



First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor

Board of Trustees

Governing Policies

Adopted 12/19/2023

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INTRODUCTION

The First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor (UUAA) is governed by our Bylaws and a system of governance that promotes shared leadership between the Congregation, their elected Board of Trustees (the Board) and the Senior Minister. The Board defines the long-term vision and strategic goals for the Congregation guided by the aspirations in our UUAA Core Values and our Unitarian Universalist Principles. The Board delegates responsibility for implementing the goals to the Senior Minister, who oversees the tasks performed by the staff. The Board provides guidance and limitations on UUAA operations through the governance policies in this document. Regularly scheduled monitoring and evaluation of progress on goals and governing procedures is key to maintaining a smooth governance system.

SECTION 1: ASPIRATIONS

The aspirations of the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor are best stated in the Core Values adopted in 2011.

UUAA Core Values

The First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, MI (UUAA) has been deeply committed to liberal religious thought and action since 1865. We join together in community to encourage and inspire each other's spiritual journeys, to honor and care for the natural world around us, and to join forces in furthering social justice, in order to make a difference in the world.

Spiritual Life

We find inspiration, renewal, and challenge in worship services. Children, youth and adults are enriched by classes and programs that expand religious understanding and nurture spiritual growth rooted in Unitarian Universalist traditions and values.

We actively support members of this Congregation in their journeys toward spiritual growth and self-knowledge. We gather in worship to share the power of collective spiritual experience.

Social Justice and Environmental Action

We live our beliefs by creating, sustaining, and enhancing programs that actively engage congregants of all ages in projects that promote peace, justice, and positive environmental action locally and beyond.

This Congregation acts in concrete and substantial ways to promote social and economic justice in the larger community, and to protect the natural environment; and participates in programs that promote peace and understanding in the world.

Community

We create and foster community by providing an intentionally welcoming and safe environment where all feel valued and cared for, and where all are given opportunity to form meaningful connections with one another. We foster a climate of purposeful inclusion of all. We cherish the diversity of gender, age, race, ethnicity, national origin, range of abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, financial means, education, and political perspective. We live together in peace, search for truth in love, and help one another.

We welcome all who enter into this religious community in which members and friends both value and respect their differences and support and care for one another. We actively reach out to our surrounding communities to offer our salvific message of the power of love and to offer a place in our religious community to all who share UU values and beliefs.

Stewardship

We are all active stewards, serving our congregation and pursuing our ministries through prudent and creative use of our resources, whether physical, environmental, financial or human. We show respect and care for our beautiful building and grounds, for our staff, and for one another. We cultivate right relationships among members of this Congregation and with the wider world.

UUAA congregants and staff share and make prudent and creative use of the resources that are available to them in service to the work of the Congregation.

Culture

We are nourished by the culture that has evolved in this Congregation throughout our rich liberal religious heritage in Ann Arbor, a culture rooted in our core belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every individual. We learn and grow from our differences. We value our connections, past, present and future, to the Unitarian Universalist world network.

Members of this Congregation are supported in substantial ways to live our values and principles, to learn and grow from our differences, to value our history, to participate in regional, national and international Unitarian Universalist programs and to promote awareness of Unitarian Universalism in the wider community.

SECTION 2: BOARD GOVERNANCE

2.0 Role of the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees governs on behalf of the Congregation by discerning UUAA mission; partnering with the Senior Minister and staff in planning for the Congregation's future; and by exercising oversight of the health and progress of the ministries of the Congregation. The Board maintains these written Governing Policies that assure the Congregation's resources are used to further our Aspirations (see Section 1) at an appropriate cost, and taking care to avoid any actions that might endanger the future of the Congregation. The policies guide the Board in assuring that the work of the Congregation is carried out in harmony with our core values.

2.1 Governing Principles

The Board will govern with emphasis on:

- The seven Unitarian Universalist Principles
- UUAA Core Values (Aspirations)
- Outward vision
- Open and candid deliberations
- Collective rather than individual decisions
- Shared responsibility for decisions
- Spiritual and strategic leadership
- Clear distinction between the strategic role of the Board and the implementation role of the Senior Minister and staff
- The future, while learning from the past and present

Accordingly,

1. The Board will cultivate a sense of group responsibility among its members. The Board is solely responsible for excellence in governing. The Board will use the expertise of others to enhance the ability of the Board as a body. The Board will allow no officer, individual, or committee of the Board to hinder or be an excuse for not fulfilling Board commitments.
2. The Board will govern and inspire the Congregation and direct the Senior Minister through the careful establishment of broad written policies reflecting the Congregation's missions and Aspirations. The Board's major policy focus will be on setting strategic goals, not on the administrative or programmatic means of attaining the goals.

3. The Board will enforce upon itself the discipline necessary to govern with excellence. Discipline will apply to matters such as attendance, preparation, policy-making principles, respect and understanding of roles and responsibilities, and ensuring continuance of governance capability. In accordance with UUAA governance, the Board will address a topic or issue only after it has answered these questions:
 - Whose issue is this, Board or staff? Is this issue about a strategic direction for the Congregation (Board responsibility) or the implementation of an agreed-upon direction or goal (Senior Minister/staff responsibility)?
 - Has the Board previously dealt with this subject in an existing policy? If so, has the Board already made a decision about this matter? Is a change in the decision needed?
4. Continued Board leadership development will include orienting new Board members in the UUAA governance process. This includes information about discernment, decision-making and strategic planning; the Board's role in financial oversight and annual budget approval; and the Board's role in monitoring operations (e.g., implementation of personnel policy, and maintenance of facilities). The standing committee on governance assists with this training.
5. The Board will review the Governing Policies and the Bylaws at least annually and implement updates as needed. The standing committee on governance assists with evaluation.

2.2 Strategic Plan

At least every five years the Board will oversee production of a multi-year strategic plan created in conversation with the Senior Minister, the Congregation, the paid staff and lay leadership. The plan will include a short list of the most important strategic goals the Congregation and staff should achieve through ministries. It will detail some strategic choices regarding programs, membership, capital and operating budgets and staffing.

