

Bylaws of First Unitarian

Approved at a Meeting of the Congregation

January 29, 2017

Amended at a Meeting of the Congregation

January 29, 2023

First Unitarian

*A Unitarian Universalist Congregation
meeting in Albuquerque, Edgewood, and Socorro*



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Albuquerque
3701 Carlisle Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110
Phone: 505-884-1801
Fax: 505-884-6425
firstunitarian@uuabq.org
www.uuabq.org

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Article 1 The Congregation

Article 1 Section 01 Mission, Affiliation, and Principles

(a) Our Mission Covenant

We the members of the First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque agree to

- promote the spiritual, intellectual, and personal growth of each member;
- minister to each other in an atmosphere of welcome, acceptance, and caring;
- be a positive force for social, environmental, and economic action;
- promote the wider understanding of our purposes and principles in the larger community;
- provide a dynamic religious education program for all ages.

To these ends, we declare our commitment to the health and vitality of this liberal religious community.

(b) Denominational Affiliation

This Church, a Unitarian Universalist Church, is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and the Mountain Desert District (MDD) of the UUA, and acts in accordance with the Principles and Purposes of the UUA. In addition to UUA's seven principles, we adopt this 8th principle:

We, a member congregation of the UUA, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

(c) Full Participation

The Congregation affirms and promotes the full participation of persons in all Church activities and endeavors, including membership, programming, hiring practices and the calling of religious professionals, without regard to race, color, gender, physical or mental challenge, affectional or sexual orientation, class or national origin.

Article 1 Section 02 Membership

(a) Qualifications for Membership

(i) Attaining Membership

To become a member in good standing of this Church, a person must

1. have attained the age of 14 years, or completed the Church's Coming of Age Program;
2. be in sympathy with the mission covenant of this Church;
3. make an identifiable financial contribution of any amount to the Church;
4. agree to abide by these Bylaws and the *Congregation and Board Policy Manual*;
5. sign the Membership Book or other authorized declaration of membership, such as signing the virtual membership book.

(ii) Voting

Thirty days after fulfilling the requirements of membership the individual becomes a voting member of the Church. The Director of Congregational Life maintains the official list of members in good standing.

(iii) Retaining Membership

To continue as a member in good standing a member must make an identifiable financial contribution of any amount to the Congregation at least once every year.

(b) Membership and Committees

Only members in good standing of the Church may serve on any Standing Committee (including the Board of Directors).

(c) Termination of Membership

A member may resign membership from the Church by notice to the office. A member may be removed from membership after 18 months if no identifiable financial contributions have been made in that time or the church has not been able to reach the person by letter, email or phone to clarify whether the person wishes to continue as a member.

A member failing to abide by Church Bylaws, or Healthy Community Policies, or who is deemed by the Board of Directors to be a danger to the persons or institution of the Church, may have their membership revoked by a Board of Directors affirmative vote of six or more Board members after consultation with the Healthy Community Team.

(d) Friends of the Church

Any person who makes an annual financial contribution to the Church, but is not a member, is a Friend of the Church. Friends may serve on board committees or task force, but Friends are not permitted to vote or hold elected office on the Board or a Standing Committee.

Article 1 Section 03 The Authority of the Congregation

The Congregation is defined as the collective body of the members. The ultimate governing authority of the Church is vested in the Congregation as expressed in Annual and special meetings. The Congregation is thus solely empowered, except as otherwise specified below,

1. to call and dismiss its Senior Minister;
2. to ordain persons in UUA fellowship to the ministry;
3. to approve the purchase or sale of real property, or major construction, or improvements thereon;
4. to borrow money and/or mortgage Church property;
5. to define the requirements of membership;
6. to elect the Board of Directors, the President, the Treasurer, and Standing Committee Members, or remove them;
7. to approve the annual budget for the operating fund;
8. to adopt and amend its Bylaws;
9. to adopt congregational policies which do not rise to the level of By-Laws.

Article 1 Section 04 Standing Committees of the Congregation

To accomplish its business efficiently, the Congregation elects certain Standing Committees.

