

# Moderator's Message – June 7, 2026

I joined the First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco in the spring of 1982. That means I have been a member for 44 years.

I have served on the Board of Trustees on and off for 19 years. I have been Moderator three different times for a total of five years. Rev. Southern is my sixth Senior minister.

I am telling you this not to impress you with my ancientness, but rather to show that I think I have some perspective on the health and strength of our community.

My belief is that this year our community has been blessedly strong, vibrant, and smart. In my opinion, we have never done more for our souls, emotions, and each other than we have this year. Really.

Looking at our organization, I see several reasons why we are strong right now. The key factors in our solid, inventive, suppurative condition are Rev. Southern, Rev. Shennum, and all of our dedicated professionals.

I have experienced excellent ministers before, but Vanessa and Laura are unique in many ways. For one, they have an understanding that they cannot be everything to all people. Vanessa and Laura delegate responsibilities without second guessing every decision. This sounds logical, but I could tell you stories about earlier times!

Another factor that makes this time special is that the community *has* stepped to an unprecedented degree. Members are active in many areas, especially the policy chores that can unhealthfully absorb ministers. Our Trustees, personnel committee, finance committee, 1187 Committee, investment committee, and others are doing great work on the business side of our Society.

Meanwhile, the ministers and staff are creating meaningful activities. Children are in Religious Education classrooms and when you watch them they actually seem engaged! Young adults have events that are social, spiritual, and purposeful. Whatever our age, we are exploring, our spirituality, our reading, and our aging.

We have strong lay chaplains and other caring community volunteers. We watch out for each other and obviously care.

We create together. We do music, art, poetry, acting, and even some photography that we share with each other as it fills our souls.

# Moderator's Message – June 7, 2026

We also do a lot of social justice, inclusion, and diversity actions. We do animal rights activism, too.

The Forum and the Human Rights Working Group have made us a force in standing up against racist immigration enforcement. We are known in the community for our caring work. Our Defending Our Rights Committee has distributed over \$55,000 in small grants to people who are suffering from unjust treatment. And, of course, that \$55,000 came from donations from our community.

The Forum also spectacularly spotlights the talent and wholeness of members of our Society. They've showcased an UUSF author who wrote about farmworkers, members have shared their expertise on Africa, and the Forum offered a Member a moment share their autism journey, and, and, and...

There is no doubt that we are living deep, active lives together. As I was preparing this message I hesitated to mention any examples of our work because I know I am leaving out a lot, including adventures here that I am a part of. But, my overall belief is that we don't stop and pat ourselves on the back enough for our stands, actions of mutual support, our planning, and our mutual mentorship. So I needed to put on the record some of the ways our Membership has been outrageously active, caring, involved, and effective this year.

Sure there are some things we will do better in the future. The top of my list is getting more of us in the community to admit that we are **members** and to support this society as much as we do more remote national do-gooder organizations.

A lot of us feel comfortable here, believe in what the community is doing, but just aren't ready join and say we are members. I mean what if the community decides to do something I don't approve of? What if I have to move for a better job? What difference does signing a book mean?

Well, I have to admit personal joy because my husband has been coming here for over 35 years. We have done every Christmas Eve service when we've been in town. We were married here in the Sanctuary. And today Geoffrey signed the Membership Book. He has been a member of the ACLU, NPR, Habitat for Humanity and many more organizations for years. But, just before my term as Moderator ended, he decided on formally joining. He met with Vanessa and signed the Membership book this morning. Welcome, Geoff.

And, I look forward to us welcoming more people who don't want to seem to be too religious or too traditional, but who have come to understand that we need each other to stand up together as members of this Society. Especially in these stressful times.

# Moderator's Message – June 7, 2026

Another action for our future is getting people who have resources to allocate a more significant amount to UUSF.

Every week we provide community, check-ins on health, support of immigrants, music for the spirit, and a willing ear. The structure our staff supplies for our work costs money, but we haven't developed the heart-tugging appeals of other progressive organizations. We don't send out emails featuring starving-looking people being delivered food supplies by Vanessa. We don't show disheveled immigrant children being handed a rent check by Bruce of our Defending Our Rights Committee.

But our work is vital in a more personal – as well as social justice – way. So, I think we need to talk to each other about maybe giving as much to UUSF as we do to the gut wrenching appeals we get on apps and in the mail.

Still, overall, wow. What a year. What a great community.

I cannot sing, preach, organize social events, or even keep musical time to know when I should ring a bell for Reiko. But what I can give is attention to organizational process and detail. If there were ever a Minister of Bureaucracy, I would apply.

So, I am honored to have been your Moderator these past two years. I have really enjoyed it!

This has been a strong year for the First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco. We have done a lot in many, many areas. Thank you for letting me help with the bureaucracy and I look forward to continuing to be in community with you all in the coming years.

Caption: Galen Workman delivering the Moderator's Message at the 2026 Annual Meeting

# Moderator's Message – June 7, 2026