2.3 Board Annual Work Plan

The Board will create and follow an annual work plan, in alignment with the UUAA long-term strategic plan. The Board President will report on progress toward this plan at Congregational meetings. The annual work plan:

1. Guides the implementation of strategic goals.
2. Serves as a starting point for budgeting and staffing.

3. Provides the Board with education and enrichment opportunities to enhance its performance.
4. Includes communication to enhance the Congregation's understanding of and stay in conversation about UUAA strategic goals, governance, financing, and monitoring efforts.

At the end of the year, the Board will create a written evaluation of the previous year's success or difficulties in achieving the strategic goals proposed in that year's work plan, as well as recommendations for improvements and next steps.

2.4 Role of the President

The President ensures the integrity of the Board's governing process, and acts as representative of the Congregation with staff and outside parties. Accordingly,

1. It is the responsibility of the President to ensure the Board behaves consistently with the UUAA Bylaws, Governing Policies outlined in this document, UUA policies, and applicable local, state or federal laws.
 - a. Meeting discussion content will focus solely on issues which, according to Board policy, clearly belong to the Board to decide, not the Senior Minister (see Section 3).
 - b. Deliberations will be fair, open, and thorough allowing time to carefully discern issues, but also timely, orderly, and kept to the point.
2. The authority of the President consists in making decisions that fall within the Governing Policies, except where the Board specifically delegates portions of this authority to others. The President is authorized to use any reasonable interpretation of the provisions in these policies. In addition, the Board President:
 - a. Will preside at all Congregational meetings.
 - b. Is empowered to chair Board meetings, with all the commonly accepted authority of that position.
 - c. As an individual, has no authority to supervise or direct the Senior Minister or staff.
 - d. May represent the Board to outside parties in announcing Board-stated positions and in stating the President's own decisions and interpretations within his or her authority.
 - e. May delegate this authority to another Board member, but remains accountable for its use.

2.5 Board of Trustees Code of Conduct

All UUAA Board members commit to ethical and lawful conduct, including proper use of authority and appropriate decorum when acting as Board members. Accordingly, members:

1. Will disclose their involvement with other organizations, businesses, vendors, or any other associations that might produce a conflict of interest by completing a Conflict of Interest form at the beginning of each Board year. (Conflicts may be unavoidable, as Board members may be engaged in a number of activities, within or outside the Congregation.)
2. Will act ethically, and in the best interest of the Congregation. Board accountability supersedes any conflicting loyalty to advocacy or interest groups and membership on other Boards. It also supersedes the personal interest of any Board member acting as a consumer of the Congregation's services.
3. Will avoid conflict of interest, particularly with respect to their fiduciary responsibility.
 - a. Will not engage in self-dealing or any conduct of private business or personal services between any Board member and UUAA staff, except as procedurally controlled to assure openness, competitive opportunity, and equal access to information.
 - b. Will ask to be excused from both deliberation and voting and will leave a meeting on an issue about which the Board member has an unavoidable conflict of interest.
 - c. Will not use their positions to obtain employment by UUAA for themselves, family members, or close associates. Should a Board member desire employment at UUAA, he or she will resign from the Board before applying.
4. May not attempt to exercise individual authority over the Congregation, except as explicitly set forth in the Governing Policies or Board member roles and responsibilities.
 - a. Will recognize the lack of authority vested in individuals, except when explicitly Board-delegated, regarding interaction with the Senior Minister and UUAA staff.
 - b. Will recognize the lack of authority vested in individuals, except when explicitly Board-delegated, regarding interaction with the public, news media, elected officials, UUA or other organizations. Board members may not speak for the Board, except to repeat explicitly stated Board decisions.
 - c. Members will not express or act on their individual judgments of the Senior Minister or staff performance outside of the Board.
5. Members will respect the confidentiality appropriate to issues of a sensitive nature (e.g., personnel, pending contracts, and confidential information about individual members of the Board).

6. Members should avoid over-identification with organizational parts (ministries or groups) rather than the entire Congregation they are elected to represent.

2.6 Board Committees

The Board may establish committees to help carry out its responsibilities. Committees will be used sparingly to preserve the Board functioning as a whole, and will not interfere with delegation from the Board to the Senior Minister. Accordingly:

1. The purpose of Board committees (including ad hoc task forces) is to assist the Board. Board committees may prepare policy alternatives and implications for Board deliberation. In keeping with the broader focus of the Board, committees will consult with the Board President regarding any request for additional resources. Board committees provide regular updates regarding progress, proposed actions, and decision-making.
2. Board committees may not speak or act for the Board, except when formally given such authority for specific and time-limited purposes.
3. Board committees cannot exercise authority over, instruct, or direct the Senior Minister, professional staff or staff volunteers.
4. Board committees are to avoid over-identification with the organizational parts rather than the whole. A board committee which has created policy on some topic will not be used to monitor organizational performance on that same topic.
5. This policy applies to any group which is formed by Board action, whether or not the group includes Board members.

2.7 Governance Development

The Board will invest in its governance expertise. Accordingly,

1. Board skills, methods, and support will be sufficient to assure governing with excellence.
 - a. Leadership development for the Board will include training, mentoring, reference materials and a Board Orientation. The Board will work with the Leadership Development Team and Committee on Governance to orient new and prospective Board members, as well as to further the skills and understandings of current Board members.
 - b. Outside monitoring assistance will be arranged so that the Board can exercise confident control over organizational performance. This includes but is not limited to fiscal audit.

2. Costs will be prudently incurred, though not at the expense of endangering the development and maintenance of superior capability. Expenses may include:
 - a. Training and attendance at conferences and workshops.
 - b. Auditing and other third-party monitoring of organizational performance.
 - c. Conducting surveys, focus groups and opinion analyses

2.8 Consent Agenda

The consent agenda is intended to streamline the process for approval of regular, routine issues that come before the Board. The consent agenda groups together routine matters such as meeting minutes, factual reports, and routine document updates under one agenda item. Items included in the consent require no discussion before voting and are all approved in one vote.