- Members of Standing Committees are elected by the Congregation at the annual meeting. All Standing Committee members must be members in good standing of the Congregation.
- All members serve for two-year terms that begin February 1st with a staggered rotation. Terms end January 31st. A Committee member completing two terms may not be reappointed or reelected until after one year off the Committee.
- The Board, in conversation with the Leadership Succession Committee, may appoint interim members when vacancies occur. When a standing committee vacancy occurs, the time served during the vacancy will not be counted toward term limits. At the following Annual Meeting, an election will be held for a new term.
- Each Committee chooses its own chair with the exception of the Board, which is chaired by the President of the Congregation.
- Each Standing Committee submits a written report to the Congregation at the Annual Meeting, and may report orally as appropriate. Between Annual Meetings, Standing Committees report to the Board as requested by the Board.
- All meetings of Standing Committees must conform to the Open Meetings Provisions of the Bylaws ([Article 1 Section 07c](#)).
- The Board may recommend to the Congregation the removal of any chair or

member of a Standing Committee.

- Ministers and staff are ex-officio members of standing committees.

(a) The Leadership Succession Committee

The Leadership Succession Committee (LSC) shall consist of seven members. The Committee shall consult with the ministers and lay leadership concerning appropriate candidates for elected Standing Committee positions and provide a slate of nominations to the Congregation whenever elections are held. In addition, the LSC can make recommendations to the Board about any necessary interim appointments to Standing Committees. When a new Senior Minister is to be chosen, LSC nominates the members of the Search Committee.

(b) The Endowment Committee

The Endowment Committee shall consist of five members elected by the Congregation.

The Endowment Committee is charged with recommending and overseeing distributions from the Endowment Fund, and ensuring appropriate checks and balances for the long-term maintenance of the Endowment Fund. It shall promote the growth of the Endowment Fund, encourage and accept gifts to the Endowment Fund, and ensure that all gifts are acknowledged, honored, and properly recorded for posterity in accordance with the policies of the Church. The Committee may recommend to the Board policies for gift acceptance and distribution.

The Committee shall provide quarterly reports to the Board of Directors and submit a written report to the Congregation at each Annual Meeting.

(c) The Board of Directors

Provisions governing the Board of Directors are contained in [Article 2](#) of these Bylaws.

Article 1 Section 05 Congregational Meetings

(a) The Moderator

All meetings of the Congregation shall be conducted by a Moderator who is not a member of the Board of Directors but is a member in good standing of the Church. The Moderator shall be elected by the members at the Annual Meeting of the Congregation. The Moderator shall serve for a two-year term, and may be reelected for successive terms without term limit. The Moderator may appoint a Parliamentarian who is not a member of the Board of Directors.

(b) Notice for Congregational Meetings

At least fourteen days prior to the Annual Meeting or any Special Congregational Meeting, notice of the meeting shall be mailed or emailed to each member in a special mailing and/or published in the official Church newsletter. Notice shall include the time and date of the meeting and the agenda. A single notice may be addressed to two or

more members at the same residence. Members must opt out of email notifications. The budget and text of all Board-presented motions and Bylaws Amendments must be posted to the Church website and available in the Church office at least 7 days before the meeting.

(c) Quorum

Unless otherwise provided in these Bylaws, 10 percent of the voting members in good standing present, in-person or virtually, shall constitute a quorum. A member not present may not vote by proxy.

In the event that a quorum is not obtained at the Annual Meeting of the Congregation, the existing budget, and such members of the Board, including the President and the Treasurer, whose terms of service are expiring, shall continue to serve until a new budget and new officers are approved at a subsequent Special Congregational meeting.

(d) Voting

(i) Subjects of Votes

Discussions may be held but no votes may be taken on matters not enumerated in the call to the meeting.

(ii) Majority

Unless otherwise specified in the Bylaws or Policies, a majority of the affirmative votes cast by voting members in good standing present at a meeting in-person or virtually at which a quorum is present shall constitute the act of the Congregation.

