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Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo Awarded \$250K in National Preservation Grant

[Buffalo, NY]. Today, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo (UUCB) was awarded \$250,000 from the National Fund for Sacred Places, a program of Partners for Sacred Places in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The funding will support critical repairs needed to preserve the 117-year-old church's building, located in the heart of Elmwood Village on West Ferry and Elmwood Avenue.

“Our congregation is honored and elated to receive funding to repair and preserve our historic spiritual home, which has served as a social justice leader and arts and culture institution in downtown Buffalo for over two centuries,” said Cathy Harrington, interim minister for the UUCB. “As a newcomer to Buffalo, I am inspired by the dedication and determination of our congregants, and the support of the community and beyond of our congregation.”

The National Fund for Sacred Places is a highly competitive program that provides financial and technical support for community-serving historic houses of worship across America. The UUCB is one of 16 organizations to receive a total of over \$3.5 million in grant funding that provides training, planning grants, technical assistance, capacity-building support, and capital grants to congregations of all faiths.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo was built in 1906 by famed Buffalo architect Edward Austin Kent on land donated by John J. Albright. The building, constructed in Indiana limestone in an English Country Gothic style, features an interior sanctuary with massive hammer beam trusses and ornamentals built by family craftsmen. The building's simple grandeur and absence of statues or religious imagery reflect the Unitarian Universalist faith, which has no dogma or doctrine and instead draws wisdom and spirituality from diverse and abundant sources.

“We’re thrilled to be selected for this prestigious award and for the recognition of our congregation’s historical and cultural significance and community outreach efforts,” said Bobby Withrow, president of the UUCB’s Board of Trustees. “This grant will allow us to preserve our building and increase community access, so we will be able to welcome more community groups into our sanctuary and continue our essential social justice work.”

Throughout two centuries in Buffalo, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo has consistently been at the forefront of efforts to bring about social progress, from free public education to the abolition of slavery, advancing civil rights, welcoming LGBTQ+ persons, and improving physical access for individuals with limited mobility. Currently, the congregation:

- Since 2007, has acted as the kitchen commissary for Food Not Bombs, which prepares and distributes free vegan meals every week throughout the city;
- Hosts more than two dozen community organizations, including arts, dancing, and music clubs, recovery groups, and social justice organizations;
- Hosted monthly community concerts and seasonal operas for more than a thousand community members and congregants;
- Since the 1960s, in partnership with Housing Opportunities Made Equal, UUCB has helped families secure stable housing and, with Family Promise of WNY, helps house and feed up to 12 housing-insecure families per year;
- In partnership with the Erie County Board of Elections, the UUCB is one of the busiest polling stations in the city, covering six precincts with more than 3,800 registered voters; and
- Its large lawn and gardens, which include a meditation labyrinth and memorial garden, are featured in the annual Garden Walk and visited daily by Elmwood Village residents and tourists alike.

About the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo. The Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo is a compassionate, thoughtful, and diverse religious community that nurtures and challenges itself to deeper understanding, meaning, and purpose. The UUCB’s vision is to gather in loving community, creating a shared vision of compassion and dignity for all, to radically transform the world in which we live. Unitarians and Universalists, which merged locally in 1953 and nationally in 1961, have been present in Buffalo since 1816. Learn more at buffalouu.org.

About the National Fund for Sacred Places. The National Fund for Sacred Places was established in 2016 to provide technical and financial support for congregations, building their

capacity and increasing the stability of these critical yet disappearing historic community centers. It is a program of Partners for Sacred Places in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Fund is supported by \$40 million from the Indiana-based Lilly Endowment Inc. The Gerry Charitable Trust provided additional support in 2019. Visit fundforsacredplaces.org for more information.