The President determines whether an item belongs on the consent agenda. The President prepares a list of the consent agenda items as part of the meeting agenda. The list and supporting documents are included in the Board's agenda package, distributed in sufficient time to be read by all members prior to the meeting.

An item may be removed from the consent agenda and added to the regular agenda for separate discussion at the request of a Board member for any reason other than for questions of clarification. If a Board member has a question of clarification about an item that appears on the consent agenda, that clarification must be requested before the meeting. An item will not be removed from the consent agenda just to have a question answered.

When preparing the minutes, the Secretary includes the full text of the resolutions, reports or recommendations that were adopted as part of the consent agenda.

2.9 Complaint Handling Process

The Board of Trustees will use the following process to address any policy-related inquiry submitted by a member of the Congregation.

1. A Board member who receives a complaint from a congregant will encourage the congregant to contact the appropriate person or unit, not a third party.
2. The Board member who receives the complaint will decide if the inquiry indicates a violation or potential violation of a Bylaw or Governing Policy. If so, the Board member will apprise the Board of this potential violation and the Board as a whole will decide if it agrees that the complaint warrants Board involvement.

3. The Board will only address a complaint if there is reason to believe that a violation of Board policy or Bylaw has occurred, if there is no relevant policy, or if there is reason to question the appropriateness or adequacy of existing policy.
4. If a violation of Board policy appears to have occurred, the Board will analyze and then resolve the problem, including making or adjusting whatever the deficiency is in existing policy. The Board will not involve itself in the application of a policy by staff or a committee, consistent with the delegation of operations to the Senior Minister. However, the Board will review how well the policies are being carried out by paid and volunteer staff as part of the Board monitoring process.

2.10 Member Comment at Meetings of the Board of Trustees

The Board offers dedicated time at the beginning of each regular Board meeting for members of the Congregation to share views, ideas, and concerns. Any member of the Congregation may address the Board during "Member Comment" time. Any topic that is related to board policy as stated in our Governing Policies is welcome.

Congregation members who wish to speak to the Board must reserve time not later than 5:00 p.m. on the Monday preceding the Board meeting. The Board will not respond to or take immediate action on issues raised during the "Member Comment" period.

Those who wish to make a more formal presentation or who are seeking a specific and time-sensitive action from the Board should consult with the Board President well in advance of Board meetings. Board meeting schedules are posted on the UUAA web site.

2.11 Congregational Resolution Oversight

When a UUAA group seeks to pass a resolution that speaks for the whole congregation, the Board and the group will follow the process specified in ***“Guide for Bringing a Resolution to a Vote by the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor”*** (Appendix D)

As the holders of the congregational vision, the Board should evaluate whether the resolution advances that vision.

In their role in oversight, the Board needs to assure a healthy community by helping to make the process leading to a vote positive, inclusive and fair.

SECTION 3: AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY DELEGATED TO THE SENIOR MINISTER

3.0 Global Authority and Responsibility

The Board hereby delegates all of its authority to manage the work and resources of the Congregation, except as expressly limited by these policies, to the Senior Minister as Head of Staff. In this capacity, the Senior Minister will further the Aspirations of UUAA provided in Section 1.

3.1 Annual Operations Planning

The Board will share their Annual Work Plan with the Senior Minister, who is responsible for implementing any strategic goals included in the Work Plan. The Senior Minister will delegate many of the tasks to paid staff and volunteers. Accordingly,

1. Each year the Senior Minister will provide the Board with an Annual Operations Plan and budget that address the Board's strategic goals for the year.
2. The Board will provide oversight and evaluation of the Operations Plan.
3. The Board will approve the annual budget supporting the Operations Plan.

3.2 Unity of Voice

Only decisions made by the Board acting as a whole, or the Congregation acting as a body, are binding on the Senior Minister. Decisions or instructions of individual board members, officers, teams, committees, or Congregation members are not binding on the Senior Minister or staff except in rare instances when the Board specifically grants such authority.

3.3. Care of Congregants (members, friends, and visitors)

1. The Senior Minister will ensure that interactions with congregants and visitors to the church are safe, non-intrusive, respectful, non-discriminatory, and provide appropriate confidentiality or privacy.
2. The Senior Minister will assure communication of Congregation activities, actions, and information to and among congregants.

3.4. Care of Staff

With respect to the treatment of paid and volunteer staff, the Senior Minister will ensure that conditions or practices are safe, clear, respectful, non-discriminatory, and professional.

Accordingly, the Senior Minister will ensure that:

1. UUAA operates with written personnel guidelines that:
 - (a) clarify policies and roles and responsibilities for staff,
 - (b) provide for effective handling of grievances, and
 - (c) protect against wrongful conditions, such as nepotism, grossly preferential treatment for personal reasons, or discrimination in violation of UU principles, as well as federal and state laws.
2. No staff member will be subject to discrimination for non-disruptive expression of dissent.
3. Grievance to the Board is available when
 - (a) internal grievance procedures have been exhausted or
 - (b) the employee alleges that Board policy has been violated to the detriment of a staff member.
4. Staff members are informed of their protections under these Governing Policies, UUAA Bylaws and other applicable documents.
5. Staff members are provided with opportunities for professional growth, development, and advancement appropriate to their role in the Congregation.

3.5. Compensation and Benefits

With respect to employment, compensation and benefits to employees, consultants, and contract workers, the Senior Minister will ensure fiscal integrity and strive for fair compensation. Accordingly, the Senior Minister will:

1. Not promise or imply permanent or guaranteed employment.
2. Ensure that current compensation and benefits are in accordance with the geographic or professional market for the skills employed.
3. Ensure that compensation and benefits are consistent among all paid employees.
4. Avoid obligations exceeding revenues that can be safely projected.

