

**Special Congregational Meeting
Unitarian Universalists of South Bend**

12 April 2026

The meeting was called to order at 12:15pm by Gail deSomer, board president. The sole business of this special meeting is to confirm the contract with Rev Jennifer Gray-Gracen.

Fern Hamlin, board secretary, confirmed the existence of a quorum: 42 members are present, plus 5 on zoom.

Gail presented a summary of the work of the search task force, including the decision to search for a full-time minister and not to pay the absolute minimum suggested by the UUA for a congregation of our size, with both of which the board agreed. The goal was a two-year contract.

A video greeting/introduction from Rev Gray-Gracen followed.

Chuck Leone made the following motion to hire the minister:

I move that First Unitarian Church, South Bend, also known as Unitarian Universalists of South Bend, hire Rev Jennifer Gray-Gracen as the minister of the church effective August 1, 2026, at the starting annual salary of \$82,100.00 with such other benefits and compensation, and under such terms and conditions as are set out in the agreement between the church and Rev Gray-Gracen which has been approved by the Board of Trustees and has been made available to the members of the church for review.

Jeremiah Cox seconded the motion.

A handout, prepared by David Mayfield, board treasurer, set out the financial breakdown of the proposed contract and the contract's likely impact on the church operating budget.

Discussion followed:

Jim Ward thanked all involved in the search.

Anne Mannix--What are Rev Gray-Gracen's strong and weak points? **Gail deSomer**, search task force member, pointed to her numerous trainings in many areas of church management and her well-rounded resume. **Chuck Leone**, search task force member, noted that she receives high marks from her current congregation in Cincinnati.

Elena Wake--Can we call her as our settled minister after the 2-year contract? **Gail deSomer**--Yes we can, since she's coming here as a contract minister and not as an interim minister.

Jerry Brooks--Will she be moving to South Bend? **Gail deSomer**--She will live within 15 miles of South Bend.

Kathy Vetter noted that she had met Rev Gray-Gracen when Rev Gray-Gracen was doing community service in our building, about 5 years ago, and Kathy had thought then that Rev Gray-Gracen would be a good match for our congregation.

Melanie Smith-Guillaume--After 2 years would the ministerial compensation package be higher? **Gail deSomer**--There is no cost of living adjustment in the contract, so the board would have to decide what it wanted to recommend to the congregation.

Barbara Williams--What percentage of the church budget income does the ministerial compensation account for? **Jeremiah Cox**, search task force member--About 73%.

David Mayfield noted that though only a two-thirds vote is required to approve the contract, a candidate might not want to accept for that minimum number.

Jim Curlee asked where the money to pay the minister will come from. **Gail deSomer**--We currently have about \$100,00 in savings, in certificates of deposit. In the second year we will probably need money from the Boyd legacy. For a third year we would have to decide how we would pay for a minister.

Anne Mannix supports the motion but asks if the money from the Boyd legacy would come from interest or the principal. **David Mayfield**, board treasurer, explained that we cannot predict what the return from the money will be in the UUCEF. Approximately \$70,000 would be needed from the Boyd legacy for the second year of the contract.

Dan Holm--If we approve the contract but not the annual budget we would still be committed to the minister. We would have to work to produce an approved budget.

Byrd Tetzlaff--A new minister will probably enlarge our membership.

Megan Sulok commented that she is excited about this prospect and grateful for the search task force, adding that the Sunday Service committee is tired after 2 years of providing Sunday services.

Marilyn Shaul moved to call the question, **David Wistreich** seconded.

The motion was approved unanimously, with 54 votes in favor, none opposed or abstaining.

Jeremiah Cox moved, and **Catherine Lundergan** seconded, to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.55pm

Fern Hamlin

Board secretary