

# **Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua**

## **Board of Trustees Governance Policies**

**March 2011**

### **I. Church Purpose and Goals**

#### **Vision**

The Unitarian-Universalist Church of Nashua, New Hampshire will be a beacon of liberal religious thought and action whose members are committed to the search for truth and meaning, the acceptance of diversity, and the promotion of social justice within a supportive and caring community.

#### **Mission and Covenant**

Embracing the Purposes and Principles of Unitarian Universalism and the Vision we have chosen, as members of the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Nashua, New Hampshire, we will:

Support and respect one another in our searches for meaning, value, and personal/spiritual growth;

Join with one another in providing, nurturing, and celebrating a free religious community through common worship, shared activities, and programs for all ages;

Promote a sense of family within the congregation through mutual support and friendship, and by attending to each other's needs;

Be a positive presence for, and work to create, a more just, humane and caring society through outreach to our local community and to the wider human family.

#### **Goals**

##### **Worship & Spiritual Development**

We enable spiritual growth, for each of us and as a church community. We provide a place where new and long-time members from various religious backgrounds feel free to question their beliefs and find support in seeking their own personal insights into life's meaning and value. We encourage each member to decide what is truly important in his or her life and to make life changes accordingly.

We join with one another in providing, nurturing, and celebrating a free religious community through common worship offering both spiritual and intellectual depth, as well as through other forms and settings.

We provide a worship setting and experience consistent with Unitarian Universalist principles and values and including traditional elements such as music, readings, sharing from individual participants and a sermon. We include varieties and variations on these elements regularly, e.g. different forms and types of music and different service structures.

We offer year-round services to provide spiritual support for our members throughout the year and to make ourselves available to visitors who may be looking for a church, no matter what time of year they choose to visit.

We encourage and support smaller groups of members and friends joining together to explore areas of particular interest for spiritual and personal growth.

We promote a sense of family through mutual support, friendship, and by attending to each other's needs.

We offer opportunities for members to act on their personal spirituality to make a difference in our church community, neighborhood, and the world.

### **Religious Education**

Our religious education program uses the sources, traditions and principles of Unitarian Universalism and the world's religions to help our youth and adults develop a religious and spiritual basis for living life, with all of its joys and difficulties. We help them to think for themselves in developing their own beliefs, values, and principles.

Our students are given opportunities to develop and be appreciated for their individual interests and strengths. Diversity is valued and celebrated. Our curricula offer a variety of approaches to achieve our objectives, such as art, drama, and discussion.

Our religious education program provides "hands on" opportunities for our children to contribute to and work on community service projects. In doing so, they experience and develop values of compassion, generosity and justice.

We support and honor the contributions of Religious Education teachers and leaders. Our RE programs are successful when people participating as student and teachers both find the experience fulfilling and meaningful.

### **Congregational Fellowship**

As a caring church community, we ensure that existing and new members have the support of people who connect them to the church, to be there in good times as well as during life's challenges.

We consciously identify and contact members and friends who may be drifting away or who leave the church.

We consciously seek, welcome, and embrace visitors and new members. All church members proactively help new members feel welcome and become aware of and involved in the life of the church.

We provide opportunities for fellowship.

### **Community Involvement**

Our church maintains a strong and generous presence in our community. We define community in a large sense: as a group with whom we share common interests, whether local, state, national or international.

We build relations within our community to extend our outreach, promote our values, and live out our mission. Our church continually extends our presence into different areas of the community.

Our church makes a difference in the greater Nashua area through our beautiful and welcoming physical facilities. They host our Sunday services, provide space for numerous public and private events, and offer a meeting place to many groups in our community, especially groups who might not otherwise have a place to meet.

We support the White Wing School program to offer high quality preschool and kindergarten and the school's efforts to serve a diverse population of children from the neighborhood and greater Nashua area.

### **Denominational Presence**

We choose to be a Unitarian Universalist congregation that participates fully in both the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and in the New Hampshire-Vermont District of the UUA. We join with and mutually support other churches sharing similar and compatible principles.

We keep our congregation informed about denominational issues and activities.

Our church provides its fair share of financial support to both the UUA and the District. We send delegates and workshop leaders to activities and conferences whenever feasible.

We provide professional expenses for our staff to assist and encourage them to actively and fully participate in their respective professional groups. We encourage the leaders in our congregation to participate in the activities of the UUA and the District. In so doing, they help us to learn from the experiences of other churches and to share what we have learned.

We also seek to make and maintain connections with other Unitarian Universalist churches internationally.

Our church provides financial support for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's activities to advance social justice throughout the world.

We provide a teaching congregation to support the development of student ministers. Our church life is enriched by what they bring to our ministry.