5. Avoid any changes in benefits that may cause unpredictable or inequitable situations, including those that:
 - a. Incur unfunded liabilities.
 - b. Provide less than a basic level of benefits to all full-time employees, though differential benefits to encourage longevity are acceptable.
 - c. Cause any employee to lose benefits already accrued by changing a benefits plan.

3.6. Financial Planning and Budgeting

Financial planning should reflect the priorities established in the UUAA Strategic Plan , the annual Board Work Plan , and the annual budget, all guided by the UUAA Aspirations. Accordingly, budgets will:

1. Include the planning assumptions used in the budget, a credible projection of revenues and expenses, a separation of capital and operational items, and a cash flow.
2. Assure the expenditure in any fiscal year does not exceed the revenue conservatively projected for that period.
3. Include any investments in governance prioritized for the budget period. (See section 2.6)
4. Include a repayment plan for loans from all sources.

The Senior Minister will prepare and present annually to the Board a proposed budget for its approval. The budget will contain the appropriate level of detail required by the Board.

3.7. Financial Condition and Activities

With respect to the Congregation's actual, ongoing financial condition and activities, the Senior Minister must take all reasonable care to prevent the Congregation from financial jeopardy. Expenditures should reflect Board priorities. Accordingly, the Senior Minister will:

1. Conform to all Board-approved financial plans and policies and Congregation-approved Bylaws.
2. Prevent operational liabilities that cannot be repaid within 12 months, unless they are part of an agreed upon long-term plan.
3. Avoid the use of, or loans from, any long-term, dedicated reserves or accounts, including endowment funds, or any budgeted contingency fund, unless authorized by the Board to do so.
4. Settle payroll and accounts payable in a timely manner.
5. Anticipate and plan for seasonal changes in cash flow.

6. Prevent line item shifting in amounts that deviate materially from the approved budget.
7. Avoid commitments to expenses in a future fiscal year budget without approval from the Board.
8. Not acquire, encumber or dispose of real property without written Board approval.
9. Pursue receivables and pledges after a reasonable amount of time.
10. Direct gifts and bequests received according to the guidelines and policies established by the Board.
11. Inform the Board about use of monies from gifts and bequests, and consult with the Board before any decision is made to use an unbudgeted amount from gifts and bequests which is more than 1% of the current operating budget.
12. Establish procedures and controls that meet generally accepted standards for receiving, processing, and disbursing funds. This includes handling of vendor billing and payment.
13. Encourage a culture of fiscal responsibility, innovation and improvement.

3.8. Asset Protection

The Senior Minister will assure that the Congregation's assets and property are protected, adequately maintained, and not subject to unnecessary risk. To this end, the Senior Minister will:

1. Report to the Board on investing and maintaining congregational funds in socially responsible ways.
2. Develop and implement policies for building usage, by members, staff and by others, including fund-raising events, that are consistent with the Congregation's missions, and the Board's strategic goals, that give priority to use by members and staff, and that protect the integrity and cleanliness of our buildings and total acreage, including our prairie, Memorial Garden, Sweat Lodge, Outdoor Worship area, well and septic field.
3. Maintain adequate insurance to protect against property losses, liability for injuries to others, corporate liability, and personal liability of Board members and staff.
4. Maintain UUAA's property and equipment to keep it in working order subject to reasonable wear and tear and ensure functionality of all emergency equipment by following a regular testing schedule.

5. Develop and implement policies that permit the fullest practical use of the building and grounds by persons with different physical abilities.
6. Develop and implement policies and procedures for reviewing, approving and reimbursing expenses incurred by congregants and staff on behalf of the Congregation.
7. Prevent the use of congregational funds or accounts in any manner that endangers the Congregation's tax-exempt, not-for-profit status under federal and state laws.
8. Take reasonable steps to protect intangible property, including intellectual property, electronic data and paper files from significant damage or loss.

3.9 Grants and Contracts

The Senior Minister may enter into a grant or contract agreement on behalf of the Congregation only if it is in alignment with Congregational Aspirations and supports an identified strategic goal. All grants and agreements must also be in alignment with federal and state laws, UUAA Bylaws, and these Governing Policies. Accordingly, the Senior Minister will:

1. Provide adequate notice to the Board and seek approval of any decision to solicit or terminate a grant or contract that will have a significant impact on programs or that will be in effect for more than a year.
2. Assess the qualifications and capacity of a grantor or contractor to fulfill their responsibilities as identified in a grant or contract.
3. Administer a grant or contract in a business-like manner, with no conflict of interest and no appearance of favoritism or nepotism.
4. Monitor each phase of the commitment, reporting progress regularly to the Board.
5. Complete the terms of a commitment, and produce final reports, a summary of expenditures and any other required documentation to the Board.

3.10 Gift Acceptance

The Senior Minister will accept only gifts without restriction or gifts with restrictions that are entirely compatible with the UUAA Aspirations and Unitarian Universalist Principles. The Senior Minister will:

1. Direct undesignated, unexpected gift income into appropriate accounts.
2. Invest the gifts and bequests in investments as appropriate.

3.11 Communication and Support to the Board

The Senior Minister will inform the Board and support its work. Accordingly, the Senior Minister will:

1. Advise the Board if, in the Senior Minister's opinion, the Board is not in compliance with the Bylaws, its Governing Policies, or the Senior Minister-Board covenant, particularly in the event that Board actions become detrimental to the relationship between the Board and the Senior Minister.
2. Conduct business with the Board as a whole, not with individual Board members, except when
 - (a) fulfilling individual requests for information or
 - (b) responding to officers or committees duly charged by the Board.
3. Report in a timely manner on actual or anticipated noncompliance with any policy of the Board.
4. Supply for the Consent Agenda any items required by contract or law to be approved by the Board.

