

**12 Questions and Comments about the Proposed Bylaws**  
Based on Congregational Conversations on January 11, 16, and 17, 2021

**1. Social Responsibilities Council and Religious Education Council**

**Q. SRC and REC are both critical to the vision and mission of Albany UU. Does removing specific reference to these councils from the bylaws indicate that they will be less important, or that their authority will be diminished?**

A. The intention of this change in direction is to better integrate the functions of social justice and religious education into the life of the congregation. Removing the election of members to these councils will open participation to more congregants in a few ways. Loosening the structure of these councils may generate more broad based participation from volunteers, with relevance to the vision and mission of the congregation, while also serving as a primary gateway for newcomers to more easily jump in and get involved. Without the three-year commitment to membership, there can be opportunity for more people to participate in a fuller range of activities, while the number of people who become engaged will be unlimited and more associated with specific initiatives. The Board, the Ministries and Operations Team (“MOT”), and the Nominating Committee can continue to support processes that recruit and cultivate leaders to step up, as they always have, in planning and facilitating the direction and momentum of the teams that form.

**Q. Currently the members of SRC and REC are elected, so council members know there is an expectation of strong member participation and members take their roles seriously. How will members of SRC and REC feel accountable if they are not elected?**

A. Our congregation has a rich tradition of attracting and cultivating strong leadership across the board, not confined to elected positions. We can look to the success of several working teams that have always operated with appointed and volunteer leadership. Our Growth Through Service program supports our work through a system of volunteer job descriptions that are linked to responsibilities and expectations. Furthermore, new members make a “pledge” that recognizes their commitment to service. And finally, our Covenant speaks to the promises we make to one another “serve our mission and vision.” The more we come together as a community in alignment with shared values and purpose, the more opportunity for leaders to emerge with enthusiasm and commitment. We will continue to operate on a platform guided by certain assumptions that members and friends are trustworthy, capable of being accountable and responsible for their decisions and actions.

**Q. If membership on the SRC and REC is more fluid, how will those groups make decisions? Could people who haven’t really participated show up at a meeting and change the direction of the group?**

A. There will continue to be a call for leaders to emerge as coordinators, organizers, facilitators, etc. As they do now, groups will establish their own agreements for how they work together, their procedures, protocols and decision making processes. Decisions that are more “run of the mill” will be made on teams as usual, through consensus or other methods of choice. Larger decisions may take more time for research and development, with the added benefit of help and support provided both through the MOT and the Board. The MOT provides the mechanism for supporting program effectiveness and alignment with our vision, while the Board provides policy where direction is needed. People coming in with fresh and innovative ideas will be a welcome dynamic of our changing system.

**Q. Currently the chairs of SRC and REC are elected. How will chairs of these groups be selected under the proposed bylaws?**

A. As noted in the answer to a previous question, during this transition period of moving into our new structure of governance, we anticipate the Board and MOT will work together to appoint leadership for the coming year (2021-22). This part of the “experiment” is expected to evolve and become more clear as plans for change are put into practice and experience helps us create the policies that will support this system of governance, and in particular, the identification of team leadership.

**Q. The current bylaws state that the SRC may issue statements of public support and endorsement. Will SRC continue to have this ability?**

A. The intention is to develop this existing bylaw into policy.

## 2. Ministries and Operations Team

**Q. The proposed bylaws state that the Board may appoint a Ministries and Operations Team, but does not state how many members the MOT will have or how the MOT will function. How will the MOT work under the new bylaws?**

A. The MOT is a committee charged by the Board to carry out the operations of the activities of the congregation based on the vision and mission provided by the congregation and the Board. The MOT is comprised of the Minister, the Director of Religious Education Family Ministries, and the Church Administrator and 4 Board appointed experienced leaders from the congregation. The MOT oversees the programming and activities of the various teams to ensure coordination of activities and alignment with vision and mission. MOT makes the day-to-day decisions regarding the functioning so that the Board can focus on the strategic and fiduciary responsibilities. The functioning of the MOT is not outlined in bylaws, but will be addressed in policy.

**Q. It sounds like the MOT has a lot of authority to make decisions for the congregation under the new governance structure. What kind of checks will we have on the MOT's activities?**

A. The MOT reports to the Board on a monthly basis regarding its activities and larger decisions that the Board will need to have awareness of. If the Board feels the MOT is not handling things as charged, they have the authority to put a hold on the work, provide guidance regarding expectations and ultimately to remove members of the team. If there were significant concerns by anyone in the congregation, they can bring them to the MOT, BOT, or Safe Congregation Team.

