



Celebrating
125
YEARS

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF DALLAS

*Honoring our past, celebrating our
present, and envisioning a vibrant
future together.*

EVENING GALA—SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5TH, 2024
ALL-CHURCH PICNIC—SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6TH, 2024

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS



As we come together to celebrate our 125th anniversary, we're doing more than marking a milestone. We're honoring our rich history of faith, compassion, and progressive values that have enabled First Unitarian Church of Dallas to become a sanctuary of love and acceptance that transforms lives and is a catalyst for positive change in our community.

Let's rejoice together in our shared achievements throughout the generations, renew our commitment to creating a more just and compassionate world, and prepare for the challenges ahead as we move into the next 125 years of faith in action. We are so pleased and proud to launch a year of special events and activities designed to honor our past, celebrate our present, and envision a vibrant future together.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Lighting of the Chalice

Prelude	Étincelles (Sparks) Op. 36 No. 6 Grant Wareham, Piano	Moritz Moszkowski
Welcome	Rev. T. J. FitzGerald	
Hymn #358	Rank by Rank	Carl G. Seaburg
Reflection	Rev. Dr. Daniel Kanter	
Well Wishes from Guests	Rabbi David Stern, Temple Emanu-El Ike Irozuru, Chair of the Board of Trustees	
Prayer	Rev. Beth Dana	
Benediction	Rev. Dr. Daniel Kanter	
Postlude	Toccatà from Symphonie No. 5 Grant Wareham, Organ	Charles-Marie Widor

THE MANY WAYS WE ARE CELEBRATING

Our 125th Anniversary is a church-wide celebration that engages all facets of church life from Sunday sermons and Religious Education to extensive community service and the contributions of individual members and groups. Along with church staff, these efforts have been spearheaded by the volunteers leading and serving on the 125th Anniversary Committee and are evident in individual and group efforts ranging from a video history completed by church youth to a history display exhibited in Channing Hall, to the many acts of service and celebrations we will enjoy throughout the year.

Throughout the church year, we will honor our deep commitment to service by inviting members and friends to perform one hour of community service for each year of First Church's history. Throughout our anniversary year (September 2024 through April 2025), we ask you to tally all of your contributions of time and talent through your volunteer efforts within First Church and beyond. At the end of the church year, we will acknowledge all volunteers at a special year-end event. There will be special recognition for all those who reach the 125-hour milestone.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Evening Gala

Saturday, October 5th, 2024 from 6:00 - 8:00 pm, Channing Social Hall

Adult church members and friends will join together for a short service of celebration and reflection in the sanctuary followed by live music, food, and dancing in Channing Hall.

Music provided by Grant Wareham.

All-Church Picnic

Sunday, October 6th, 2024 following the 11 am Sunday Service, Channing Social Hall

Our All-Church Picnic is a way for families, members and friends of all ages to celebrate. This event is hosted by the Coming of Age and Youth of our church and includes child-friendly activities and free play in our brand-new Mikey's Playground.

Music provided by the First Church Jazz Band - Jeremy Givens, guitar, Michael Alves, bass guitar, George Cornelius, trombone, Rosana Eckert, vocals, Noe Eckert, vocals, drums, Gary Eckert, piano, drums, Tina Malone, vocals, Stephen Potter, drums

OUR 125-YEAR JOURNEY

In 1899, when our church was founded, about 38,000 residents called Dallas home. The *Dallas Morning News* and *Dallas Times Herald* had only begun to publish a few years earlier and electricity and telephone service were recent introductions. What would later become University Park, and the permanent home of our church, was mostly dirt roads and farms. The first homes in the area grew up around the fledgling Southern Methodist University with SMU providing those first residents with utility services.

Dallas was a rough-and-tumble sort of place in its early years, prompting *D Magazine* to call Dallas, "A city founded on hard justice." But by the late 1870s, Dallas had launched a concerted effort to rebrand itself as part of the southwest sunbelt to encourage northern investment and to distance the city from its past support of slavery and opposition to Reconstruction.

Into this interesting mix, the visionary Dr. George Alexander Kohut, Rabbi of one of the largest synagogues in the southwest, invited a teacher from Trenton, Mississippi who was spreading the word about Unitarianism, to Dallas to give a talk about the religion. Temple Emanu-El hosted the talk by Daniel Christian Limbaugh who said, "The time has come in the history of Dallas when a broad and liberal Christianity should be declared here." He described his vision for "a liberal platform which does no violence to religion, but which, while perfectly rational, is at the same time expressive of the highest conception of a life of spirituality."

Limbaugh, who later became a Unitarian minister, visited several more times and eventually agreed to stay and work with a few dozen families to create what would become First Unitarian Church of Dallas.

STANDING ON THE SIDE OF JUSTICE

From its inception, First Church has committed itself to progressive ideals and securing equality and respect for all. First Church minister Rev. Robert Raible stood with his counterpart at Temple Emanu-El in 1957 to advocate for the desegregation of Dallas public schools and ours was the first church in Dallas to welcome members of all races. Following in Rev. Raible's footsteps, Rev. Dwight Brown proudly walked alongside Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King during the march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965 and provided abortion counseling both before the issuance of *Roe v. Wade* and after.

Just as Temple Emanu-El so generously welcomed and hosted our early members in their facilities, First Church provided space for the Islamic Association of North Texas to pray in Channing Hall. First Church chartered its first LGBTQ group in 1981 and became a welcoming congregation in the early 1990s and one of the largest walking contingents in the Dallas Pride parade.

