2026 Capital Campaign

Now is the Time

BUILDING THE CHURCH BATON ROUGE WILL NEED



Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge

Est. 1948

WHO WE ARE BECOMING

Our Vision

This campaign funds a strategic plan shaped by months of discernment, guided throughout by a vision our steering team held before us:

We are a resilient, radically welcoming Unitarian Universalist community where every person is celebrated, every voice matters, and our actions radiate love, as we serve as a sanctuary within the Baton Rouge area for belonging and a beacon for bold, joyful change.

Our longtime vision, *Many Beliefs, One Community, A Better World*, has carried us far. As we implement this plan, a renewed vision and mission will emerge from the congregation itself, one that names our commitments plainly and sets the stage for generations to come.



A WELCOME

From Rev. Nathan Ryan

Dear friends,

We watched from the office window as our architect grew more confused the first time he walked up the breezeway. He was looking for the front entrance to the church, but our breezeway ends without resolution. It gives you no answer on where to go. He did not know how to find us.

The people of Baton Rouge are hungry. They are hungry for a state that listens to them, a culture that acknowledges them, and a religious landscape that affirms them. Simply put, the people we serve are hungry to know that they are worthy and loved.

Once every generation the church comes together to build its new future. This is our time. Standing on the bold vision of our religious ancestors, we are being asked to craft a church strong enough for the next generations.

Unlike much in our world right now, we are open-eyed about the future. We know that more people will need support in this current regressive societal trajectory. We know that climate change will test our building and our community in ways many are not ready for.

Our building is well crafted. It was designed intentionally to connect us to each other and the outside world. In the original design every room had two ways to see outside. Over time we lost that. Through the generations we inadvertently created intersections of confusion.

Now is our time to realign our building and ourselves to become the church this city and state needs. Now is our time to recommit ourselves to a more inclusive, loving, and intentional community.



With love, courage, and cheer,
Rev. Nathan Ryan
Senior Minister, Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge

Where does one in Baton Rouge go?

For 75 years, the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge has been a place where people have come seeking justice, compassion, connection, and community. Today that calling is stronger than ever. This campaign to fund our strategic plan is about preparing a sanctuary and creating the congregation Baton Rouge needs for the next generation.

Why now?

Across the country, fear has sown division. Our neighbors are being told that they don't belong here. At this moment, our congregation is choosing another path. Now is the time to widen the circle. A time for UCBR not to retreat, but to become more fully who we have always aspired to be: a community that welcomes widely, acts courageously, and stands on the side of love and justice.

Our strategic plan calls us toward preemptive radical hospitality. That means not waiting until someone arrives at our door to ask what they might need. It means doing the work now to become a place of belonging, safety, connection, and action for people we may not even know yet.

We are already learning what that can look like. When increased ICE activity in Baton Rouge left immigrant families afraid, UCBR members joined with Mision Migrante to provide food, legal and notary services, Know Your Rights workshops, and court observation. Our commitment to racial justice calls us to confront racism and work toward a more equitable community. We provide refuge for LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender people, for whom walking into a church can be an act of courage. QUUeer Fête, our annual musical festival, tells queer people they are not merely accepted; they are celebrated.

The strategic plan this campaign funds was not created by consultants or by a committee. It was created by our congregation: more than 100 volunteers, 40 team leaders guiding 20 planning teams. On August 2, 2026, the congregation enthusiastically endorsed that vision.

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS

Our Story

In 1948, a small band of visionaries seeking a place for liberal religion that challenged segregation began to meet. Their first gatherings were in the basement of the Old State Capitol, until protests over their “outlandish religion” forced them out. In 1952, the Unitarian Fellowship of Baton Rouge was chartered, with the Rev. Albert D’Orlando of New Orleans as its mentor. The oak planted in his honor still stands on our campus.

For fifteen years the Fellowship gathered in eight different meeting places, held together by conviction rather than a building. One program chair recalled that his hardest job was not finding speakers but finding members to tell them where the next meeting would be. The first house they bought stood in the path of the new interstate; its sale to the city for $10,000 seeded the search for a permanent home. Their last stop, a house at 5803 Government Street, carried the “Wayside Pulpit,” whose liberal messages caught the eye of passing drivers. The Women’s Alliance filled the building fund with cookbooks and spaghetti suppers.