### **Social and Environmental Justice**

Our church seeks to affirm the worth and dignity of every person, the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part, and the goal of world community with peace, justice, and liberty for all. And toward those principles:

We contribute generously both financially and by congregational involvement to programs that address critical social and economic needs in our community.

We support local coalitions and organizations which work to build a greater force for improving the lives of people in New Hampshire.

We look for causes underlying the programs we give service to by organizing forums, workshops, and other educational activities for the congregation and community. We strive to raise awareness and deepen our understanding of the underlying political, social, and economic institutional structures that give rise to critical issues in our community and world.

We speak out for our principles and provide timely responses to crises or events in our community that conflict with the values of our liberal faith.

We participate in progressive social justice actions that lead to social and economic change, stronger environment protection, and peace in our community and wider world. We welcome the progressive social justice work done by other groups, and we join with them in supporting our common causes.

We collaborate with groups which work for a stronger voice in state and national issues.

### **Environmental Responsibility and Architectural Integrity in the Maintenance of our Facility**

In all decisions regarding our physical structure and grounds, we give preference to choices that are both fiscally and environmentally responsible, taking into consideration the architectural and historical preservation of our property.

## **II. Executive Team Limitations**

The Executive Team is responsible for managing the day-to-day activities of the Church to achieve the *Church Purpose and Goals*. In so doing, the Executive Team is empowered to take whatever action it deems prudent, except for those actions specifically prohibited here.

The Executive Team shall not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision, or organizational circumstance that is either unlawful, imprudent, in violation of commonly accepted business and professional ethics, or in violation of the Unitarian Universalist *Principles and Purposes*.

**Treatment of Church Members and Visitors.** With respect to interactions with Church members and visitors, including children, the Executive Team shall not cause or allow conditions, procedures, or decisions that are unsafe, undignified, unnecessarily intrusive, or that fail to provide appropriate confidentiality or privacy.

**Treatment of Church Staff.** With respect to the treatment of paid and volunteer Church staff, the Executive Team may not cause or allow conditions that are unfair or undignified.

**Compensation and Benefits to Church Staff.** With respect to employment, compensation, and benefits to Church staff, the Executive Team shall not cause or allow jeopardy to fiscal integrity or public image.

**Financial Planning and Budgeting.** Financial planning for any fiscal year or the remaining part of any fiscal year shall not deviate materially from the *Church Purpose and Goals*, risk fiscal jeopardy, or fail to be derived from a multiyear plan.

**Financial Condition and Activities.** With respect to the actual, ongoing financial condition and activities, the Executive Team shall not cause or allow the development of fiscal jeopardy or a material deviation of actual expenditures and income from the annual budget approved by the congregation or Board priorities established in the *Church Purpose and Goals*.

**Asset Protection.** The Executive Team shall not allow the assets of the Church to be unprotected, inadequately maintained, or unnecessarily risked.

**Communication and Support to the Board.** The Executive Team shall not permit the Board to be uninformed or unsupported in its work. Accordingly, the Executive Team shall not:

Neglect to submit monitoring data required by the Board in a timely, accurate, and understandable fashion.

Fail to report in a timely manner an actual or anticipated non-compliance with any policy of the Board.

### III. Board Process

The purpose of the Board of Trustees, on behalf of the membership of the Church, is to see to it that the Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua achieves its *Church Purpose and Goals*, while avoiding unacceptable actions and situations.

**Value of Good Governance.** Because poor governance costs more than learning to govern well, the board will invest in its governance capacity by financially supporting and encouraging the individual members to participate in relevant educational opportunities with the goal of strengthening their knowledge and skills in order to achieve enriched input and deliberation.

**Governing Style.** The Board will govern with an emphasis on (1) outward vision rather than internal preoccupation, (2) encouragement of diversity in viewpoints, (3) strategic leadership more than administrative detail, (4) clear distinction of Board of Trustees and Executive Team roles, (5) collective rather than individual decisions, (6) future rather than past or present, and (7) pro-activity rather than reactivity.

**Board Job Description.** The job of the Board of Trustees is to discern the needs of the congregation and greater community and to incorporate these needs into their strategic planning, consistent with the mission of the church. Further, the Board will represent the Church membership in determining and ensuring appropriate organizational performance in alignment with the *Church Purpose and Goals* and in adherence to the *Executive Team Limitations* policies.

**Agenda Planning.** The Board will follow an annual agenda that completes re-exploration of the *Church Purpose and Goals* annually.

**Chairperson's Role.** The chairperson assures the integrity of the Board's process and represents the Board to outside parties.

**Board Committee Principles.** Board of Trustees committees, when used, will be assigned specific tasks by the Board in order to enhance and reinforce the Board's job, and will report directly back to the Board so as never to interfere with delegation from Board to Executive Team.

