

Governance, Ministry & Proposed Bylaws

An Overview

Proposed revisions to our Bylaws can be understood best through the lens of governance change.

Many, perhaps most, of you are already familiar with the various governance changes we've already implemented. We've been "trying on the new" without having to make any permanent changes. Some congregations that have made similar governance changes opted to suspend their bylaws to allow for such experimentation. The Board determined that that was neither necessary nor advisable. We found we were able to make significant shifts within our existing structure.

After seeking considerable congregational input over a period of years, we commenced to do just that. We greatly appreciate the valuable feedback and input we received from members and friends, committees and congregational leaders.

Now, we are at the point in our transition where revised bylaws are necessary to fulfill the governance plan.

Why Governance Change?

The proposed governance structure includes:

- A smaller Board with strategic focus
- A Ministries & Operations Team to lead and coordinate ministry, and
- A simpler organizational structure and bylaws.

These changes will promote:

- Better communication
- Coordination and complementarity between message and ministry
- Fewer silos of operation

Redefining Ministry:

- Shift from committee approach to team approach of ministry:
- Deepen and expand volunteerism
- Deter burnout
- SHIFT FROM: The primary role of serving on a committee is attending committee meetings.
- MOVING TO: The primary role of serving on a team is performing volunteer opportunities within that area of ministry.
- Better consistency with Growth Through Service principles: matching interests and skills with volunteer opportunities.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees will include four officers and four at-large members, each elected to two-year terms.

- The smaller size will allow the Board to be more nimble and flexible.
- Fewer board members will be needed to perform the more strategically focused governance responsibilities it will undertake, as operational and programmatic issues will be delegated to the Ministries & Operations Team.
- Fewer members and shorter terms will enable more congregational leaders to take on other initiatives.

Five Central Responsibilities of a Policy Governance Board:

1. Congregational Mission-Vision Discernment
2. Fiduciary Responsibility and Oversight
3. Policy Development and Promulgation
4. Congregational Assessment
5. Strategic and Long-Range Planning

Ministries & Operations Team

Role and Composition of the Ministries & Operations Team (MOT):

The MOT includes the Minister, Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry, and Congregation Administrator and four Board-appointed lay leaders.

The Program Team/Council exercises authority and responsibility, as delegated to it by the Board, over congregational operations and programs to achieve the congregation's goals, vision and mission, within the limitations and expectations of governing policy as set by the Board and is accountable to the Board for its work.

MOT Expectations and Accountability:

- To lead and unify the volunteer and paid staff in directing their efforts toward the fulfillment of the congregation's goals, vision and mission.
- To ensure compliance with the bylaws, Board policies, and applicable laws and regulations.
- To uphold a high standard of ethical conduct, consistent with Unitarian Universalist values and principles.
- To implement the Board's Vision of Ministry by developing and accomplishing annual goals for its work as a team.

Four Board-Appointed Lay Leaders:

The Board will appoint four members for two-year overlapping terms who are to be experienced lay leaders of the congregation, jointly nominated by the Board President and the Minister. The Nominating Committee may forward nominees to the Board for consideration and appointment. They may not simultaneously serve on the Board.

- Current MOT lay leaders Dick Dana, Matt Lesniak, Jon Newell, and Peggy Sherman.
- Former members include Barb Manning and Dave Munro.

Governance & Ministry

Governance entities are elected or appointed:

- Board of Trustees
- Finance Committee
- Ministries & Operations Team
- Nominating Committee
- Personnel Committee
- Stewardship Committee
- And other Board created committees
- (Endowment Trust is separate entity)

Ministry Teams are volunteer and open to all members and friends of the congregation:

- Caring Network
- Inclusivity
- Membership
- Religious Education
- Religious Services
- Social Responsibilities
- All other existing teams and MOT created teams

Social Justice & Religious Education Councils

Both of these essential ministries will continue to function as they do now.

The changes proposed will not impact the issues that get highlighted or how the ministry is organized...just who gets to do it. Opening up the membership on these teams would have a big impact on our congregation and our ministry.

Ministry should be as open, inclusive, and welcoming as possible. Unelected members shouldn't need to feel like junior members in order to be involved. Making these ministries open to all will broaden support within the congregation and help us fulfill our vision and mission by being:

- More welcoming to newcomers
 - Religious education and social justice are both "gateway" issues for newcomers. By being less "closed off" these ministries would be important entry points for new members.
- Welcoming to those who identified related interests/skills in the Growth Through Service interviews. Why make them wait for the opportunity to serve?
- Better able to attract a more diverse group of people

➔ Opening these ministry teams will enable us to broaden our impact.

Bylaws & Policies

The proposed bylaws will adequately provide for the overall framework for governance and operations at Albany Unitarian Universalist.

The current bylaws include many provisions that are not necessary to this framework and would more efficiently be handled by policy. The Board of Trustees will adopt policies and compile them in a Policy Book that will be easily accessible by the congregation.

Until new policies are adopted, the Board commits to following the requirements in the current bylaws that are not specifically addressed by the proposed bylaw revisions.

Once, and whenever, new policies are developed:

- The Board will notify the congregation of all changes.
- Members are free to raise issues or concerns with Board members.

The proposed bylaws are the culmination of the governance changes we've been implementing over the past several years.

Many of our trusted leaders have been involved in the development of these changes:

Governance Working Group:

- Molly Daniels
- Jon Newell
- Peggy Sherman
- Re. Sam Trumbore

Bylaws Working Group:

- Bob Franklin
- Amie Jamieson
- Karen Kaufmann
- Peggy Sherman

Many successive boards under the tenures of three presidents:

- Peggy Sherman
- Dick Dana
- Patti Jo Newell

Please join us for congregational conversations so we can hear from you!