(iii) Special Requirements for Decisions about Real Property

Any action involving the sale, encumbrance, or acquisition by the Church of real property, or major construction, or improvements thereon shall require a two-thirds vote of those members in good standing present and voting at a Congregational meeting at which a quorum is present with such action in its call.

(iv) Special Requirements for Decisions involving Borrowing Money

Any action involving the borrowing of money shall require a two-thirds vote of those members in good standing present and voting at a congregational meeting at which a quorum is present with such action in its call.

(e) The Annual Meeting of the Congregation

An Annual Meeting of the Members shall be held in January in Albuquerque at a time and place to be selected by the Board of Directors.

(i) Reports

The President and the Senior Minister shall report on the activities of the Church since the previous Annual meeting, and make appropriate recommendations for the future direction of the Church. The Treasurer shall report on the financial condition and

transactions of the Church during the past year. Each Standing Committee will make an appropriate report in writing, and may report orally to the meeting. The Chairpersons of all Program Teams and Councils shall submit written reports covering their respective activities and recommendations.

(ii) The Budget

The Members in good standing shall receive and vote upon the annual operating budget of the Church for the ensuing fiscal year.

(iii) Elections

The Members in good standing shall elect the President of the Congregation, the Treasurer, the Moderator, the members of the Board of Directors, and elected members of the Standing Committees. Nominations from the floor will be accepted.

(iv) Bylaws

The Members in good standing shall adopt and amend Bylaws as necessary.

(v) Other Business

The Members in good standing shall discuss and adopt resolutions on all other business on the agenda or appropriate to such a meeting.

(f) Special Congregational Meetings, Other Than Meetings to Adopt Stands on Social Issues

A special meeting is only called by the Board of Directors and must be called upon submission of a written petition to the Board of Directors signed by at least 10 percent of members in good standing. A special meeting may concern itself only with those items enumerated in the call for the meeting or in the petition. Special meetings must follow the rules for Notice and Quorum as specified in these Bylaws.

(g) Special Congregational Meetings to Take Stands on Social Issues

Following completion of the steps set forth in the Policy on Congregational Resolutions included in the *Congregation and Board Policy Manual*, a Congregational meeting will be called by the Board for the purpose of considering a Congregational stand on issues of social concern.

A quorum of 30 percent of the members in good standing must be present, and 80 percent of those members in attendance must approve the resolution.

So long as the requirements for Notice in these Bylaws and for a quorum under this subsection are met, this meeting may be convened immediately following any Annual or Special Meeting of the Congregation.

Article 1 Section 06 Amendment of Bylaws

(a) Procedures

Amendments to these Bylaws may be proposed by the Board of Directors or by a petition that states the proposed amendment, signed by at least 10 percent of the members in good standing of the Church.

Amendments to the Bylaws may be taken up at any meeting of the Congregation.

Amendments proposed by petition will be taken up at the next called meeting.

The text of the proposed change(s) shall be presented to the Church according to Notice provisions as specified for Congregational Meetings in these Bylaws.

(b) Special Requirement for Adoption of Bylaws Amendments

Amendments to the Bylaws require approval by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast by members in good standing present at a Congregational meeting at which a quorum is present.

Article 1 Section 07 Other Provisions

(a) Protection of Non-profit Status

Neither the Church, the Board of Directors, nor any member or employee of the Church shall take any action or allow any activity or use of Church property that shall endanger the nonprofit status or charitable, tax-exempt status of the Church or its property. Nothing in these Bylaws shall be construed to allow a violation of this section.

(b) Open Records

All records of the Church other than those of a confidential personal or personnel nature or donor records shall be made available for inspection by any member.

(c) Open Meetings

All meetings of Standing Committees of the Congregation, Board Committees, Councils and Teams, other than those considering legal, personnel, nominations, personal issues or donor records shall be Open Meetings. At meetings or portions of meetings which are not open, the participating members and final decisions will be recorded.

Open Meetings will adhere to the following guidelines:

- They will be on the Church calendar when timing permits.
- They will be open to observation by any member in good standing of the Congregation.

