecting on the Christmas story in an atmosphere of joy and celebration. The service includes a minister's homily, carols and readings.

Special Services

If you are interested in other special services, please contact the church office.

Weddings Ceremonies: For both gay and straight couples services are developed by the minister in close consultation with the couple being joined. Music is planned in consultation with our music staff.

Memorial Services: Memorial services are planned by the minister in consultation with the family of the deceased to honor the memory of that individual. Sometimes the service includes a time for those present to remember the deceased with a story or anecdote. Hymn singing and special or instrumental music help celebrate the honored life and comfort the friends and family.

Child Dedications: We have ceremonies for infants and young children. The dedication ceremony is a celebration of the blessing of a new life, an expression of the parents' hopes for their child, and a call to the caregivers and members to lead and nurture the child's spiritual life.

Religious Education for Children and Youth

Nursery care is available from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for infants through three-year olds.

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Religious Education provides experiential opportunities to help grow spiritually, build stronger families, improve relationships and build a better world. The Religious Education classes for children and youth are offered during the church service.

Elementary School: *Theme Based Exploration* -- Using stories that illustrate the theme of the month, this multi-age class rotates throughout the month to different ways of expressing themselves in relation to the theme. Graphic arts, drama, food preparation, needle arts, music and other hands-on experiences encourage the children to have fun and be involved while integrating their thoughts about the topic.

Grades 6 – 12: Middle and high school students use a curriculum whose goal is creative empowerment; helping all participants discover themselves as creators and as one with positive and universal creative forces. They will be enriching their experiences with course-relevant questions from the church themes.

Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to become involved in the activities of our Religions Education Program to support their children and develop ties with other families.

Other Programs for Children and Youth

Our Whole Lives (OWL) Sexuality Education for Youth is offered in conjunction with the Houston Cluster of UU Churches. **OWL for grades 7-8 and grades 10-12** will be offered at churches in the Houston area. Our Religious Educator will provide detailed information about these courses in the spring. These courses are part of a lifelong Unitarian Universalist program to provide a healthy understanding of our sexual selves and our relationships with partners. This program typically meets Sunday afternoons and requires parental orientation and consent. **Contact:** OWL@firstuu.org

District Youth Events: youth who are interested may attend rallies and other youth activities held in our district. Youth need to be actively involved in the congregation in order to attend these events.

Ways to Help in Religious Education for Children and Youth

Teachers are the backbone of our religious education program. It is an exciting and rewarding experience. Teaching gives you the opportunity to be with the younger segment of our community, to make an important contribution to the whole, to learn more about Unitarian Universalism, and to meet other adults in our community. Most teachers volunteer for two Sundays per month from September to May, and can rotate in and out of teaching, as their time commitment changes. Teachers attend a Teacher Orientation in the fall.

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Adult Religious Education

Growth Groups

The core of adult religious education is our Growth Groups. These are guided small group experiences designed to provide members and friends with a setting in which to get to know each other while discussing the sermon or other spiritual theme and how the subject matter affects our daily lives and spiritual growth.

The groups generally meet once a month. Watch our announcements, or contact the Campus Minister for more information.

In the words of our Senior Minister, the Rev. Dr. Daniel O'Connell, Growth Groups:

- Encourage you to a spiritual challenge
- Gently hold you accountable;
- Cheer you on when you thrive;
- Support you when you falter;
- Provide you with a tribe where you are truly known, and where you can truly know others.

Enrichment Activities

The Thoreau/Stafford campus also has a wide range of enrichment programs for adults. Information about the exact times and locations can be found in the newsletter, weekly email updates, Facebook, and our Enrichment Guide.

Adult Discussion Group: One of our most popular enrichment activities at Thoreau is the Sunday morning Adult Discussion Group. Each week the group meets at 9 am in the CCR lobby to explore and discuss a current topic of interest. All adults are welcome and childcare is provided.

Adult Enrichment Group: Each Wednesday at noon in the Thoreau Fellowship Hall a group gets together to read, discuss and explore a religious theme, book or film.

Ethnic Dining: Every other month everyone is invited to gather at a local restaurant to enjoy an evening of conversation and food.

Lunch Bunch: Once a month after the Sunday service join your fellow church members and newcomers for lunch at a local restaurant.