3.12 Senior Minister Absence

The Senior Minister will designate at least one staff person who will keep sufficiently familiar with Board and Senior Minister issues and processes to enable that person to act as an interim successor with reasonable proficiency.

3.13 Senior Minister Well-Being

The Senior Minister will provide adequately for his or her well-being and spiritual care. This may include taking advantage of the appropriate vacation time, retreats, professional development, and consultation with a ministerial advisory and support team.

3.14 Senior Minister Compensation

The Senior Minister must negotiate a contract with the Board that stipulates compensation and benefits. Senior Minister compensation is to be decided annually.

SECTION 4: BOARD OVERSIGHT AND EVALUATION

4.1 Mission Focus

The role of the Board is to ensure that the Congregation's human and material resources are used for the benefit of its mission. The Board accomplishes this in two ways: by monitoring regular reports provided by the Senior Minister and staff, and by scheduled evaluation of the Congregation's progress toward achieving its strategic goals as stated in annual work plans and in the UUAA Strategic Plan.

4.2 Monitoring

The Senior Minister will provide regular written reports from the staff to the Board. Reports should focus on progress on the priorities set by the Board in the Annual Work Plan, and on compliance with these governing policies. Policy monitoring reports must be e-mailed to Board members in advance of monthly meetings, but will not normally be a subject of Board discussion, except when they require Board action.

The following monitoring reports will be provided by the Senior Minister, a designated staff member, or a lay leader as appropriate.

1. Financial Monitoring

Monthly financial statements that show overall financial performance compared to budget and highlight any significant financial issues.

Annually - a volunteer committee will perform an internal financial audit.

Every three years a qualified professional will be engaged to conduct an external financial audit or review, and will provide a written report on the findings to the Board.

2. Congregant Participation Monitoring

Monthly reports that provide numbers of members joining/leaving, and the number of people attending Sunday Services, SGD classes, and all-congregation events, as well as any other participation numbers of interest may be included.

3. Program Monitoring

Monthly progress reports focused on one specific category of UUAA ministries and activities, grouped by the core values they advance. The areas of focus rotate on an annual church-year schedule shown in Appendix B. These reports provide information about the health of the programs and their progress toward achieving the Congregation's strategic goals.

4. Policy Compliance Monitoring

Quarterly reports focused on specific areas of the Senior Minister's responsibilities as defined in these UUAA Governing Policies. The areas of focus rotate on an annual church-year schedule shown in Appendix C. [Reports in September, December, March, June]

The financial reports, congregant participation reports and policy compliance reports will usually be part of the Board's consent agenda unless there are specific issues that need Board decisions.

The Program Monitoring Reports may be used to engage in strategic discussions about vision and strategic goals for the programs. Program leaders may attend these Board meetings to take part in these discussions based on the written reports of accomplishments and impacts of the program.

4.3 Evaluation

Everyone responsible for work on behalf of UUAA will engage in a continual process of evaluation to foster excellence in ministry work by ensuring that leaders:

- Practice open communication and provide regular feedback
- Meet performance standards appropriate to their roles
- Maintain effective, positive working relationships with one another
- Focus on achieving the goals established by the Board and staff

1. Board and Senior Minister Evaluation

Annually, the Board and Senior Minister will together review their respective contributions to the fulfillment of the prior year's strategic goals. This evaluation process allows the Board and Senior Minister to work together to assess progress toward the year's goals and to review the process of setting and evaluating annual goals.

2. Staff Evaluations

The Senior Minister will ensure that all paid staff develop, together with their supervisor, performance goals supportive of the year's strategic goals and the Senior Minister's Annual Operations Plan. Their performance must be evaluated annually in writing by their supervisor.

3. Evaluation of Ministry Teams

The Senior Minister will instruct all programs and activities that submit an annual report to include in their report an evaluation of contributions they have made toward achieving the Congregation's strategic goals and how their work has reflected UUAA Core Values.

Appendix A – Document Revision History

Document editors: Update this table when making changes.

Date of Edit	Changes Made	Date Approved by Board	Editor
1/03/2021	Added Section 2.12 Congregational Resolution Oversight. Added Appendix D – Guide for Bringing a Resolution to a Vote. Reformatted Doc file to serve as the master document going forward.	12/15/2020	R. Witten
1/20/2021	Reformatted to fix skipped “2.2” section number. Decrement sections 2.3 thru 2.12 by 1. Added Appendix A – Document Revision History.	1/07/2021 via email conversation	R. Witten
4/30/2022	Added GA Delegate Selection Process	4/19/2022	R. Witten
12/19/2023	Adjusted timeline of GA Delegate Selection Process	12/19/2023	H. Florusbosch

Appendix B – Program Monitoring Schedule

Program reports focus on the year's successes, goals, obstacles. The reports should stimulate strategic discussions between the Board and program leaders.

September	Alignment – Annual Operations Plan / Board Work Plan – focus on programs
October	Spiritual Life – SGD, Small Group Ministry
November	Social Justice & Environmental Action
December	Spiritual Life – Sunday Services, Music Programming
January	Culture – Denominational connections, on-line outreach, community involvement
February	Stewardship [Governance] – Leadership Development, Governance / Governance Processes
March	Stewardship [Assets] – Bldgs & Grounds, Staff, Pledging
April	Community – Social Events, Identity Groups, All-Congregation activities
May	“Making a Difference in the World” – Summary of outreach over the year
June	Annual Operations Plan Results – Supports year-end Board / Sr Minister evaluation)

Appendix C – Policy Compliance Monitoring Schedule

The Senior Minister submits these monitoring reports to the Board at least one week ahead of the Board meeting for the month listed below.