- When special meetings are required, they must be announced as feasible and the chair must notify all members.
- The committee may elect to allow observers to speak, but not to vote.
- Minutes of all Board and Standing Committee meetings are required to be submitted to the Church office and be on file within 40 days following the meetings.

(d) Parliamentary Authority

The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order, as interpreted by Sturgis, shall govern the corporation in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the Bylaws of the corporation.

(e) Dissolution Clause

Should the Church cease to function and/or the membership vote to disband, all assets of the Church, including the endowment, shall be transferred to the Unitarian Universalist Association for its general purposes. Such transfer will be made in full compliance with applicable laws.

Article 1 Section 08 The Endowment

(a) Purpose

The purpose of the Endowment Fund shall be to help further the principles and purposes of the Church as embodied in the Mission Covenant Statement.

(b) Distributions

Reasonable annual distributions from unrestricted and broad field of interest accounts shall be made, but must retain the historic buying power of the endowment, and are limited to a maximum of 4 percent of the average market value balance of the Fund for the previous three years.

(c) Special Requirements to Change Endowment Bylaws

Any changes to [Article 1 Section 08](#) shall require that a Special Congregational Meeting be called for this purpose, with a quorum requirement of 25 percent of the membership, and a two-thirds affirmative vote by those present.

Article 2 The Board of Directors

Article 2 Section 01 Composition

(a) Composition of the Board

The Board of Directors shall be composed of 9 members elected in staggered fashion for two-year terms, including the President and Treasurer.

- A Board member must be a Member in good standing of the Church.
- The Senior Minister shall serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Board.
- The Board annually shall select from its membership a Vice President and a Secretary.

(b) Board Tenure, Vacancies and Removal

The members of the Board shall take office on February 1st following election at the Annual meeting. Board terms of office end January 31st.

- A Board member completing two terms may not be reelected until after one year off the Board.
- Vacancy of any office due to death, resignation, or other cause shall be filled by the Board by appointment with the input of the Leadership Succession Committee. When a standing committee vacancy occurs, the time served during the vacancy will not be counted toward term limits. At the following Annual Meeting, an election will be held for a new term.
- A member of the Board may be removed for cause by an affirmative vote of eight or more Board members.

Article 2 Section 02 Officers

(a) President

The President shall:

- preside at meetings of the Board of Directors;
- see that orders and resolutions of the Board are carried into effect;

- have general powers and duties of supervision and management usually exercised by the Board chairperson of a Unitarian Universalist Church;
- have been a member in good standing of the Church for a minimum of the preceding two years at the time of the election;
- have signatory power on all (non-financial) legal instruments pertaining to the Church.

(b) Vice President

The Vice President shall:

- in the absence of the President, perform the duties and exercise the powers of the President;
- perform duties delegated by the President or by the Board of Directors.

(c) Secretary

The Secretary shall:

- ensure that minutes are taken at all Board Meetings and Congregational Meetings, and then present the minutes of such meetings to the Board of Directors for approval at the next regular meeting;
- ensure that official Church documents are accurate and available;
- be the official custodian of the seal of the Church and shall affix the seal to all instruments as required;
- ensure that all notices required by statute, Bylaw, or resolution are given to the Congregation;
- perform any other duties as may be delegated by the Board of Directors.

(d) Treasurer

The Treasurer shall:

- communicate financial information, questions, and decisions among the Staff, Board, Congregation, and other Church bodies concerned with finance;
- have signatory authority on checking and other financial accounts.

(e) Tenure of Officers of the Board

The positions of the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary constitute the officers of the Board and are one-year terms. The officers may be reelected to

consecutive terms, provided that they do not exceed the term limits set forth for all Board members.

Article 2 Section 03 Meetings

The Board of Directors shall meet at least once a month. A quorum shall be a majority of the current voting members.

