



2026 Elected Leadership Slate

Introducing the First Unitarian
Church of Dallas elected leadership
slate for 2026.



Steve Dennis (President)

Steve Dennis has been attending First Unitarian since 2005 and has been a member for more than a decade. He's in his second term on the Board of Trustees and is the current Vice President and past Secretary. His other leadership roles at the Church include serving on the Capital Committee, and the Strategy Implementation Steering Committee, as well as helping launch WISE.

Professionally, Steve is a strategy consultant, retail analyst, and keynote speaker focused on innovation and the impact of digital disruption. He is the author of two business bestsellers: *Remarkable Retail: How to Win & Keep Customers in the Age of Disruption* and *Leaders Leap: Transforming Your Company at the Speed of Disruption*. Steve also hosts the retail industry's #1 weekly podcast.

Steve received his MBA from the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration and a BA in Economics from Tufts University.

He has two adult daughters, Elena and Claire, both of whom now reside in Chicago.



Emily Gould (Vice President)

Emily's career is centered around connecting people with the information and resources they need to thrive. Within our church, she's served in several volunteer roles: implementing Love Beyond Belief principles with Rev. Thandeka, leading the Nominating Committee, and as a Trustee on the Board for the last three years, two of which she served as Clerk.

Professionally, Emily is Senior Director of Documentation at GitHub, the industry-leading platform for software development. Emily leads a global team focused on developer and enterprise needs. Emily's focus as a leader is empowering her teams to thrive and create and have fun.

Emily started her career by serving in AmeriCorps in Baltimore, connecting schools and communities. She then facilitated programming and raised funds for a nonprofit library that provides wraparound services, like after-school programs, to the local neighborhood. Emily transitioned into the tech industry as a writer and content strategist before moving into leadership.

Emily values service and social justice, and our faith of action is one of the things that drew Emily to Unitarian Universalism. She's been attending First Unitarian Church of Dallas since 2011 and believes in the power and opportunity of our congregation to make both individual, immediate, and systemic, long-term impact in the world. She's grateful to have the opportunity to support our congregation and its mission as an officer of the Board of Trustees.



Stephanie Duelm (Treasurer)

Stephanie finds the things she values in a church at First UU Dallas: a caring community, a focus on making the world better, a place to regularly be reminded of things bigger than herself, inspiring words, and beautiful music. She has been involved with First Church since 2012 and has taught children's RE for many years. Stephanie has participated in the Circles program, the Foodies and Friends group, the Spiritual Parenting group, and is active in the Virtual Connections group. She is the current treasurer. She is grateful for the religious education and connections her children Sophie (16) and Peter (12) are receiving at church.

In her professional life, Stephanie loves being an accountant. Her life as a CPA has varied from tax practice with a global accounting firm to accounting and grant writing for Tarrant County College Foundation. Stephanie is currently the Senior Accounting Manager at Tarrant County College where she has fun with spreadsheets, reports, and auditors. She is excited to bring her experience working with governing boards to the Board of Trustees at First UU Dallas.



Linda Donnelly (3-Year Board Term)

Linda Donnelly has been attending First Unitarian since 1998, and her two (now adult) sons were raised in this church. She retired in 2014 from Allstate Insurance, where she worked in Corporate Finance (budgeting) for 30 years.

Among her leadership roles in the community, she has served on the boards of Twelve Hills Nature Center, North Texas Master Naturalists, and in recent years she has had several roles as a board member of PFLAG Dallas.

She is a cofounder of Cub Scout Pack 1899 and Scouting America Troop 1899, which are sponsored by First Unitarian and were among the very first LGBTQ+ welcoming and affirming Scouting America (formerly BSA) units in Texas. She currently serves as Charter Organization Representative for both units.

Over the years, Linda has been an RE teacher and a Sumfun counselor. In 2018, she joined the adult Boston Heritage trip, which was transformative in deepening her relationship with the church. In 2022, she served as chair of the Nominating Committee, and she was a part of the 2024 Spiritual Leadership Path cohort.

Activities that bring her joy include hanging out in nature (with kiddos is a bonus) and singing in community with Kindred Voices.

Linda is humbled, challenged, and inspired by her fellow congregants, the ministers, and our amazing church staff. She would be honored to play a part of our Board continuing the important legacy of First Church in these pivotal times.



Joe Keys (3-Year Board Term)

Joe first connected with First Unitarian Church of Dallas in November 2023 after discovering a sermon on Instagram that deeply resonated with him. Drawn by its message of interconnectedness and compassion, delivered without the doctrine he'd grown up with and long struggled to embrace, he reached out to the friend who shared it and learned about the Unitarian Universalist Church of Dallas. Though initially uncertain about joining a church, Joe soon found a community where his own values were reflected back to him. The experience reignited his sense of connection and belonging in ways he hadn't expected. After completing the Inquirers class, he formally joined the church in January 2025.

From the start, Joe immersed himself in the church's adult learning and community programs, completing the Inquirers series, Beyond Inquirers, and the UU Elevator Speech class. Wanting to create opportunities for deeper connection and spontaneous friendships, he founded the connect group ImpromptUU, which continues to grow as a space for members to build meaningful relationships through shared experiences.

Professionally, Joe has worked in corporate leadership and learning for more than 20 years, holding a variety of roles. He began his career in sales and went on to manage teams, train leaders, and design learning experiences before assuming his current role as a lead strategist partnering with global clients. His work has consistently centered on communication, growth, and helping others reach their potential, values that also guide his service within the church.