In 1964, the Fellowship bought three acres at 8470 Goodwood Boulevard and broke ground. The sanctuary they built, now our Fellowship Hall, was dedicated in 1965. The Fellowship called its first minister, the Rev. Toby Van Buren, in 1969, and became a Church under the Rev. Glenn Turner in the late 1970s. Everything we are today rests on the courage of those founders.



Groundbreaking on Goodwood Boulevard, 1964. “Future Home, Unitarian Fellowship of Baton Rouge.”

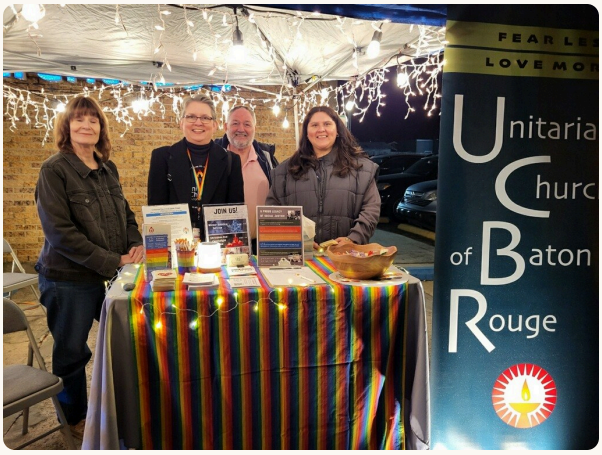
Three capital campaigns have followed, each an act of faith in the generation to come: a larger sanctuary in 1988, a bigger Religious Education wing and offices in 1998, and the 2012 Great Expectations campaign, our first to raise $1.5 million, which rebuilt the parking lot, created the Peace Garden, and grew our staff. This, our fourth campaign, is built on the shoulders of those who, 75 years ago, started us on our journey as a beacon for others who need what a liberal and progressive faith community has to offer.

From the beginning our DNA has included a commitment to racial justice, to dismantling racism, and to building beloved community (a welcoming, multicultural community that is intentionally accessible, safe, and connected), and a long reputation for age-appropriate sex education.

We do not do this alone

We draw strength and support from partners across the greater Baton Rouge area: Together Baton Rouge, the Interfaith Federation, and the nonprofits that share in our weekly offerings.





One Conversation, Two Gifts

This fall a Visiting Steward from the congregation will sit down with you. The conversation has two parts: your annual pledge, and then your commitment to the capital campaign.

First, your annual pledge

Your pledge funds the day-to-day life of the church for the coming year: worship, staff, programs, and keeping the doors open. The annual budget comes first. A capital campaign only makes sense on top of a fully supported yearly budget.

Suggested fair-share pledge, as a share of net income, by your financial capacity and level of engagement:

	CORE	ACTIVE	CASUAL	RESTING
Cup is low	1–2%	1–2%	1–2%	1–2%
Cup is adequate	8–10%	5–8%	3–5%	1–3%
Cup is full	13–15%	10–13%	7–10%	5–7%
Cup runs over	15%+	13%+	10%+	7%+

A starting point, not a rule. The full guide, with its reflection questions, comes in your steward packet.

Then, your capital commitment

Purpose: To fund the strategic plan the congregation endorsed on August 2, 2026, so that it happens rather than waits.

The goal: *$3 million*, given over and above your annual pledge.

How it works: Commitments are made this fall and fulfilled over time, up to three years, in payments at any frequency. For many households this gift comes from savings or investments rather than income. Gifts of securities and planned gifts are welcome.

What it funds: Please see “Where Your Gift Goes” on the next page.

WAYS TO GIVE

- Cash or check, monthly, quarterly, or yearly over time, up to 36 months.
- Appreciated stock, transferred directly, which avoids capital gains tax.
- A qualified charitable distribution from an IRA, for donors 70½ and older.
- A grant from a donor-advised fund, or a gift of real estate or other property.

Please consult your financial or legal advisor. The church office can help with any transfer.

Aug. 2 Congregation endorses the strategic plan

Sept. 6 Congregation votes to launch the campaign

Sept. Leadership phase: first conversations

Oct. General phase and launch celebration

Nov. Campaign close and celebration

2027–2029 Commitments fulfilled, work begins

THE ASK, MADE SIMPLE

Where Your Gift Goes

The strategic plan is big. The ask is simple. Every dollar you give to this campaign does one of four things.

Our campaign goal **$3,000,000**

Staff, Systems and Programs

$680,000 est.