- a. Adoption of a motion or resolution requires the affirmative vote of a majority of the Board members present at a meeting at which a quorum is present.
- b. Board meetings are subject to the Open Meetings provisions of these Bylaws ([Article 1 Section 07c](#)).
- c. The Board may meet in executive session to discuss personnel matters, or issues of a confidential personal nature, or to receive legal advice. Any action taken during the executive session shall be reported in the minutes of the meeting.
- d. When action is required before a meeting is feasible, the President may poll the Board by electronic means. If two or more board members object to voting before a full discussion can be held, the electronic meeting will not be held. If a motion at an electronic meeting receives two or more "no" votes, the motion will fail.
- e. The Board may permit any or all Board members to participate in Board meetings by any means of communication that permits all Board members to hear each other simultaneously during the meeting or communicate using disability related accommodations. A member participating in this way is deemed to be present in person at the meeting and shall be noted in the minutes as so.

Article 2 Section 04 Duties and Responsibilities

(a) Strategic Leadership and Direction

The Board of Directors is responsible for the long term strategic planning for the Church, including but not limited to

- visioning needs for future facilities and programs;
- functioning as a governance body for the Church;
- establishing policies to implement bylaws and governance provisions;
- setting annual governance objectives;
- planning for fundraising to meet future needs; and
- initiating task force actions to address identified long term needs.

(b) Operations and Policy

The business, property, and affairs of the Church shall be managed by the Board of Directors acting collectively on behalf of, and for the benefit of, the Congregation in accordance with:

- The congregation's Mission Covenant,
- Applicable Law,
- The congregation's bylaws,
- The congregation's approved budget,
- Prudence in regards to the physical and emotional safety of participants,
- Prudence in regards to the congregation's physical and reputational assets.

The Board will operate primarily by making policy. Board Policies may be initiated by the Board, and suggested policies may be brought to the Board by any person, group, or team. Board Policy is created by majority vote and added to the 'Congregation and Board Policy Manual' which is maintained on the church website."

The Board, through its president or other designee will be in contact with members of each standing committee, initiate its first meeting of the year if necessary, and remain in contact with the chair throughout the year.

(c) Finances and Budget

The Board is responsible to the Congregation for the safety and good stewardship of the Congregation's financial resources. It acts primarily by setting priorities and enacting policy.

The Board shall:

- establish budget priorities for the ensuing year;
- recommend the budget for the ensuing year to the Congregation;
- set parameters for Staff discretion in budget management;
- and review financial reports.

(d) Risk management

The Board will see to it that the Church has adequate protection to protect its financial health in the case of property damage, malfeasance or the mishandling of funds, or liability claim, including liability claims against Staff and volunteers performing their functions or duties.

(e) Bylaw Review

The Board is responsible for acting in accordance with the Bylaws and recommending bylaw changes for the Congregation's review and action.

(f) Ministry Goal Setting and Review

Each year, the Board shall work with the Senior Minister to develop goals and priorities for the ministry of the Church. These goals will be reviewed by the Board and the Senior Minister's performance will be evaluated by the Board on a yearly basis.

Article 2 Section 05 Board Committees and Task Forces

The Board may form and dissolve committees (long term) or task forces (short term) to assist it with specialized functions such as Personnel, Finance, Stewardship, Strategic Planning, Healthy Community, Governance, Campus, Facilities, etc.

- Board committees may be a mix of members and non-members of the church. Chairs and committee members are named by the Board. Committee member term begins when named by the Board. A committee member completing two terms may not be re-appointed until after one year off the committee or task force.
- Ministers and staff are ex-officio members of committees and task forces.
- The Board may dissolve committees or remove members as needed.
- Task forces are created by the Board and may include anyone from the Church community.

Article 2 Section 06 The Budget**(a) Budget Period**

The annual budget is established on the basis of a fiscal year as designated by the Board of Directors.

(b) Budget Procedures

Each year the Board sets priorities for the budget and creates rules to govern how income and expense lines will be established. The Staff drafts a budget consistent with these priorities and rules. The Finance Committee reviews this budget for accuracy and conformity to the Board's direction. The Board makes changes if necessary and recommends the budget to the Congregation at the annual meeting.