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Men's Group: Men of all ages are welcome at this monthly get together for a great evening of camaraderie over dinner.

Second Thursday Discussion Group: This group gets together once a month to discuss a topic of societal interest selected by the group the month before. All are welcome to join the discussion on each 2nd Thursday at the Thoreau campus.

Women's Book Club: Once a month this group gathers to discuss a book on the list selected by a majority vote at the beginning of the year.

GROW

Why join our church?

- You want a safe place to grow. Our church is a place where your mind will be stretched, your heartstrings tugged, and your conscience called to action – if you let it!
- You want to belong to something bigger than yourself. A lone individual can only accomplish so much.
- You want to commit to living out your values in a community of like-minded seekers.

What are the expectations of new members?

We ask you to attend and get connected to our church for a few months before getting ready to join.

- Attend Sunday Services and worship regularly.
- Try a Growth Group or our other Enrichment activities to meet other people at our campus in a supportive atmosphere.
- Participate in our Outreach and Shared Offerings.
- Get involved with a Social Justice activity or ministry team.

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What is the meaning of membership at First Unitarian Universalist Church?

- Our membership process is based on the idea that once you become fully engaged at First Church, you experience transformation in your life. This leads to becoming a fully developed person of spiritual depth.
- To be a member means you make certain commitments to support the community, and the community makes certain commitments to support you.

New U Class

While not a requirement for membership, we hope you can attend one of our “New U” classes to learn more about membership. This class will:

- Help you get to know new people
- Learn more about Unitarian Universalism
- Learn more about First Unitarian Universalism Church of Houston • Learn more about the Thoreau campus and how to get involved
- Discern how good the fit is for you and your family.

We try to offer “New U” classes regularly, usually a few times a year on a Saturday morning. Childcare is available upon request.

Okay, how do I join?

We welcome you to join with us in the rich spiritual life of this community. We are confident your relationship with First Unitarian Universalist Church will be spiritually, intellectually and emotionally rewarding.

In a nutshell -

1. Become connected to our church community.
2. So we can get to know you better, fill out a registration form.
3. Meet with a member of the Welcome Team or Campus Minister.
4. Make a financial commitment to First Church.
5. Sign the membership book.

Our Welcome Team can set up a meeting and bring the book out when you indicate your intention to join. Most people usually join after a Sunday service (during coffee hour) or after a New U class. Once you have your forms complete, let the Welcome Team or the Campus Minister know you are ready to make a commitment and to sign the book.

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Not everyone is ready for membership.

There are certain commitments expected from members. Some guests are ready to join right away -- others may take a year or two. In the meantime, after you've been around too long to be just a visitor, you are invited to be a "pledging friend." This means attending regularly, involving yourself in any of the activities which call to you, and pledging the financial support that makes everything 'church' possible.

Stewardship

Stewardship is an essential part of your own spiritual journey and the long-term financial and spiritual health of this congregation. You are asked to make a financial commitment within your means to the work of the church, before coming a member. Also, each year our administrative staff works closely with the Stewardship Team to accomplish a successful canvass to renew pledges to support the work of our campus and church.

At First Church, we have a step-wise approach to stewardship and the development of generosity as a spiritual practice. We support and acknowledge the progress of members and friends as they journey along this path, and ensure that a donor's generosity is appreciated and their gifts are put to good use.



If you have any questions about Stewardship, you may speak to the Welcome or Stewardship Teams.

SERVE

Our Seven Core Ministry Teams

Our core ministries are run through ministry teams on each campus. Our Campus Minister and church staff provide leadership for the operation and administration of the campus ministry and church teams. Ministry and church teams are an opportunity for you to learn new skills, hone old ones, and work with likeminded folks to live out your values.

Below is a list of volunteer opportunities. Some (like greeters) you can become part of right away. Others (like Worship Associates) are reserved for more seasoned members.

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Welcome: Led by Deirdre Hammons, our Welcome Team is responsible for welcoming newcomers and helping them along the path to membership. Whether you've been around for years or just discovered the Thoreau/Stafford campus, share your enthusiasm by joining the Welcome Team. Help others learn their way around and help make sure guests feel at home. Greeters, who are also part of the Welcome Team, greet people as they arrive at the service each Sunday. They hand out the orders of service, welcome people to church, and help them feel at ease. They also gather the offering each Sunday. This is a great way to meet other members of our community.

