



First Universalist Church of Rochester

"Nurture the Spirit and Serve the Community"

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A Safe and Healing Place

Where do transgender and genderqueer people have an opportunity to attend a church they can call home? One possibility is to connect with one of the few churches, including First Universalist at 150 S. Clinton Avenue, that is led by an openly transgender and genderqueer minister.

First Universalist Church congregants welcomed their beloved minister Rev. Lane Maired Campbell when they came out as genderqueer in 2022 on the Sunday before the Transgender Day of Visibility.

The majority of the congregation is cisgender. But, as one cisgender member Kitty Forbush said, "We acknowledge the harm that the LGBTQ+ community has endured. Trans people have been especially targeted. We want this church community to be a safe and healing place for them. It's important to welcome them into the fabric of this community."

Nicholas Williams, a trans member of the congregation and choir member, said this about their attraction to First Universalist. "Rev. Lane-Maired is a delightfully refreshing experience in the world of modern spirituality. Their presence as a nonbinary minister and dedication to LGBTQ+ visibility has always made me feel safe and welcomed at First Universalist. I feel enriched and SEEN after their sermons, and their ability to not only take space as a nonbinary minister, but to make space for other trans folk is both welcoming and inspiring."

The congregation is grateful for the LGBTQ+ community for the many contributions of talent, energy, and caring. Because of their presence and leadership, the church has a robust series of lunchtime Eastman at Washington Square concerts on Thursdays. They have LGBTQ+ leadership roles on their Board of Trustees, Finance Committee and various other committees.

In times when anti-trans legislation is on the rise in the United States, congregations that affirm the inherent sacredness and worth of transgender people are essential. First Universalist can provide a voice and a spiritual home for trans and gender nonconforming

people when many religious denominations and communities are using their theology to support legislations that would erase and criminalize trans experience.

The church year will kick off September 8 at 10:30am with a water ceremony, welcoming members, friends, and visitors. The ceremony is a ritual unique to the Unitarian Universalist tradition. People bring water from their homes and travels to honor their experiences of love, grief, joy, and sorrow. Visitors can pour water from a communal pitcher.

Other information about Rev. Lane-Maired Campbell:

- Featured in the locally made documentary “*Remember Me Now*,” assembled by Next Generation Men of Transition and directed by Brittan Hardgers.
- Delivered a lecture at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in spring of 2023 called “*We Have Always Been Healers: On Building Genderqueer Religious Communities*,” as part of their bi-annual LGBTQ+ lecture series.
- Appeared on “*Connections*” with Evan Dawson along with Brittan Hardgers and representatives from the School on March 7, 2023.
- Offered prayer during Rochester’s Transgender Day of Remembrance Brunch in 2023. (First Universalist Church provided the food and beverages for the brunch.)
- Offered grounding and centering prayer during vigil honoring the death of Nex Benedict in March of 2024.

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