

In writing the policies for the Governance, Discernment and Management sections we were guided by the work of Dan Hotchkiss in Governance and Ministry and drew heavily on his examples, using several as written, and tailoring others to reflect the expectations, culture, and practices at All Souls New London.

Governance

Philosophy of Governance

Governance is a collective process that produces lasting policies designed to direct many individual decisions. It is best accomplished through democratic or representative bodies, including congregational meetings, the Board of trustees, and Board working groups. The Board of trustees, under the leadership of the president, is responsible for leading the governance of our congregation. The Board is charged with discerning our congregation's mission and vision, making strategic choices about how to conduct our ministry, and holding others accountable for overall results.

The Board's focus shall be on the long-term mission and well-being of the congregation, not on administrative detail. As much as possible, the Board shall delegate management decision-making and devote its own attention to discernment, strategy, and oversight. The Board shall strive for transparency and open communication in all its work.

Board Covenant

We, the Board of trustees of All Souls New London, covenant to keep the mission of All Souls at the center of all we do. We will treat each other with respect and openness, assuming the best intentions of each member, actively listening, not interrupting, and staying in relationship with one another, even in conflict. We shall respect our time together by honoring our commitments, being prepared for meetings, and handling non-meeting business outside of our Board meetings. We shall focus on policy, not micromanagement. We will ask for help when we need it. We will make decisions only after full discussion, listening deeply to the opinions of each member. We shall stand by our group decisions and speak with one voice. We will continue to learn as a Board and deepen our sense of spirituality and Unitarian Universalism.

Board members are expected to:

- Attend monthly Board meetings, alerting the Board president if an absence is necessary

- Read the Board packet and additional emailed reports and prepare to discuss agenda items
- Set the congregation's mission and vision, goals, and strategic directions
- Be actively involved in congregational life by frequently attending worship services and congregational events.
- Act as liaisons to committees and ministry teams and be conscientious in carrying out the role of liaison (this applies to the five at-large trustees)
- Be familiar with the congregation's bylaws, policies, financial affairs, and staff
- Ensure sound financial structure and procedures, and exercise fiduciary oversight, so that resources are used effectively
- Respond to Board communication, including emails, in a timely fashion
- Set an example through personal commitment and actions, serving as role models
- Use their skills to participate fully and thoughtfully in congregational governance
- Work collaboratively and communicate openly with fellow lay leaders, clergy, staff and congregants
- Act with personal honesty and integrity, including avoiding personal gain and conflict of interest
- Engage in regular evaluation of policies and procedures
- Create a safe and welcoming environment, built on trust, for all congregants and employees
- Ensure that matters requiring confidentiality are respected

Board Self-Government

Duties of Board Members

Members of the Board have the following obligations:

- The *duty of care* requires that a Board member commit adequate time, energy, and attention to enable him or her to know the mission, understand the congregation's affairs, and act responsibly.

- The *duty of loyalty* means that the Board member must hold the congregation's mission as paramount.
- The *duty of integrity* requires Board members to comply with the congregation's foundational documents –bylaws, policies, and denominational rules – and applicable laws. A Board is a continuing legal and moral entity. It inherits all the promises it has made, even if all individual Board members are new. At meetings, Board members may disagree sharply, but once a vote is taken, the duty of integrity requires every member to speak with respect of the decision and the Board's authority to make it.

Board Agenda

The Board empowers the Executive Committee to set the agenda for Board meetings. The Executive Committee consists of the officers of the Board (President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer) and the senior minister. The Executive Committee is charged with preparing the Board packet and an agenda for the Board meeting. The Board packet will include the minutes from the previous Board meeting, and any pertinent reports, readings, policy drafts, etc. that are expected to be discussed or voted on at the Board meeting. The Board secretary will email the Board packet to each member of the Board, the senior minister, and any other staff who will be in attendance at the meeting, no later than 5 days before the Board meeting. Liaison reports, the treasurer's report, and the senior minister's report shall be emailed to all Board members no later than two days before the Board meeting.