Sunday Celebration: Led by Betty Johnson the Sunday Celebration Team works closely with our minister to plan each Sunday's worship service. This includes Set-up, A.V. Music, and Worship Associates.

Healthy Communication Team: With Johanna DeYoung in the lead, the Healthy Communication Team works to make sure that there is healthy communication between church members and church staff. This team serves as a sounding board for church members and friends. The team works with the ministers to ensure that good communication takes place here at church.

Care and Concerns: Chairperson Jane Smith ensures that the Care and Concerns Team works with the congregation to minister to congregants in times of need. The Care Team provides emotional and physical care and assistance for members who are in need of support. They sometimes provide meals for the homebound or infirm and offer transportation to appointments and respite for caregivers.

Stewardship: The yearly canvass campaign raises most of the Thoreau/Stafford campus' operating funds. All active members and friends will be asked to make their pledge for the coming year so that we may budget responsibly. The canvass campaign generally happens during the month of February.

Leadership Development: Johanna DeYoung of the Thoreau/Stafford campus serves on the First Church Nominating Committee and leads the effort to find and develop future church leaders.

Social Justice: With shared leadership by Valerie Tolman and Cassey Crouch, the team meets annually to plan a variety of opportunities to serve in our community.

Campus Advisory Team (CAT)

This team meets once a month to coordinate the campus calendar and communications and to provide advice to the campus minister. Members are: Jan Elias, Deirdre Hammons, Ron Hammons, Betty Johnson, Ron Masters, and Tamara Veneruso. Ministry team leads often attend the CAT meetings.

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Other Opportunities to serve church teams at the Thoreau/Stafford Campus

Aesthetics: Led by Dan Druecker, this team helps select and place art, furnishings and accessories in the sanctuary and fellowship halls.

ADG Planning: Tamara Veneruso leads this monthly effort that plans Adult Discussion Group topics for the coming month.

Art Wall: Coordinated by Tamara Veneruso, this team curates an art gallery in the fellowship hall. Contributions from First Church members and friends are welcome. The exhibit is usually displayed for 2 months.

Audio Visual Team (part of Sunday Celebrations): members are responsible for preparing and running the AV during the Sunday services. Betty Johnson takes the lead for Thoreau.

Enrichment: See the campus Enrichment Guide for coordinators, or talk to Tamara Veneruso if you would like to become involved in the planning of adult enrichment activities.

Greeters (part of our Welcome Team) provide a welcoming presence at each Sunday morning service. Led by Deirdre Hammons, the greeters arrive early to set up the Welcome Table and make sure all is ready for our guests. They hand out the orders of service, welcome people to the church, and help them feel at home. This is a great way to meet other members of our community.

Hospitality: The Hospitality team, led by Janice Milo, organizes the food served during coffee hour and cleans up the kitchen afterwards. It also helps to organize food and decorations for certain special occasions.

Houston UU Network: Ron Hammons represents the Thoreau campus at the regular meetings of the UU Network in Houston. The network plans various activities in which all the UU congregations in Houston participate.

Hospitality team: Led by Janice Milo, this group organizes the food served during coffee hour and cleans up the kitchen. Everyone is welcome to bring a snack to share once a month, and the team always needs set-up and clean-up helpers.

Lunch Bunch: Peggy DeMarsh coordinates monthly outings after service to various restaurants, and is always looking for suggestions of suitable venues.

Maintenance Volunteers and Work Parties are needed occasionally for odd jobs and minor repairs - they help keep our facilities in good working order. Contact Ron Hammons.

Music (part of Sunday Celebrations): Music Director Michael Crouch is always looking for talented musicians and singers to assist with music during the services.

Songleaders - Each week a few members of the congregation come early to sing through the songs for that day so that they can help lead the congregational singing during the worship service. Anyone is welcome to join us for this informal practice. Come to the piano in the sanctuary about 9:40 AM to join us.

Ad Hoc Music - Participation opportunities are available for those with previous music training. These individuals and groups perform occasionally throughout the year and during the summer months by audition. On Sunday morning, ask for our Music Director Michael Crouch, or email the office and we will connect you.