Rev. Laurel Hallman led the congregation into the new millennium and unprecedented growth, doubling the budget, growing the membership, and shepherding the Chart and Compass Strategic Plan which led to the building of the south side of the current campus. Rev. Hallman also initiated the call for an Associate Minister.

The Rev. Daniel Kanter was called to that post and has continued the church's tradition of progressive leadership, being named Senior Minister in 2009. In conjunction with neighboring faith communities Trinity Christian, Temple Shalom, and the Islamic Association of North Texas, Rev. Kanter helped found Friends for Good in 2015 to gather religious leaders and community members to grow friendships across barriers. In 2015, he also founded a multi-faith volunteer chaplaincy group supporting abortion care at Southwestern Women's Surgical Center. When the state put a six-week ban on abortion in 2021, it turned into a robust travel program helping women get to and from New Mexico for abortions. In 2018, under his direction, our church formed the Racial Equity Task Force to transform our church from one steeped in white supremacy to one actively engaged in justice making and liberation. In 2024, First Church founded the Truth Pregnancy Resource Center to provide comprehensive, compassionate, and culturally just reproductive counseling services to pregnant persons in Dallas. Rev. Kanter is also a founding force behind SACReD, a national organization that engages spiritual communities in practices that advance reproductive justice, and in 2024 First Church became a recognized SACReD congregation.

Rev. Beth Dana came to the church initially as a Sabbatical Minister and then joined the ministerial team in 2015, the same year the congregation ordained her into the Unitarian Universalist Ministry. Since June 2020, she has served as Minister of Faith Development. Rev. Dana has guided children, youth, and adults in their faith development and spiritual exploration, helping them understand what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist and then live out their values in the world. Her efforts have included welcoming new families, equipping our programs to better minister to neurodiverse children and their families, pastoral and spiritual support for parents around parenting, the evolution of the 9th grade Odyssey/Coming of Age program, overseeing the fundraising and design of two new playgrounds, and developing the *Family Faith Practices* booklet as a resource for bridging the Sunday morning experience at church with home life. Rev. Dana has also led the development of *Faith Forward: From Visitor to Leader*, a guided path for adults to become more engaged with the church, deepen their faith, and grow their leadership, which is now used in over 70 other Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Rev. T. J. FitzGerald came to the church in 2022 and was hired as the Minister of Community Care and Engagement in 2023. In this time, Rev. FitzGerald has led initiatives to increase access to care for church members and to reach a wider community searching for a church home. He has partnered with national and local justice initiatives to increase racial equity and protect reproductive rights. He began a church podcast that reaches more and more people every week called Tiny Pulpit Talks. With the launch of the Lay Chaplains program he worked to build, trained members provide care to our congregants who are going through troubling times and increase the connection and care they receive from the church in meaningful ways.

In addition to the strong leadership of our ministers, our members have stood against sexism in religious organizations, advocated for women's rights to control their own finances, founded and led the Texas Land Conservancy, and formed a coalition called the Dallas Committee for the Study of Abortion. This group provided support to those organizing to make abortion legal, including the attorney who would argue and win the *Roe v. Wade* case that made abortion services legal across the United States.

Our church continues to champion social justice issues of today, including radical inclusivity, a commitment to drive racial equity, support for reproductive justice, and serving as an outspoken voice for progressive thought and against ultra-conservative political and religious doctrines that would restrict individual rights and freedoms.

WHERE WE'RE GOING

First Church was formally founded on December 3, 1899 with 32 visionary and committed members. Over the next one hundred years, the congregation increased to more than 750 members. Today, First Church is a vibrant and growing congregation that is one of the largest Unitarian churches in the world with more than 1,100 members and friends who attend locally in person and via livestream each week from across the United States and around the world.

At a time when many people feel disconnected from the religious communities of their upbringing, the progressive and inclusive message of First Church continues to resonate with people of all ages and walks of life. People who still hunger for the kind of ongoing search for truth, fellowship in diverse community, and willingness to take important stands on issues of social justice reflected in that early talk given by Limbaugh in 1899, continue to drive strong growth and extensive acts of service in the church today.

Moving forward, we see First Church continuing to grow locally, internationally, and as a highly visible force ready to speak and act in ways that respect and promote the inherent worth and dignity of all people. We don't know what challenges the future will bring, but we know that our commitment to stand on the side of love and justice will be unwavering.

Our current strategic plan is tackling the vision of the near future with a focus on five areas:

Impact: Align our ministry and outreach efforts with current social issues and needs of the communities that we live in and care about.

Financial Sustainability: Assess our current financial health and develop strategies that ensure long-term sustainability and resource optimization.

Membership & Engagement: Evaluate our hybrid, in-person, digital reach and strategies to engage existing members while attracting new congregants.

Racial Equity: Reinforce our commitment to racial justice and equity and continuing to support an inclusive environment where all individuals feel valued and included.




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Thank you to the 125th Anniversary Planning Committee:

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Kathryn Bryant

SENIOR MINISTER

Rev. Dr. Daniel Kanter

SERVICE COMMITTEE

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Jenny Moore
Mike Stanton

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Jenny Pugh
Suzette Buehrle
Janet Kafka
Kathryn Bryant

SERVICE SUB-COMMITTEE

Gwen Cassel
Doug Delaney
Susan Hamilton
Linda Houghton
Daleen Maxwell

**We also extend a special thanks to the 125th Sponsor Committee,
whose generosity made this weekend's festivities possible.**



Rev Dr. Daniel Kanter — Senior Minister
Rev. Beth Dana — Minister of Faith Development
Rev. T. J. FitzGerald — Minister of Community Care and Engagement
Grant Wareham — Director of Music