**Q. Given the importance of the MOT, I think it is important for the MOT's activities and decisions to be transparent. How will the congregation know what the MOT is doing?**

A. The MOT had not previously advertised its meetings to the congregation but will do so going forward. Minutes from the meetings are also kept and are available for members to review, as are the monthly reports the MOT provides to the Board. The decisions being made at this point are day to day operational ones.

**Q. Currently the MOT consists of the Minister, the Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry, the Congregation Administrator, and four Board-appointed congregation members. Right now our DRE and administrator are members, but they may not be in the future. Are you concerned about potentially having so many non-members on the MOT?**

A. The Minister, DREFM, and Administrator are appointed to the team because the bulk of programming and activities involve them. These staff positions would be a part of the MOT regardless of the status of membership with the congregation. There being 4 appointed congregational members helps round out the team and balance the perspectives and decision making.

### 3. Policies

**Q. You have mentioned that policies will govern the functioning of the MOT and the teams that will perform the functions that the SRC and REC currently accomplish. When will we be able to see those policies?**

A. The Board approved a policy drafting team that has been working on developing policies for the past few months. To accommodate the transition period before those policies are in effect, the Board has proposed a resolution stating that existing councils and committees would continue to function as they do under the existing bylaws until new policies are adopted. Those policies would be developed with input from the relevant councils and committees.

**Q. Policies are going to address important issues that will be fundamental to the functioning of Albany UU. How will policies be developed, approved, and maintained?**

A. Policies would be developed as the currently are—by the Board or a group delegated by the Board (such as an existing committee or a committee appointed specifically for the purpose of developing policies). The proposed bylaws include a provision that the Board will develop a policy on how members of the congregation will be notified of changes to the policies, and how they may access and comment on the policies. This policy will ensure transparency in regards to policy changes and allow members easy access to all policies.

**Q. Given that the Board is going to be smaller, it seems like based on the quorum requirements for the Board, only a few Board members would be required to push through big changes to policies. Will the bylaws address this issue?**

A. Yes. The Board approved a change to the proposed bylaws that would require five or more (out of a total of eight) Board members to approve new policies, or to revoke or amend existing policies.

#### **4. Specific Changes Noted**

- a. **Removal of reference to how an interim minister is called:** The provision on calling an interim minister has been reinstated in the proposed bylaws.
- b. **Removal of certain specificity, such as the minimum number of Board meetings required per year, requirements related to finances, reference to specific committees, granting responsibility for personnel matters to the Board, and the process for selecting Religious Education Director:** The bylaws committee thought that in general, the items noted as being removed from the bylaws were more appropriately set forth in policies, which can change as the needs of Albany UU change. As discussed in the congregational conversations, these specific requirements would not change unless and until the Board approves policies that changes them. However, the Board approved certain changes to the bylaws based on comments, such as specifying when the Board could enter a confidential executive session, and replacing the “Purpose” section of the bylaws with the vision and mission that were approved by the congregation.

#### **5. Timeline**

**Q. How long have the proposed bylaws been available for the congregation to review? Will there be opportunity to share thoughts outside of the three congregational conversations?**

A. The proposed Bylaws and other materials providing background and detail were distributed via email on January 4<sup>th</sup> and included in each Weekly Windows since. The three congregational conversations were scheduled for January 12<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Members are welcome to reach out with questions or comments to Patti Jo Newell, Jan McCracken, Molly Daniels, Reverend Sam Trumbore, Peggy Sherman, or Amie Jamieson.

**Q. What is the timeline for the proposed vote?**

A. It was initially thought that we would hold a special congregational meeting to discuss and vote on the proposed bylaws on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Upon hearing feedback from members in congregational conversations that more time to ask questions and receive more fleshed out answers would be helpful in reviewing the proposed bylaws, the Board is proposing we move the vote out to February 28 after the service.

**Q. If the proposed bylaws are approved, when would the changes will go into effect?**

A. The changes would be effective with the new fiscal year start in July of 2021, however if the bylaws are approved, the Nominating Committee would immediately make changes to the slate being presented to the congregation for the May Annual Meeting. The positions elected at the upcoming Annual Meeting would reflect the governance structure in the new bylaws.