Publicity and Social Media: If you would like to help spread the word about First Church and the Thoreau Campus, contact the church office.

Sunday Set-up opens the campus facility on Sunday, puts out the street signs, and helps to set up the sanctuary for service.

Worship Associates (part of Sunday Celebrations) are a team of volunteers, led by Betty Johnson, who work to ensure that every Sunday service flows smoothly. These Associates also serve as liturgists when the campus minister is away on a Sunday.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the general direction and policy for the business of First Church and the operation of all three campuses. The Board is comprised of Trustees who are elected by the members of the church at the annual meeting in May or June. We have nine Trustees serving staggered three-year terms. Members of the Board must represent all three campuses, and they hold Board Linkage sessions throughout the year. Non-voting members include the Secretary and the Treasurer. The Board meets monthly on the third Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. in the Fireside Room at the Museum District

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campus. Meetings are open to anyone in the First Church community who may wish to attend and watch the proceedings. Thoreau campus Trustees are Jan Elias and Betty Johnson.

Service to the Wider Community

Social Justice Activities

Our Social Justice efforts in the Fort Bend area are guided by our Social Justice Team. The team meets annually to plan a variety of opportunities to serve in our community, aimed at giving every member the opportunity to work on something that interests him or her. This year volunteer opportunities include, among others, helping the homeless, community building projects, and hands-on Service after the Service projects. In addition, the Thoreau/Stafford campus started and maintains a scholarship that pays college tuition for low-income students who are the first in their family to attend college. Thoreau campus members and friends are also welcome to participate in church-wide Social Justice activities. The annual Social Justice guide can be found on the website.

Outreach Offerings

Each Sunday the Thoreau/Stafford campus collects items for a community partner. This is an easy, fun, meaningful way to develop a spiritual practice that makes a difference in our community. Members, guests and children are encouraged to bring items for the weekly donations. The offerings are advertised in our weekly newsletter, on Facebook, and in Sunday Announcements, but you are also welcome to bring food or personal hygiene items for the Food Pantry if you don't know the collection item. Some of our recent outreach offerings have been:

- School Supplies for low-income children
- School clothes for low-income children
- Food for the Fort Bend Food Pantry

- Toys for low-income children
- Items for veteran's care packages
- Items for welcome backpacks for foster children in new homes

Shared Offering Partners

The Thoreau/Stafford campus shares our Sunday offering each week, giving away half of the donations to nonprofit organizations which share our values. Some of our recent shared offering recipients have been:

- Fort Bend Family Promise

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- Planned Parenthood
- East Fort Bend Human Needs Ministry Food Pantry
- The Thoreau Dream Scholarship
- Fort Bend Women’s Center
- UUSC Clean Water Project

Service after the Service

A few times a year, the Thoreau campus sponsors a hands-on social justice project immediately after the Sunday service. This might be wrapping holiday presents for kids, bagging pet food for Animeals, preparing meal kits for the homeless, or sorting items for backpacks for foster kids. This is a great way for congregants of all ages to work together to make a difference in our community.

UU Voice for Justice (UUV4J)

Our coalition of Houston area congregations is a liberal religious voice that is willing to speak out. We launched the Unitarian Universalist Voice for Justice (UUV4J) program on October 11, 2014 based around 4 issues: Women’s Health and Reproductive Rights; Interfaith Cooperation; Justice for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning People; and Racial Justice. Contact the church office for more details.

MINISTERS AND STAFF

The Rev. Dr. Daniel O’Connell, First Church Senior Minister (located at Museum District Campus)

(713) 526-5200, daniel@firstuu.org

(713) 376-9588 after office hours (off on Mondays)

The Rev. Dan King, Thoreau/Stafford Campus Minister revdanking@firstuu.org

Ralph Krog, student minister, Copperfield and Museum District

Carol Burrus, Director of Religious Education (located at Museum District Campus)

Richard Miller, Thoreau/Stafford Campus Religious Educator richard@firstuu.org

Michael Crouch, Thoreau/Stafford Music Director

CONNECT GROW SERVE

Nikki Steele, Church Administrator (located at Museum District Campus) (713)
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Welcome Team

**Deirdre Hammons, Thoreau/Stafford Welcome Team Leader Irv
Smith, Darlene Thompson, Thoreau/Stafford Path to Membership**
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