Originally from Little Rock, Arkansas, Joe has called Texas home for nearly two decades, living in both Austin and Dallas. He is drawn to art, nature, beauty, creativity, intellect, truth, and kindness, qualities that continue to inspire his personal and spiritual life. Joe is honored to serve on the Board of Trustees and hopes to help others experience the same sense of connection and personal growth that continues to call him to a higher version of himself at First Unitarian Church of Dallas.

Tammy Hayward (3-Year Board Term)

Tammy joined First Unitarian Church of Dallas in 2016, searching for engaging RE for her teenage children and a spiritual home for herself and her husband Don. She has taught youth religious education, previously served on the board, served on the nominating committee and is a facilitator for the Spiritual Leadership Pathway. She is grateful for the community and spiritual home she has found at First Dallas.

Tammy lives with her husband and menagerie (2 cats and 2 dogs) in Fort Worth. She enjoys visiting her two adult children whenever she can.

In her professional life, Tammy is a general pediatrician. She also serves in administrative roles, supervising primary care pediatricians and helping to optimize the electronic medical record for the department. In her professional roles, she has the opportunity to advocate for equitable care for children and workplace inclusivity.





John McNair (Endowment and Memorial Gift Fund Committee)

John joined First Unitarian Church of Dallas in 2023. He has become an usher at the early service on the first of each month. During 2025, he has been serving on the Impact Pillar of the Strategic Planning Committee. He has been active with the over 40 singles group as well. He knew he found a home while visiting the church in 2022 and 2023. The church aligns more with his values than any place he's ever been.

John has one daughter, Sarah. She's 28 and lives in Marquette Michigan. She is the residential director of Teaching Family Homes of Northern Michigan. It's a group home for children and adolescents. John has practiced law in the Dallas area since 1982. He is Board Certified in Estate Planning and Probate and Tax Law and a Certified Elder Law Attorney. He primarily practices estate planning, probate and elder law.



Steve Lewis (Nominating Committee)

Steve joined First Church in 1986, thankful that his wife Karen had been raised in the church and knew right where to go when their pre-school aged son came home from a sleepover wanting to know if he "would burn in the fire under the ground". Well, that settled that, didn't it? They got busy and got involved. It was smooth and easy transition from having been unchurched for the previous decade or two. And their son quickly unlearned the burning story.

His volunteer involvement included the Buildings and Grounds Committee, By-Laws task force, Journey Toward Wholeness anti-racism initiative, Gourmet group, Sunday school teaching, and involvement in the transition to Policy Governance. He served on the Board of Trustees, including a stint on the Executive Committee as Clerk.

Outside the church, Steve served on the NTAUUS Endowment Committee for a decade, as well as being President of the Greenwood Hills Community Club, and being fully engaged in their children's academic, athletic, and social endeavors. Today, those children are great members of our community, and thoughtful and involved parents themselves.

On a professional level, he served as the church's first Executive Director from 1997-2001 and joined Dr. Laurel Hallman in providing consulting services to numerous large UU congregations across the country. Steve recently retired after a nearly 20-year stint as Executive Director at Temple Shalom in Dallas.



Seldon Short (Nominating Committee)

Thirteen years ago, Seldon found his spiritual home at First Unitarian, a Community of Faith where he continues to learn, grow, and find meaningful connection. He has sung in the choir, co-chaired the final phase of the most recent Capital Campaign, completed Connect Group training, and now facilitates the Keepin' It "Reel" Movie Group.

Seldon has also coordinated the holiday decorating of the sanctuary for the winter holidays, performed at the Annual Hanging of the Greens and the Seniors Holiday Party, and served on the Nominating Committee.

Beyond the church, he volunteers at the Vickery Meadows Food Bank and shares his passion for music by singing and playing piano for seniors in local care communities.

Professionally, Seldon has worked for 35 years in K–12 education as a teacher, administrator, and sales executive, serving schools across Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and California.

A proud fifth-generation Kentuckian, Seldon has made Dallas his home for the past 26 years, where he lives with his husband, David Schulze, and their Australian Shepherd, Rafiki, who faithfully ensures they stay on schedule. In his spare time, he loves watching movies and theater, traveling, entertaining, and singing and playing the piano.

Seldon stated, "I look forward to serving on the Nominating Committee and making new connections with members who are open to serving our church."

Aleysha Vorkoper (Nominating Committee)

Aleysha Vorkoper came to First Church at the beginning of 2018 with her husband Phillip. Phillip had grown up in the church and just knew that Aleysha would find the spiritual home that she had been looking for and he was right. Aleysha really values the diversity and inclusivity that First church provides. She decided to become a member in 2020 and has been fully committed ever since.

Aleysha quickly got involved with the WEA and is now serving as its President. She is also part of the hospitality team where she is a greeter for the Inquirer's Class and has served on the coffee team. She has participated in many of the religious educational programs that the church offers and has been part of several circle groups.

Aleysha has a bachelor's degree in English from The University of Oklahoma and has spent much of her career in customer service management. She worked for over 10 years at Restoration Hardware as a store manager and is currently in a leadership role at FedEx Office. Aleysha really enjoys getting to help people every day. That's also why she values being involved at First Church so much - she gets to help it grow and prosper.