The work of racial justice and beloved community, and the people and systems that make the plan happen: an Operations Director, staff pay closer to fair levels, church software with an app and mobile giving, and programs in faith formation, music, and social justice.

Transforming Grounds

$350,000 est.

Drainage that works, connected pathways, native and edible plantings, a shaded courtyard, an open-air pavilion, and play spaces for all ages.

Restored and Reimagined Interior

$2,500,000 est.

Accessible entrances and classrooms, a covered dropoff, upgraded kitchens and restrooms, new flooring and furnishings, a larger Fellowship Hall, and technology for hybrid worship and meetings.

Built to Endure

$200,000 est.

The repairs and maintenance currently needed, cooling and energy savings, fire monitoring, and backup power for when the grid goes down. Not icing on the cake: the roof, the water, the power.

Staff, Systems and Programs

A building alone cannot do this work. What turns a campus into a community is people: the staff who hold it together, the volunteers who show up, and the programs that make a newcomer feel expected rather than tolerated. This is the piece a campaign most often overlooks, and the one our plan puts first.

- **Racial justice and beloved community**: The UUA Mosaic platform, art and symbols that reflect our community of communities, programs that build interracial, intercultural, and interfaith goodwill, and a campus audit to lower barriers.
- An **Operations Director** to run day-to-day administration and support our volunteers, with the salary phasing into the annual budget over time. **Staff pay** moved toward UUA-recommended levels.
- **Faith formation** that is multigenerational and year-round, and **social justice** programming: comprehensive sexuality education (OWL), reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ support, and speakers worth traveling for.
- **Music**: New instruments and more ways to take part at every age.
- **Systems**: A full administrative platform with a church app, a modern website, and mobile giving.

Transforming Grounds

Our grounds should say what our sign says: welcome. Today too much of the campus is plain grass, standing water after a hard rain, and pavement that has cracked and heaved. We want landscaping that reflects welcome and sustainability, and outdoor places where people actually want to linger.

- **Drainage** that finally works, connected pathways, and the old playground repurposed.
- **Native and edible plantings** throughout: a food forest for people and wildlife, rain gardens, and privacy plantings for the sanctuary and music room.
- The central courtyard turned into a **shaded gathering space**, an open-sided pavilion, and swings and a play structure with safe surfacing.



Restored and Reimagined Interior

Few things are as frustrating as not being able to hear the speaker. Our kitchen has not been remodeled in more than thirty years. Our restrooms are showing their age. And a member who cannot manage stairs still cannot join the choir or step onto the chancel. This work reimagines our interiors so they serve the church we are becoming.

- **Accessibility** for every body: updated doorways and thresholds, a welcoming entrance with inclusive signage, a covered dropoff, wheelchair-accessible classrooms, and smooth paved paths.
- **Live transcription** of worship, streamed to a second room, and hearing assistance in the sanctuary.
- The **kitchen and kitchenette** remodeled, so volunteers and renters have a place that works. **Restrooms** upgraded, plumbing fixed, and single-stall rooms that carry dignity for all.
- New **flooring** and furnishings, a larger **Fellowship Hall**, rooms for reflection and low-sensory quiet, and office space that fits our staff.
- The sound booth relocated, acoustic panels, a cohesive chancel with an **ancestor memorial**, and **hybrid-meeting technology** for classrooms and the Fellowship Hall.

Built to Endure

Are we safe? We live in times that ask us to think about it, from the classrooms to the sanctuary. And when the next storm takes the grid down, a church with power becomes a refuge for the whole neighborhood. These repairs and safeguards are not extras. They are the roof, the water, and the power that let every other gift last.

- A comprehensive **repair and preventive maintenance** plan, with a team to carry it out, for the work we can no longer put off.
- **HVAC** and energy savings, so cooling holds through longer, hotter summers.
- **Backup power** during disasters, then a permanent source: a natural-gas generator or a 20 kW rooftop solar array.
- Communication channels that work when broadband does not, remote **fire monitoring**, and the measures in our comprehensive safety plan.



OUR VALUES IN ACTION

Social Justice Projects

This campaign lets us live our faith in the fabric of the building itself, and in the work we do beyond it.