Board committees

The Board may create and dissolve committees and task forces as needed to assist it in the work of the congregation. Task forces are appointed for the purpose of tending to specific, time-limited tasks and shall receive a clear charge and timeframe for carrying out the charge. The Board committees, as described in our bylaws, shall include the following:

- Personnel – The Executive Committee of the Board functions as the Personnel Committee.
- Membership - guides potential members through the process of learning about Unitarian Universalism and All Souls.
- Finance – Provides oversight for the congregation's financial health.
- Facilities - works to keep the buildings and campus of All Souls safe, secure, clean and attractive.

- Nominating and Leadership Development - prepares a slate of qualified candidates for elected positions named in the bylaws or designated by the Board. It also identifies leadership development training opportunities and coordinates participation in these opportunities.
- Stewardship - coordinates the planning, distribution, and receipt of the financial commitment forms of the congregation.
- Ombuds - evaluates and responds to reports of behavior that falls outside the bounds of the Behavioral Policy of the congregation.

Conflicts of interest

Board members shall carry out their duties with undivided loyalty to the congregation and its mission. A conflict of interest exists whenever a Board member or a close relative of a Board member has interests or duties that interfere with the Board member's duty of loyalty. The conflicting interest may be financial, moral, political, theological, or otherwise.

Conflicts of interest may arise when a Board member:

- Stands to gain or lose because of a Board action
- Has a fiduciary duty or close personal or business relationship to any person or corporation that stands to gain or lose because of a Board action. A Board member who is a close relative of an employee of the congregation always has a conflict of interest with respect to any Board action affecting such employment.
- Holds a property interest in a corporation or business, or serves as an officer or Board member of another nonprofit organization that stands to gain or lose because of a Board action.
- Cannot set aside personal preferences as an individual consumer of the congregation's services to vote in behalf of the whole congregation and its missions
- Faces any other situation that creates or appears to create divided or conflicting loyalties

If any item of business arises in which any Board member suggests that a conflict of interest may exist, the affected Board member may withdraw or ask the Board for guidance. In the latter case, the Board, minus the affected parties, shall determine how to handle the situation.

Depending on the seriousness of the conflict, possible responses include:

- *Disclosure.* A supplemental disclosure form shall be filed by the affected member who may then continue to participate and vote as usual.
- *Recusal.* The member shall disclose the conflict and withdraw from the meeting while the item is under discussion or voted on.
- *Resignation.* The member shall resign from the Board.

Anyone who exercises authority delegated by the Board, including paid and unpaid staff members, is subject to the same standards of loyalty that apply to Board members.

Discipline and removal of Board members

The Board of Trustees has the power to remove members who fail in their duties or disrupt the body's work. Reasons for removal include, but are not limited to, serious violations of the Board covenant or conflict-of-interest policy and excessive absenteeism. Before exercising its power to remove a member, the Board shall notify the member in writing of its intent to do so and offer the member the opportunity to be heard.

Discernment

Mission Statement

All Souls Unitarian Universalist Congregation is a liberal religious congregation that nurtures lifelong spiritual development. We covenant to create a welcoming, caring, justice-seeking community within and beyond these walls.

Core Values

We are grounded in the principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), covenanting with each other and other Unitarian Universalist congregations to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

In addition to the seven Unitarian Universalist Principles our core values include:

- **Welcoming**

One of the core values we hold at the center of our congregation is a commitment to hospitality. A spiritual practice of radical hospitality provides the foundation for our relationships with each other, with visitors and newcomers, and in the wider world. It is up to each of us to make our congregation and our world the kind of place where all feel welcomed – a world in which all are treated with justice, equality, and compassion. A congregational commitment to welcoming has the potential for transformation – of ourselves, our congregation, and our world.

- **Caring**

We are called to act out of kindness and compassion. Within our congregation our Caring Ministry coordinates efforts to provide support to members and friends who are experiencing a difficulty in their lives. Pastoral concerns are addressed by our ministers, who are available to speak with congregants who have personal or spiritual concerns or questions they would like to discuss. Small Group Ministry groups provide a caring environment in which to develop connections within the congregation. Beyond our walls our commitment to caring is evidenced through our Social Justice work in the community and in the larger world. We are committed to providing a compassionate and caring community within our congregation and beyond.