**Board Members' Code of Conduct.** The Board commits itself and its members to ethical, businesslike, and lawful conduct, including proper use of authority and appropriate decorum when acting as Board members. Accordingly, Board members subscribe to the following *Board Covenant*.

## Board Covenant 2010/2011

The members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua, New Hampshire, acting in the tradition of the Free Church, have entrusted us with the responsible governance of our congregation. To help us honor that trust we promise the following to one another. As fellow members of the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua, we will:

**Show respect for one another.** We will honor the dignity of our fellow Board members and respect their opinions. We will strive to assure that everyone's voice is heard and refrain from interrupting each other. We will assume the best intentions of our fellow Board members, remembering that we are working toward common goals.

**Take responsibility to express our opinions on the issues before us.** We recognize that we each have an obligation to express our views on the important matters that come to the Board. We will keep an open mind when listening to the viewpoints of others, and express our disagreements respectfully.

**Respect the dignity of Board decisions.** We may offer varying opinions in our discussions, but we will stand behind the decisions the Board has made once the decision making process has been fairly completed.

**Make efficient use of time.** We will focus on the issue on the table with minimum distractions and complete our work in a timely manner. Making efficient use of time includes timely dissemination of meeting materials; taking time to read through materials and prepare for meeting discussions, respecting established time limitations; and keeping comments pertinent and succinct.

**Conduct our business face to face.** Whenever possible, we will conduct our discussions and deliberations in person.

**Maintain a sense of the sacred.** Even as we attend to matters of business, we will remember that we are a religious community, and our purpose is to advance the mission and covenant of this Church.

**Inject fun in our work.** Though our work together is serious, we shall not take ourselves too seriously.

**Make our activities transparent to the Congregation.** We are mindful that we have been entrusted by the members of this Church to carry out the business of governance. Therefore it is our duty and obligation to participate in and encourage open, two-way communication regarding our work on their behalf.

**Keep mindful that we are part of a greater community.** We shall remember that in our deliberations we must consider the needs of our larger community and the impact of our decisions on the world outside our doors.

**This is a living document.** As such, it can be reviewed and revised by consensus at any time.

## IV. Board and Executive Team Linkage

The relationship between the Board of Trustees, which sets policy, and the Executive Team, which manages Church operation, is defined here. The Board's sole official connection to the operational organization, its achievements, and conduct is through the Executive Team.

**Unity of Control.** Only decisions of the Board acting as a body are binding on the Executive Team.

**Accountability of the Executive Team.** The Executive Team is the Board's only link to operational achievement and conduct, so all authority and accountability of Church staff, as far as the Board is concerned, is considered the authority and accountability of the Executive Team.

**Delegation to the Executive Team.** The Board will instruct the Executive Team through written policies that prescribe the *Church Purpose and Goals* to be achieved and describe organizational situations and actions to be avoided (*Executive Team Limitations*), allowing the Executive Team to use any reasonable interpretation of these policies.

**Monitoring Executive Team Performance.** Systematic and rigorous monitoring of Executive Team performance will be solely against the only expected Executive Team job outputs: organizational accomplishment of the *Church Purpose and Goals* and organizational operation within the boundaries established in the *Executive Team Limitations*. Accordingly:

- Monitoring is simply to determine the degree to which Board policies are being met.
- The Executive Board will acquire monitoring data by one or more of three methods:
  - By internal report, in which the Executive Team discloses compliance information to the Board.
  - By external report, in which an external, disinterested third party selected by the Board assesses compliance with Board policies.
  - By direct Board inspection, in which a designated member or members of the Board assess compliance with the appropriate policy criteria.

| Policy  | Method of Monitoring               |  |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| Overall Priorities to Achieve the <i>Church Purpose and Goals</i> | Internal Report                    |  |
| Worship and Spiritual Development (Goals)                         | Internal Report                    |  |
| Religious Education (Goals)                                       | Internal Report                    |  |
| Church Community and Fellowship (Goals)                           | Internal Report                    |  |
| Community Presence and Outreach (Goals)                           | Internal Report                    |  |
| Denominational Presence and Outreach (Goals)                      | Internal Report                    |  |
| Treatment of Church Members and Visitors (Limitations)            | Internal Report                    |  |
| Treatment of Church Staff (Limitations)                           | Internal Report                    |  |
| Compensation and Benefits to Church Staff (Limitations)           | Internal Report                    |  |
| Financial Planning and Budgeting (Limitations)                    | Internal Report                    |  |
| Financial Condition and Activities (Limitations)                  | Internal Report<br>External Report |  |
| Asset Protection (Limitations)                                    | Internal Report<br>External Report |  |
| Communication and Support to the Board (Limitations)              | Direct Inspection                  |  |