September Asset Protection (3.8) / Grants & Contracts (3.9) / Gift Acceptance (3.10)

This report includes any new progress toward, changes in, or recent problems regarding:

- Building use policies
- Land use policies
- Insurance coverage (property, liability)
- Building & equipment maintenance
- Accessibility and inclusion efforts (AIM)
- Protection of important electronic files and data (backup / archiving)
- Grants or contracts issued
- Gifts and bequests received

December Financial Planning & Budgeting (3.6) / Financial Condition and Activities (3.7)

This report includes any new progress toward, changes in, or recent problems regarding:

Planning & Budgeting

- Annual Budget process
- Unusual expenditures
- Loans

Ongoing Financial Activities

- Management of endowments
- Processes for receiving, processing, disbursing funds
- Cash flow
- Sale of property
- Gifts & bequests

March	Care of Congregants (3.3) / Care of Staff (3.4) / Compensation & Benefits (3.5) / Senior Minister Well-Being (3.13)
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This report includes any new progress toward, changes in or recent problems regarding:

Congregants

- Interactions with visitors to UUAA
- Interactions between congregants
- Communications that keep congregants informed of UUAA activities (newsletter, web, etc)

Staff

- Up to date personnel manual
- Conflict management
- Staff development opportunities
- Staff annual evaluations (must be conducted at least every 12 months)

Senior Minister

- Vacation / sabbatical time
- Professional development
- Advisory or support teams / task forces

May/June	Fulfillment of Annual Operations Plan and Progress on Strategic Goals
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This report includes an end of church-year update on the operations plan

- Progress on strategic goals
- Budget items supporting strategic goals
- Staff time spent on strategic goals



Guide for Bringing a Resolution to a Vote

by the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor

Created 8/22/19 by the UUAA Governance Advisory Team

Adopted by the UUAA Board of Trustees: 12/15/2020

Updated to be aligned with the Bylaws adopted by the congregation June 2022

Document Scope

This document is intended to be a guidance document for the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor (UUAA) Board of Trustees (BOT) and UUAA groups seeking a congregational vote on a resolution. Congregational votes to approve bylaw changes or make decisions on regular business items are described in our bylaws.

Definitions

Resolution – a formal expression of opinion, will, or intent voted by an official body or assembled group. [Merriam Webster Dictionary]

Statement of conscience – A public statement about a social justice issue that is primarily an expression of faith and values. [UUA: <https://www.uua.org/action/statements>]

Quorum – As of this writing, a quorum is defined in our bylaws as 15% of the Full Members of UUAA (the number who must be present at a congregational meeting to conduct business.)

BOT – Abbreviation for the UUAA Board of Trustees, the elected body that represents the members of the Congregation.

Background

The First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor is proud of our long history of confronting the issues of our times, from women’s rights in the late 1800s to immigrant rights today. When we bring issues to the congregation, we need to be careful to honor the values of our democratic religious community. Two recent examples of the UUAA congregation coming together to speak out as one voice are our 2014 affirmation of marriage equality (which became a model for the state) and our 2017 decision to become a Sanctuary Congregation, a decision that was both a statement to the community and the start of a plan of actions that committed building space and significant UUAA resources to the sanctuary cause.

Bringing the congregation together to discuss, learn about and then pass a resolution of conscience can be a powerful experience. Quoting a UUA guidance document,

“This is about personal transformation. Our ability to create social transformation is linked with our willingness to go through personal transformation in the process. How can we expect the world to change if we’re not willing to?” [3]

The UUA guidance document also counsels that a congregation considering a resolution must attend to the broader needs of the congregation.

“How the work is done is as important as the end goal of promoting justice. If the justice work we do fails to build community—or worse yet, destroys it—then we will not have served well....” [1]

This document refers to “justice issues”, but uses the term “resolution” to include any type of resolution or statement of conscience. This document might also be used as a guide for other types of congregational decisions, as deemed appropriate by the BOT. In making that determination the BOT will consider the level of impact of the decision and whether an affirmative vote implies widespread agreement by the full UUAA Congregation.

The UUA guidance continues:

“The first thing to keep in mind is that anything done in a congregational setting can be divisive if done poorly. As faith communities, it is important to take a stand on the side of justice in a way that nurtures community. Hopefully, within the context of the congregation, people are willing to be emotionally and spiritually open; to take the risks and share their personal stories necessary for understanding, grieving, healing, and transformation often required when taking action. Ensuring that the congregation remains a safe space for this openness is critical to the success of whatever decision or project is being considered, especially if it is something that is controversial or will be a long-term project or has long-term ramifications. This does not mean that “contro-versial” issues should be avoided—just that they should be addressed thoroughly and thoughtfully. Space needs to be created so that if there is a minority in disagreement they still feel part of the community.... The process of passing a resolution can lead to greater understanding, stronger community and transformation in the congregation itself. It can lay the basis for authorizing clergy, staff, and members of the congregation to join interfaith and advocacy coalitions on behalf of the congregation.” [1]

The UUA guidance documents (see references) also counsel that resolutions work best when they are part of the strategic plans for the congregation, that is, if they implement a goal that has already been agreed upon.

The following procedures are based in part on the UUA documents quoted above and on the Bylaws of the UU Church of Rochester [4].

Procedures for Bringing a Resolution before the UUAA Congregation

A group of 10 or more members in good standing is needed to sponsor a resolution. Before bringing a resolution to the BOT, please read these procedures. Note the checklist at the end of the document that can help you navigate the process.

Summary of the Sponsoring Group's Role

The sponsoring group should take time to reflect on whether a resolution is the best way to address their issue. Many issues might be better served by forming an action group or joining UUAA activities already in progress. Consider whether the resolution is a meaningful way to use the time and energy of the congregation. You may want to seek advice from lay leaders or UUAA senior staff. If the decision is to proceed, then the group needs to take responsibility for assuring that the congregation is well informed on the issue and fully prepared to participate in a vote.

Summary of the BOT Role

As the holders of the congregational vision, the BOT must evaluate whether the resolution advances that vision. In their role in oversight, the Board needs to assure a healthy community by discerning the resolution's possible effects on the congregation and by helping to make the process leading to a vote positive, inclusive and fair to both the sponsoring group and members of the congregation who may oppose the resolution. The BOT has authority over congregational voting procedures and it calls all official congregational meetings.

