



CONGREGATIONAL CONVERSATIONS

First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany

February 8, 11:30am in Community Hall

February 12, 7:00pm on Zoom

Jointly sponsored by the Board of Trustees
and the Nominating Committee

Proposed Amendments to Albany UU Bylaws

This document outlines proposed amendments to our bylaws and the rationale for the change. The Board of Trustees encourages all members to participate and vote regarding these amendments at a congregational meeting on February 15, 2026, at 11:30 a.m. in Community Hall, or online on Zoom.

This document contains two parts:

- A. Why does Albany UU need amendments to its Bylaws?
 - B. Comparison of Amendments – Current to Proposed
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Why does Albany UU need Amendments to its bylaws?

An amendment is a specific change to a bylaw, distinct from a revision, which takes a more holistic approach and may include multiple amendments.

In Article IX, Section 1 of our bylaws it states:

These bylaws may be amended or repealed, or a section or sections may be suspended for up to one year, by a two-thirds vote of the active members at a congregational meeting.

Our last search for a settled minister was more than 25 years ago. Rev. Sam Trumbore's retirement in 2023 initiated the current transition period. Since then, our congregation has been served by three interim ministers.

The proposed amendments address our need for a Ministerial Search Committee to be in place by July 1, 2026. This committee will initiate and conduct the search for a settled minister. We aspire to successfully engage a new minister by July 1, 2027.

Amending the Bylaws will address the following needs:

- a) Reduce the Ministerial Search Committee (MSC) from 9 to 7 members.
- b) Change the process for electing MSC members.
- c) Add the responsibility of the Nominating Committee to seek congregational input early in the process of forming the Ministerial Search Committee.

Reasons for the Proposed Changes:

1. Our congregation has evolved, and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has also revised its recommended procedures for ministerial searches.¹ Their current recommendations are inconsistent with our present Albany UU Bylaws, and while the proposed amendments do not fully address these inconsistencies, they do allow

¹ Current recommendations may be found in the Ministry Search Handbook, https://www.uua.org/files/2025-06/Ministry_Search_Handbook.pdf, primarily pages 106-114.

us to act on the recommendations that the Board considers most important for this congregation's upcoming ministerial search.

2. In the Bylaws, congregational involvement in selecting the Ministerial Search Committee is currently limited to voting on candidates at the end of the selection process. The Board believes that requiring early congregational education and input will create a more transparent, inclusive process and encourage diverse representation that best serves the congregation.
3. The proposed amendment reduces the size of the Ministerial Search Committee (MSC) from 9 to 7 members, and softens the requirement for alternates, addressing key concerns of effectiveness and practicality. A smaller committee can foster more efficient decision-making, enhance communication, and streamline the search process. A "right-sized" committee may also project a stronger image of trust and capability to potential ministerial candidates.
4. Under the current bylaws, members of the MSC are elected by congregational vote in a contested election, with 9 members and 3 alternates. This system can place members of the congregation in competition with one another, which (in effect) results in a popularity contest that can lead to disappointment and tension within the community. The formation of a MSC whose members have diverse life experiences and connections to the congregation is of utmost importance. Therefore, the Board recommends that the Nominating Committee create a diverse MSC that the congregation will vote on as a unified slate.

If you are interested in accessing the Albany UU Bylaws in their entirety, here is a [link](#) to the document or use this QR Code:



Albany UU Board of Trustees:

Jan McCracken (President)
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John Sherman (Secretary)
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Comparison of Current Albany UU 2021 Bylaws to Proposed Amendment to Bylaws

Current Bylaw	Proposed Amendment (for congregational vote on 2/15/26)
<p>ARTICLE VII. MINISTER AND MINISTRIES</p> <p>Section 2. Ministerial Search Committee and Call</p> <p>A. When, at a properly called congregational meeting, a simple majority of the active members of the Society resolve that it is advisable to select a Minister, the Nominating Committee shall prepare a slate of 12 candidates, broadly representative of the Society, to compose the Ministerial Search Committee.</p> <p>B. Voting for the Ministerial Search Committee shall take place at a special meeting by written ballot. Balloting shall be by the ranked choice method and the nine persons receiving the most favorable votes will compose the Ministerial Search Committee. The others will serve as first, second, and third alternates.</p> <p>C. The name of a ministerial candidate to be placed before the Society as the committee's choice must have the support of at least seven members of the committee.</p> <p>D. To be called as Minister of the Society, the candidate must receive the votes of at least 85 percent of the active members participating in a special meeting called for this purpose. The candidate shall be informed of the exact count of the vote.</p> <p>E. If the candidate fails to be elected or withdraws after selection by the committee, the Ministerial Search Committee will resume its work and present another candidate in like manner until a candidate is called to be Minister of the Society by the requisite number of votes and accepts the call.</p>	<p>ARTICLE VII. MINISTER AND MINISTRIES</p> <p>Section 2. Ministerial Search Committee and Call</p> <p>A. When, at a properly called congregational meeting, a simple majority of participating active members decide that it is advisable that the Society should call a Minister, the Nominating Committee shall be charged with forming a seven (7) member Ministerial Search Committee (MSC) that is broadly representative of the Society.</p> <p>B. The process for forming the MSC shall include seeking input from members of the Society and publicizing the nomination and election policies and procedures.</p> <p>C. The MSC shall be approved by a simple majority of active members present at a congregational meeting.</p> <p>D. Should any MSC member become unable to complete their service, the Board may approve a replacement recommended by the Nominating Committee.</p> <p>E. The MSC shall search for and recommend a candidate for Minister of the Society.</p> <p>F. To be called as Minister of the Society, the candidate must receive the votes of at least 85 percent of the active members participating in a congregational meeting called for this purpose. The candidate shall be informed of the exact count of the vote.</p> <p>G. If the candidate fails to be elected or withdraws after selection by the committee, the MSC will resume its work and present another candidate in like manner until a candidate is called to be Minister of the Society by the requisite number of votes and accepts the call.</p>

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Current Bylaw	Proposed Amendment
<p>ARTICLE IX. AMENDMENTS, SUSPENSIONS, AND RESOLUTIONS</p> <p>Section 1. Amendments and Suspensions</p> <p>These bylaws may be amended or repealed, or a section or sections may be suspended for up to one year, by a two-thirds vote of the active members at a congregational meeting.</p>	<p>ARTICLE IX. AMENDMENTS, SUSPENSIONS, AND RESOLUTIONS</p> <p>Section 1. Amendments and Suspensions</p> <p>These bylaws may be amended or repealed, or a section or sections may be suspended for up to one year, by a two-thirds vote of the active members participating in a congregational meeting.</p>