(c) Budget Modifications and Limitations

The Board of Directors may modify the approved operating budget, but shall not make or approve expenditures in aggregate above 5% of the approved budget without the vote of the Congregation unless current revenue is available to cover such increases. The Board of Directors shall not make any capital expenditure in excess of 5 percent of the total approved budget unless specifically included in that budget or approved by the Congregation.

Article 2 Section 07 Other Finance-Related Provisions

(a) Execution of Instruments

In addition to persons designated herein, checks, drafts, and orders for the payment of money may be signed on behalf of the Church by persons specifically named by the Board of Directors until such authority is revoked by the Board. Where a contract, conveyance, or other legal document approved by the Board of Directors does not specify the executing official, the President or Vice President may execute it on behalf of the Church, and the Secretary may affix the Seal of the Church thereto. The Seal shall be circular in form and shall contain the name of the Church with the following words and numbers: "Corporate Seal - 1953 - New Mexico."

Article 3 Ministry and Program

Article 3 Section 01 Senior Minister

(a) Selection

A new Senior Minister will be selected through a search and candidacy procedure recommended by the UUA. In advance of the search, the exact process will be determined by the Board with the following requirements:

- The Search Committee members shall be members of the Church, nominated by the Leadership Succession Committee, and elected by the Congregation at a duly called Congregational meeting.
- The Church's Senior Minister must be in fellowship with the UUA.

(b) Tenure

The Senior Minister shall be chosen or may be dismissed only by a vote of the Congregation at a Special Meeting at which a quorum of 30 percent of the Church members in good standing is present. An 80 percent affirmative vote of those voting is required for calling a Senior Minister, and a majority negative vote is required for dismissal of a Senior Minister. The terms of employment shall be set forth in a written letter of agreement recommended by the Board of Directors and approved by the Congregation at the meeting at which the Senior Minister is called. Minor amendments to the terms of employment may be made by the Board.

(c) Duties

The duties of the Senior Minister are those defined by the letter of agreement and related documents outlining the ministerial position. In general, the Senior Minister shall provide overall religious leadership and guidance in accordance with the established purposes of the Church. The Senior Minister shall be guaranteed freedom of the pulpit.

The Senior Minister will serve as head of Staff, and in that role is responsible to the Board for Church administration and implementation of those goals, policies and procedures established by the Board and delegated to the Senior Minister, and includes all duties herein assigned to "Staff."

(d) Interim and Temporary Senior Minister

Upon receiving approval from the Congregation to find an interim or other temporary senior minister, the Board of Directors is empowered to choose an interim minister and set the terms of employment. Interim or temporary senior ministers are non-voting ex-officio members of the Board of Directors. Interim and temporary ministries are governed by rules set forth by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

(e) Other Ministers

The procedures for employing Associate ministers, Assistant ministers, and ministerial interns (and interims in these positions) shall be included in the Church's Personnel Policies, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors.

Article 3 Section 02 Program Teams and Councils

Program Teams and Councils are responsible for the Church's ministry: those activities which enrich the lives of the Church's constituents and its community in one of the four major areas of ministry: Worship and Spiritual, Educational, Social Responsibility, and Caring Community. The Church Staff is responsible for supporting the effectiveness of Program Teams and Councils.

(a) Program Teams (e.g., Worship, Care, Adult Ed, ESL)

Program Teams form informally around ministry objectives.

Program Teams choose their own chairs. One of the Church Staff or ministers serves ex-officio on each Program Team.

Program Teams operate in accordance with the Open Meetings Bylaw ([Article 01 Section 07c](#)).

(b) Councils (e.g., Social Justice, Religious Education)

Councils form when multiple teams in crucial areas of the Church's ministry need a structure to come together to share information, leadership, and administrative tasks.

Because Councils have major leadership, management, and spending authority, members are appointed by the Leadership Succession Committee from a list provided

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by either the Council or the Board.

Bylaws

A member of the Staff serves ex-officio on each Council.

Councils operate in accordance with the Open Meetings Bylaw ([Article 01 Section 07c](#)).