Step #1 – Discernment

The sponsoring group must begin early, working to make sure the BOT and other congregational leaders are aware of their effort.

If the issue involved is new to the congregation or controversial, the sponsoring group must be willing to commit to leading a multi-month process of education and open discussion that allows differing opinions to be shared in a respectful environment.

A process of discernment should precede writing the resolution. The sponsoring group should be able to clearly answer this question "Is the resolution appropriate and compelling for advancing the current goals of the congregation?"

A congregational resolution is appropriate if any of the following are true:

- The resolution serves an articulated goal that isn't sufficiently served through action by an action committee or subgroup of the congregation. Clearly articulating the goal will help educate the BOT and the congregation about why it is important and the potential positive impact of adopting the resolution.
- There is a demonstrated grounding, history, and identity of the congregation with the issue that makes passage highly likely.
- There is a deep felt need by an historically marginalized group for the congregation to stand with them in solidarity.

Step #2 - Writing the Resolution and Support Material

The actual resolution to be voted on by the congregation must be worded as specifically and briefly as possible (guideline- a half page) and must be reviewed by multiple congregants before submission to the BOT. First and foremost, the resolution must be grounded in Unitarian Universalism and UUAA Core Values [5,6].

Reviewers should include a range of people from the congregation, including groups who do not have a large voice and groups that might be specifically affected by the resolution or its subsequent actions.

The sponsoring group must submit to the BOT the specific language of the resolution and also a supporting document that includes:

- Brief background information that will help readers understand the issue.
- The congregational goal advanced by the resolution
- An impact assessment - How will this statement or set of actions make a difference in our congregation? community? in the world? What impact will it have on the resources of UUAA? This information must include estimates of staff time and any financial impact.
- An assessment of the current level of support for the resolution (see below).
- A draft plan for how to use the resolution if it is passed, for example, communication to the media, coordination with organizational partners, corresponding with elected officials, forming action teams.
- A draft FAQ sheet addressing anticipated concerns.

Demonstrating Support The documentation should reference any broader support for the resolution. Sponsors of resolutions addressing social justice issues are encouraged to collaborate with or seek guidance from the Social Justice Council before submitting their resolution to the BOT. A collaboration or endorsement demonstrates to the BOT that there is broad congregational support for the resolution. If the Social Justice Council has not been involved, the BOT may wish to refer the resolution to the Social Justice Council for their review and recommendations.

Similarly, sponsors of resolutions not associated with a social justice issue are encouraged to collaborate with or seek support from groups working on similar issues within the congregation before submitting their proposal to the BOT. Again, this demonstrates wider support for the resolution and could also lead to collaborative projects. If there are no ongoing efforts related to the resolution, the sponsors should mention this in their submission to the BOT.

Step #3 – BOT Discussion and Discernment

The BOT verifies that the resolution wording and all associated information are adequate to fully understand the goals of the resolution. Then, the BOT must review the “appropriateness” criteria described above and all possible outcomes of the resolution and their impact on the community. In conversation with the group sponsoring the proposal, the BOT will discern and determine if the proposed resolution is in the congregation’s best interest to move forward. The BOT will consider:

- How the resolution serves the current vision and goals of UUAA
- Impact on the personnel and resources of the congregation
- Whether the resolution is likely to energize and unify, or divide the UUAA community
- Whether the resolution is the most effective use of time and resources to accomplish the stated goals
- Whether the outcomes of the resolution and its follow-up might do harm to a segment of the UUAA community

If the BOT decides the resolution should not go forward, they must provide a written explanation to the sponsoring group and also make the explanation available in BOT meeting minutes and/or other UUAA communication channels available to the whole congregation.

Step #4 –Education and Dialog

The amount of time and effort needed to inform the congregation and allow for open discussion can vary widely depending on the issues involved. The BOT will make this decision, and counsel the sponsoring group on how they might create and implement a plan for educating the membership. The BOT will work with the group to establish a timeframe for the discussion/ voting/ follow-up actions.

Determining How Much Time is Needed

1. It is possible that an urgent resolution could be communicated through email and the pulpit and voted on very quickly, for example, a statement of support to a neighboring mosque that has been vandalized.
2. A short period of discussion, perhaps one month / one ‘town meeting’/ information in newsletter, email blast, bulletin, website, might be appropriate for:
 - A statement of conscience that is core to the identity of the congregation, so that understanding will be quick, and passage very likely.
 - A resolution that arose from activities already in place, so that a broad range of the congregation has already taken part in discussion and learning activities.

3. A longer period of 3- 6 months, possibly a full year or more, of providing information using lay organized classes, all available media, perhaps open meetings structured by leaders or staff who can assure a respectful environment might be needed for more complex or more controversial issues. For example:
 - An issue that is quite new to a large part of the congregation, so will need time to be fully understood.
 - A resolution that was evaluated by the BOT and although controversial, has leadership support for continuing to take forward in a careful and respectful way. This assumes that additional education opportunities are likely to lead to wider acceptance of the resolution.
 - A resolution (or its subsequent actions) that involves acquiring or disposing of congregational assets, using significant congregational resources or that requires significant fundraising.

In all cases, the BOT and members of the sponsoring group are obligated to make sure that all congregants have an opportunity to learn about and speak out about the resolution. Measures must be taken to maximize the number and diversity of congregants who have the opportunity to vote.

Step #5 – Congregational Vote

The BOT sets the date for the vote and supervises the voting process.

The BOT and sponsoring group must take measures to assure maximum participation of UUAA members in the voting process.

Pursuant to Article IX of our Bylaws--dealing with Congregational Resolutions--a required quorum for passing a congregational resolution shall be twenty-five percent (25%) of the voting Members of the Congregation. Congregational resolutions shall be approved by an eighty percent (80%) majority of voting members present at the meeting.

