

## Get to know the First UCC Search Team



**John Barbour** • I retired in 2018 after 36 years as Professor of Religion at St. Olaf College. I have two adult sons and an eight-year old grandson. In retirement I'm writing two books, take and teach classes at the Elder Collegium, get lots of exercise, travel, and enjoy friends and family. I became part of our congregation at age four, when my parents moved to Northfield in 1955. I have been a persistent if sometimes erratic worshiper at First UCC Northfield since then except for 1968-82, when I was a college and graduate student. I love our congregation's intellectual and religious diversity, affirmation of doubt and searching, concern for social justice, vibrant music, strong lay leadership, and history of challenging and inspiring ministers.



**Trish Zimmerman Beckman** • I teach, knit, write, bake, sauna, ski, wrangle big dogs & big kids (three boys 15, 15, 12). I'm a teaching professor of Religion at St Olaf College. On the side I train lawyers and business folks in religious literacy, have served on the local school board, and advise a first generation underrepresented college student program. I bake a mean pie. I grew up in Minnesota and love the natural world and the people. I moved away for a couple decades (Chicago, Germany, Missouri) and came home again about 15 years ago to tend my dying parents and raise my growing children. I came to First UCC as a single mom after divorce and found a place of radical love, generous accompaniment, and deep spiritual nourishment. We're allowed to be messy here, discouraged from calcifying in old forms while also reveling in traditions, and we're honest about our shortcomings even as we seek to be ever-growing, wild Light to the world. Grateful for it all.



**Susan Evans** • I am a newer member of First UCC, having moved to Northfield in 2017 in order to more fully participate in the life of the congregation here. For years, my long-time companion, Annie Kramer, and I drove an hour each way to attend worship at First UCC out of a deep longing to be part of a truly progressive, Open and Affirming, Just Peace church. I hold advanced degrees in English and Theology and am a certified Spiritual Director. For decades I have facilitated small-group adult classes and book studies in literature and theology. Locally, I am involved in the Cannon Valley Elder Collegium, taking courses, serving on the Curriculum committee and an Executive Board member. Now retired, I find deep joy in my life as mother, grandmother, and friend.



**Sarah Forster** • I live a block from First UCC and love the church's physical proximity to my family's home, to Carleton College (my alma mater and employer), and downtown. You'll find Northfield to be a very walkable town with First UCC near the heart of our cherished historic district. My spouse and I are new to empty nesting (two kids now in college) and we are grateful to First UCC for being such a big part of our family's life over the past two decades. When I'm not working with Carleton alumni and donors, you'll find me out in my garden (summertime), cross-country skiing in Carleton's Arboretum (wintertime) or tinkering on a project to keep our 150+ year old house from falling apart.



**Mackenzie Perkins** • Hi! My name is Mackenzie Perkins. I am in 8th grade, and have been attending First UCC pretty much since I was born.

During the time I've been at this church, I've contributed to it by being in choir, some musicals, and helping read (and perform) scripture, and now serving on the search committee! In my free time, I enjoy reading, skiing, baking, and playing bass. Looking forward to meeting you.



**Amanda Eastvold Pettis** • My husband Matt and I settled in Northfield 16 years ago, after leaving St Paul where I completed my Masters of Social Work degree. We have found a true gem in Northfield for our 13 year old and 9 year old sons. After working as an advocate for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence and as a Hospice social worker in the Northfield area, I took some time away from active social work to do deep personal healing and to raise my sons. Right now, I work alongside my husband making furniture that ends up all over the country. I love to read and write, which I balance with being active: running, yoga, cross country skiing, and my true passion—gardening, sustains me. We joined First UCC 10 years ago and I have experienced true belonging here. I have loved and benefited from our Wednesday community meals, our Sunday services, Camp experiences and CONNECT groups. I served on the Care Team for many years, and have helped out with special book groups and prayer services. I know that the heart of this church are its members and friends who are practicing together the courageous love and justice of Jesus.



**Scott Richardson** • Now retired, I worked in community journalism and healthcare communications for 40 years. I have been a member of First UCC for 40 plus years, serving on a number of committees and in leadership roles, including two tours of duty as moderator. I also coached the church softball team, the Fighting Apostles, for 30-some years. During my time in Northfield, I have been involved in a number of community initiatives, including the Northfield Healthy Community Initiative, Northfield Historical Society and the Northfield Economic Development Authority. I am married with three children and nine grandchildren, two of whom I see regularly at church.



**Sam Steinberg** • I have followed an indirect path to First UCC. I grew up Lutheran, but like many people, drifted from organized church in the years after college. Despite this distance, I connected with First UCC briefly when my wife (a childhood member) and I were married in this building! We did not live in Northfield at the time, though, so that connection was brief. Years later, having moved back to Northfield, I was approached by a friend to play on the First UCC softball team. Fast forward a few years, and here I am, the sitting moderator and member of the Search Team! God works in mysterious ways, indeed. My family and I have found a wonderful home here and are excited for the next chapter in First UCC's story. When I am not at First UCC, I work as a high school science teacher and instructional coach at Prior Lake High School in the southwest metro area, but my true joy is finding ways to play outside with my three boys age 10, 7, and 4.