FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF DALLAS

FIRST SUNDAY COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

History and purpose

The purpose of the First Sunday Committee is to select nonprofit organizations to receive a First Sunday Plate collection.

Since its inception in March 2006, the First Sunday Plate collection has raised more than $925,000 supporting more than 90 community service and social justice organizations.

The Chart and Compass 2010 Strategic Plan confirmed the collection:

“Our community service and social justice work will be supported in part by a dedicated offering. The plate collections received on the first Sunday of each month will go toward our support of outreach programs.”

While the collection is generally conducted on the first Sunday of every month, the Senior Minister can designate, or the Committee can recommend, if appropriate, a different Sunday.

Members

The First Sunday Committee consists of seven members, including the Chair. Four members are appointed by the Senior Minister and a representative is appointed by each of the following groups:

a. Board of Trustees
b. Community Service Committee
c. Social Action Council

Members serve for a term of three years.

The Committee’s responsibilities are to review nominations for the First Sunday Plate Collection and to select the recipients (one recipient per month).

The Committee also suggests the month in which each selected organization will receive the First Sunday Plate Collection.

Committee members should be familiar with these Committee guidelines, the vision, mission and values of First Unitarian Church of Dallas, the Church’s Ends Statements and Strategic Plan, and related documents intended to guide the actions of our Church.

Committee members should also be familiar with the values and principles of Unitarian Universalism.

A mix of skills and experience in philanthropy, non-profit management, and financial statements is important to ensure good decision making.

While on the committee, members should not submit nominations. They should also make the rest of the committee aware of any relationships they have with nominated organizations.
Chair

The Chair is appointed by the Senior Minister of the Church, for a term determined by the Senior Minister, but not to exceed three years. The Senior Minister can replace the Chair at any time.

The responsibilities of the Chair include:

a. Revising the nomination form, as needed.
b. Setting and communicating the due dates for nominations.
c. Setting and communicating meeting dates for the Committee.
d. Providing documentation for all nominated organizations to the Committee at least one week in advance of the meeting.
e. Chairing Committee meetings.
f. Communicating the Committee’s selections to the Senior Minister
g. Communicating the Committee’s decisions to all nominated organizations.
h. Communicating information to be posted on our website to our webmaster:
   1. Selected organizations’ names and their websites, to be posted after all applicants have received their acceptance or rejection letters from the Chair.
   2. Amounts collected, to be posted when the total has been determined.
i. With Senior Minister’s input, resolving issues, if raised, by nominated organizations.
j. Ensuring the nominated organizations are effectively represented in church on their designated Sunday.
k. Preparing and providing a summary of First Sunday recipients and results in advance of each Parish Meeting (two times per year). The summary should be provided to the Senior Minister at least two weeks in advance of each Parish meeting and include the most recent information on organizations selected, amounts raised, and the next upcoming due date for nominations.

The Chair may delegate any of these activities to members of the Committee.

Liaison Officer

The Chair may select a Liaison Officer, who has the responsibility to convey to each Church member who nominated a chosen organization the nominator’s responsibilities regarding the First Sunday announcement in the newsletter, posting information on the First Sunday bulletin board in Channing Hall, and guidelines about communication at the pulpit at both services on the day of the collection.

Senior Minister

The Senior Minister provides guidance for the First Sunday program. In this role, the Senior Minister:

a. Appoints four of the members of the Committee
b. Appoints the Committee Chair
c. Reviews and approves the Committee’s selection of organizations to receive a First Sunday Collection and the month assigned to each chosen organization.
**Process for nominating organizations**

The Chair determines the form for nominators to complete in order to be considered for a First Sunday collection.

The Chair sets the due dates for nominations to be submitted.

The Chair will ensure that the due dates and the nomination forms are accessible on the church web site.

To be considered, organizations must meet the following requirements:

a. Be a 501c3 organization and provide a letter from the IRS documenting their 501c3 status.

b. May be local, state, national or international.

c. Must not violate any legal constraints prohibiting the church from providing financial support (such as political campaigns and organizations).

d. Provide financial information, as detailed in the nomination requirements, to establish financial condition.

e. Be consistent with the values and mission of First Unitarian Church of Dallas.

f. Be financially responsible and appropriately managed.

g. Other requirements may be determined by the Committee.

**Process and criteria for selecting organizations**

The Chair will determine the process used by the Committee to make selections. In general, each organization is discussed and Committee members express their views, and after all organizations have been reviewed, each Committee member ranks the nominated organizations in order of preference. These rankings are then tabulated, and the results are reviewed and discussed by the Committee. The committee then decides which organization(s) to select.

The following criteria should be considered when evaluating nominees:

a. Because one goal of the program is to support the ministries of our members, it is important to give preference to organizations in which one or more of our members participate as volunteers, board members, financial supporters, etc.

b. The degree to which the organization supports the values and principles of First Unitarian Church of Dallas and UU Principles.

c. Financial viability and sustainability.

d. The mix of activities represented – it is appropriate to represent a wide range of issues and activities.

e. The geography served – it is appropriate to represent a wide range of geography – e.g. local, state, national, and international.

f. The intended use of the funds collected, and the impact that they are expected to have.

Two organizations are designated as annual recipients for the First Sunday Plate Collection, one for a month in the January – June period and one for a month in the July – December period. The decision to select an organization as annual recipient is made by the Senior Minister working with the Ministers. An
annual recipient will be designated for a fixed period, typically two or three years. Current annual recipients are:

North Texas Food Bank

WISE

In addition to the annual recipients, the Senior Minister will designate one organization each year as a Senior Minister selection. An application should be submitted for that organization.

The youth of the Church should be asked to nominate one organization each year; if one is nominated, it is given preferential consideration.

Generally, organizations other than those given preferential consideration as noted above will only be eligible for selection once every 24 months. The Committee has the discretion to override this guideline, but the intent is to allow a wide range of organizations to participate.

The Committee should also recommend which month to assign each selected organization, based on the organization’s’ requests, logical timing (e.g., the month including Earth Day may be appropriate for an environmentally oriented organization).

Organizations that are not selected for one cycle may be held over for the next cycle, or asked to reapply, at the discretion of the Committee.

Process for communicating committee decisions

The Chair reviews the committee’s selections and proposed calendar month assignments with the Senior Minister.

If the Senior Minister has concerns with the selections, the Chair will discuss proposed changes with the Senior Minister, and then with the Committee members to reach a resolution.

The Chair then communicates with each organization that applied, informing them of the decision with respect to their organization.

The Chair then communicates the selected organizations’ names and their websites to the church webmaster for posting on the First Sunday page on the site.