- Programming and spaces that advance racial justice, dismantle racism, and build beloved community.
- ADA and accessibility upgrades across the campus, so everyone knows they belong in every space.
- Solar power, utility upgrades, and energy efficiency that allow our church to become more resilient against the effects of a changing climate.
- Continued partnership with Together Baton Rouge and other community organizations.
- Science-based, age-appropriate sex education for children and adults.



OUR SHARED INVESTMENT

Cost & Giving Guide

BUCKET	PROJECTED COST
Campaign goal	**$3,000,000**
Staff, Systems and Programs (est.)	$680,000
Transforming Grounds (est.)	$350,000
Restored and Reimagined Interior (est.)	$2,500,000
Built to Endure (est.)	$200,000

Essential gifts chart: $3 million over three years

GIFT RANGE	GIFTS	EXPECTED
Major gifts		
$100,000 and above	3	$525,000
$75,000 – $99,999	4	$340,000
$50,000 – $74,999	6	$360,000
$40,000 – $49,999	7	$315,000
$30,000 – $39,999	9	$306,000
$20,000 – $29,999	12	$288,000
Subtotal, major gifts	41	$2,134,000
General gifts		
$15,000 – $19,999	14	$238,000
$10,000 – $14,999	16	$192,000
$7,500 – $9,999	17	$144,500
$5,000 – $7,499	18	$108,000
$3,000 – $4,999	22	$83,600
$1,000 – $2,999	28	$50,400
Under $1,000	Many	$49,500
Subtotal, general gifts	189	$866,000
Total	230	$3,000,000

Your gift over three years

GIFT	YEARLY (3)	MONTHLY (36)
$100,000	$33,333	$2,778
$50,000	$16,667	$1,389
$25,000	$8,333	$694
$15,000	$5,000	$417
$10,000	$3,333	$278
$7,500	$2,500	$208
$5,000	$1,667	$139
$3,000	$1,000	$83
$1,500	$500	$42

Commitments made this fall may be fulfilled over time, up to 36 months, at any frequency. Every gift counts.

IN THEIR WORDS

Why We Give

“UCBR gives my queer family a safe and inclusive place to build community and explore our faith without having to subscribe to any particular doctrine. We love having a community that shares our values and grows alongside us.”

Lanee Hughes

“This church is where we raised our children, where I’ve made some of the most meaningful connections of my life, and where I’ve watched people find community, purpose, and belonging. I give my time and my financial support because I want to help ensure this oasis remains here, not only for those of us who love it today, but for the people who haven’t found us yet and the generations still to come.”

Marla Elsea

“UCBR is an oasis in a troubled world. I give to the church, not because it’s perfect or because it is untouched by the greater problems of the city. I give because it tries to be better in thought, word, and deed over and over again.”

Canova Smith

“Of all the spaces in my life, this is one of the few where I always feel welcome, and where my family does too. It is where I feel most comfortable, most safe, and most seen. When I became a member, I knew I was committing to the church I wanted in the future, not only the church as it is today. That is why this capital campaign matters to me.”

Jane Mitchell



A Shared Responsibility

Every generation of this congregation has left a gift for those who followed. Our founders met in borrowed rooms. The generation before us built this campus. Now it is our turn.

To care for what we have inherited

The sanctuary, the campus, and the community that founders and members before us built and sustained.

To strengthen what sustains us now

The programming, the staff, and the spaces that make belonging possible as the church grows and matures.

To prepare a home for those who will follow

A child not yet born, a grieving elder, a family still searching, a lonely person looking for connection, a young person wondering whether they are loved exactly as they are.



The future is already calling us. Now is the time to answer.

WITH GRATITUDE

Leadership & Staff

Ministers

Rev. Nathan Ryan · Rev. Meredith Barber

Staff

Kathy Smith · Lee Hartman · Dr. Trey Davis

Campaign Co-Chairs

Jackie Blaney · Bryan Costello · Diana Dorroh

Campaign Consultant

Mark Ewert, Generosity Path

Strategic Plan Steering

Donna Yelverton · Maida Owens · Capi Landreneau · Kathy Judy · Heather Jahnke

Leadership Gifts

Janet Moulder · Linda Hardy · Suzanne Besse

General Gifts

Angus Woodward · Rachel Stahl

Follow-up Gifts

Melanie Borek · Connie McLeod

Community Gifts

Alison Ocmand · David Hawley · Ashley Heyer

Publicity

Jane Mitchell

Events

Vic Cross · Margie Ford

Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge

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NOW IS THE TIME

Building the church Baton Rouge will need