- **Justice Seeking**

As a congregation and individually we strive to live out our Unitarian Universalist principles and promote justice in all of our interactions. We recognize that there are

injustices in our world and we make efforts to bear witness, to learn, to take action and to advocate for systemic change.

Management

Delegation to the staff

Global Delegation

The Senior Minister shall lead and direct the spiritual, programmatic, and administrative work of the congregation, and is hereby delegated authority and responsibility to make all operational decisions, adopt administrative policies, and allocate congregational resources except as specifically limited by these policies.

The Senior Minister shall not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision, or congregational circumstance that is inconsistent with our Unitarian Universalist principles or is unlawful, imprudent or in violation of professional ethics, or commonly accepted business practices.

With respect to interactions with congregants, the Senior Minister shall not cause or allow conditions or practices that are unsafe or disrespectful.

With respect to the treatment of paid and volunteer staff, the Senior Minister shall not cause or allow conditions or practices that are unsafe, unclear, disrespectful or unprofessional.

Neither the personnel committee nor the Senior Minister shall set employment terms, compensation, and benefits for employees, consultants, and contract workers above the financial means of the congregation. Neither the personnel committee nor the senior minister shall set compensation and benefits below fair compensation without a plan to reach fair compensation that is within the congregation's financial means.

Staff structure

The Senior Minister shall serve as head of staff and be responsible for maintaining a productive and effective staff team, for ensuring that staff efforts are directed toward fulfilling the congregation's mission, vision, and strategic plan, and for staff compliance with all Board policies and procedures.

Delegation to Others

The Board of Trustees may appoint a separate Board for a substantial subsidiary enterprise, such as a school, which requires more expertise and attention than the church Board of Trustees can give. The subsidiary Board's responsibilities shall be described in a written document which shall then be incorporated into the policy book.

Care for People

Health and Safety

The head of staff shall ensure that all facilities are maintained in a safe, sanitary, and secure condition, that required licenses and inspections are kept up to date, and that problems are corrected promptly. Specific policies shall be in place for emergency planning, sexual harassment, and child protection.

Nondiscrimination

No one acting for the congregation shall discriminate because of race, color, age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, national origin or ancestry, economic status, union membership, gender expression or political affiliation. Employment shall be based solely on merit and qualification. Religious opinions and affiliation may be considered only in the case of paid or unpaid staff positions that include religious teaching or worship leadership.

Universal Access

The congregation intends to make its premises and activities accessible to persons with the widest possible variety of disabilities. To this end it will meet all legal requirements, and engage in ongoing examination of its properties, practices and attitudes.

Care for Staff

The head of staff shall be responsible for maintaining a productive and effective staff team, for ensuring that its efforts are directed toward fulfilling the congregation's mission and vision, and for compliance by the staff with all Board policies.

- **Compensation.** Compensation for congregational staff shall follow the UUA Recommended Salary Range Fair Compensation guidelines for the size of our congregation within our Geo Index.
- **Benefits.** All staff members working more than twenty hours per week shall receive a uniform benefits package including health insurance and retirement plan contributions,

according to UUA guidelines. Complete details are available in our Personnel Policy Manual.

- Creating staff positions. Prior to creating a new staff position the head of staff shall consult with the Board personnel committee. If appropriate, the Board may appoint a search committee to seek candidates for an open position. A Board task force may be charged to evaluate staffing models and make recommendations to the Board. The head of staff shall report to and consult with the Board prior to making a decision to proceed.
- Discharge of staff. Prior to discharging a staff member, the head of staff shall consult with the personnel committee to ensure that the proposed decision adheres to accepted personnel practices and complies with applicable laws, bylaws, and Board policies.
- Grievances. Employee complaints or grievances shall be addressed as described in the Personnel Policy Manual.
- Personnel Policy Manual. The head of staff and the personnel committee are responsible for maintaining an up-to-date personnel policy manual covering matters not specifically addressed in these Board policies, as required to ensure that the congregation complies with legal requirements and denominational norms for employment practices. The personnel policy manual will be reviewed every two years by the personnel committee.

