Minister's Message from Rev. Karen – March 18, 2026

We will disappoint you.

In every congregation I have served, when I speak with individuals on the path to Membership, I often tell them that there is no way to avoid that at some point, the Congregation (or I, or any minister) will disappoint them. Sometimes deeply. It's the nature of human beings being human together.

Then I ask them: would they be willing to stick through the hard times of disagreement and disappointment, conflict and compromise, to be able to be a part of the deeper, stronger community that comes out on the other side? With a yes answer, I believe they are ready to become Members of a congregation and to honor the collective covenant that holds us all.

At First UU, we have a congregational covenant that articulates the promises we make to each other:

- *To come with open minds and hearts so that we can welcome new ideas, new people and new possibilities.*
- *To listen carefully to each other, to speak openly and respectfully, and to assume good intentions, especially in times of disagreement.*
- *To participate actively in the life of the Society by being present, serving/volunteering, and providing financial support.*

While terrible things are happening in the world, and ICE's presence in our own community is devastating, there have been some challenging dynamics within our congregation. In particular, I am writing about the current conversation at FUUSB about the Apartheid-Free Communities pledge.

I leave it to the President of the Board to describe the Board's process for considering the request that it vote to endorse the AFC pledge. There is a separate message from her; if you have not seen it, please locate it.

I want to address the actions of a Member of the Society following this vote and the implications for our community. Within hours of the vote on March 17, a Member of the Society made comments on already existing posts in FUUSB's Community Messenger, describing the vote inaccurately and advocating for Members of the Society to withhold their pledges.

I can't know the motivation behind such misguided advocacy, though I make room that it comes from a place of deep disappointment and grief. However, I believe that any decision

to pull one's pledge based on a single Board or Congregational vote falls outside our covenant as First UU'ers.
In circumstances like the one we find ourselves in, our covenantal and caring work continues long after any one vote. It continues with conversations with each other – awkward ones, tense ones, thoughtful ones that do not necessary end with any resolution. It continues with each of us listening to understand even when we do not agree, then returning again to each other to find common ground where we can, and respect for each other when we cannot.

In this case, I can't help but wonder if this moment offers up an opportunity for our moral imaginations to try again to explore more broadly what First UU is willing to do to address the seemingly intractable, painful, urgent issues that arise from the conflict within Palestine/Israel and its tendrils in our local community. Many people are suffering. Lives are being violently lost. People in our own community feel unsafe, unsupported, and targeted. These are urgent issues calling for our creative, courageous, and compassionate action together.

I do not know the answer to how we move forward, but I continue to be willing to try. I hope you are, too.