While our congregation values a diversity of opinions in many ways, a resolution implies a unified stand. The results of a vote on a statement of conscience are not binding on any individual member, since our Principles value the right of conscience equally with the use of the democratic process in our UU congregations.

Step #6 – Follow-through

Following the vote, if the resolution was approved, the written follow-up plan from Step #2 begins. Oversight should be provided by staff members or lay leaders when appropriate. For example, the follow-through might include a written statement for release to media that would be created in cooperation with the Senior Minister or BOT President using the UUAA Communications Policy as a guide.

The sponsoring group must update the congregation on follow-through activities at regular intervals by providing information in the current UUAA communications channels, such as the website and newsletter and bulletin.

If the resolution was not approved, the sponsoring group might look for other ways to achieve their goals. If, after a period of time (more than one year), circumstances change to make the resolution more likely to pass, the sponsoring group and BOT can hold a discussion to decide whether it would be wise to re-introduce the resolution and begin the process again.

References

1. Taking Action As A Congregation; Guide for Congregational Resolutions & Social Justice Statements, a UUA guidance document: <https://www.uua.org/justice-programs/resolutions>
2. CONGREGATIONAL DECISION-MAKING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES, By the Rev. Bill Gardiner:
<https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/aw/congregationaldecisionmaking.pdf>
3. Inspired Faith, Effective Action -A Social Justice Workbook for Unitarian Universalist Congregations (2008):
<https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/washingtonoffice/ifea.pdf>
4. 2018 Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Rochester, MN:
<https://uurochmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/1st-Church-Bylaws-2018-06.pdf>
5. The Seven Principles of UUism
6. UUAA's Core Values

Checklist for Bringing a Resolution to the UUAA Congregation

- Assess whether a resolution is the most effective way to address the issue. Think about what current UUAA goals it advances. (See guidance Step #1)
- Write / review / refine wording of the resolution – include a variety of reviewers. Make it simple to understand, terse, inspiring, grounded in UUism.
- Write a document that includes: 1- background material/motivation, 2- an impact assessment, 3- a draft FAQ sheet addressing possible concerns and 4- a follow-up plan for communication, actions, oversight needed once the resolution is passed. This might be 1 page for a simple issue or 5 pages for a complex issue.
- If this is a social justice issue, request input from the Social Justice Council. (If not a social justice issue, then seek support from other related UUAA groups.)
- Submit all to the BOT and hold dialog with them to discern whether to continue. If so...
- Work with BOT guidance to plan how best to educate the congregation to get ready to vote on the resolution—perhaps information sheets, town hall meetings, etc.
- Ask the BOT to schedule a vote that follows the education phase. (The BOT will oversee the meeting and the vote.)
- If the resolution passes, execute the follow-up plan for communication and actions, making sure to keep the congregation informed.

UUAA BOT GA Delegate Selection Process - Version 5

Committee: Laura Johnstone, Glenn Harris, Vanessa Campbell, and Kathy McLean

Updated December 19, 2023, to adjust time frame

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor (UUAA) Delegates to the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) General Assembly (GA) annual meeting are approved for voting credentials by the Board of Trustees (BOT) each year.

We encourage all members of the congregation, in good standing, to consider participating as a delegate at the UUA GA annual meeting. It is a meaningful way to contribute to our denomination and to represent our congregation at UUA GA. Delegates are expected to inform themselves on relevant GA issues to be considered and to attend business sessions where agenda items are discussed and voted on. Delegates are also expected to report on their GA experience, including information from the GA with implications for UUAA (e.g., issues that may require UUAA to consider action).

The size of UUAA membership determines the number of delegates we can send to each annual GA meeting. In the event that there are more members in good standing applying to be delegates than there are available slots, preference may be given to UUAA members who have not attended in the past two years, youth and young adults, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), leaders or members actively involved in UUAA groups and committees, and to members of the Board of Trustees. Preference may also be given to those with experience or interest in special topics that will be discussed at GA and those with experience or interest in governance questions that may be decided at GA.

Timeline for Recruiting and Selecting GA Delegates

No later than March:

- A selection committee is formed, with representatives of the Denominational Connections Team (DCT), selected by the DCT, and two Board of Trustee (BOT) members, selected by the BOT.

April:

- April 1: deadline for applying to be a delegate. The DCT collects all GA delegate applicant information and sends this to the DCT/BOT Committee.
- No later than April 15: The DCT/BOT Committee reviews the applications and decides which applicants to recommend to the Board as delegates after confirming the following:
 1. Check with the Welcome Ministries Coordinator to verify GA applicants are UUAA members in good standing.

2. Check with the Senior Minister to confirm that the GA Delegates recommended are in covenant with the UUAA congregation.

(Detail of the above policies, can be found in the Operations Policy and Procedures: [Congregational Health and Safety/Good Standing and Covenant](#))

- One week before the April or May BOT meeting: The DCT/BOT Committee sends their list of proposed GA delegates to the BOT for review at the May BOT meeting.
- April or May BOT meeting: BOT considers the proposed GA delegates and approves a final list of Delegates, including alternates.
 - After the April or May Board meeting, the DCT/BOT Committee contacts the selected GA delegates and notifies applicants who were not selected.
- May/June congregational meeting: Selected delegates are announced to the congregation.
- Delegates will receive their GA credentials and instructions for registration from UUAA Operations

UUAA General Assembly Delegate Requirements and Selection Criteria

Eligibility:

- Must be a member of UUAA in good standing.
- Must be in covenant with the UUAA congregation.

GA Delegate Selection Criteria:

If the number of volunteers exceeds UUAA's allotted number of GA delegates, we may limit selection to one delegate per household, and preference may be given to:

- UUAA members who have not served as GA delegates in the past two years
- Youth (grades 9-12), young adults (18-35 years old), and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)
- People who have experience or an interest in topics that will be discussed at GA
- Lay leaders (chairs or members of UUAA committees)
- Board of Trustee members