

About our Bylaws

- Define our mission, identity, organizational structure, and operating rules
- Current version adopted in 1954, and subsequently amended and revised.
- May only be amended by a vote of the Church (supermajority required)

Key Points in Our Bylaws

- We are congregational in structure
 - The Congregation has the final say in all matters.
 - The Congregation elects the Board of Trustees.
 - The Congregation calls the (settled) minister.
 - Only the Congregation can dismiss the minister.
- We vote on our affairs at Congregational Meetings
 - Annual meeting every June
 - Special meetings as called by the Board or by petition of members.
- We are Affiliated with the UUA and Clara Barton District
 - We pledge cooperation with the wider UU body.
- Our purpose is broadly defined
- Any person in harmony with our principles may become a member.
 - We do not discriminate, and declare ourselves to be a Welcoming Congregation.
- All adult members can vote, with a few specific exceptions for new members.
- Day to day management is delegated to the Board of Trustees.
- Minister has a free pulpit (we can't tell him or her what to preach about), and is responsible for the conduct of our services.
- Board of Trustees is responsible for managing financial affairs.
 - Is accountable to the Congregation.
- Board members have specific duties and responsibilities.
- If we dissolve, our assets are turned over to the Clara Barton District.

Bylaws Outline

- Adopted 1954 (Earlier Bylaws completely replaced.)
- Amended 1962 (Language changes due to UUA Merger)
- 1968 (Criteria for membership – Eliminated congregational approval for new members, modified voting rights clause. Meriden residency requirement removed.)
- 1978 (Numerous major revisions, Purpose clause adopted, Christian specific references removed, name changed from First Universalist Church of Meriden to Unitarian Universalist Church In Meriden.)
- 1989 (Strengthened Board member attendance requirements)
- 1991 (Restructured Board of Trustees, Changed fiscal year)
- 1999 (Standard Operating Procedures established, Role of minister clarified, District oversight of property and invested funds removed.)
- 2001 (Welcoming Congregation Clause added)
- 2008 (Voting rights clause modified, revised financial procedures, clarified who can authorize and sign contracts.)

Article I (Name and Definitions)

- Our legal name is The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden
 - Successor organization to the First Universalist Society of Meriden, and the First Universalist Church of Meriden.
- Establishes us as a Welcoming Congregation and affirms full participation in every aspect of our church without regard to race, color, gender, gender expression, physical or mental challenge, affectional or sexual orientation, age, class, or national origin.

Article II (Purpose)

- States our Purpose
 - The purpose of this Church shall be to provide for its members and their children the opportunity for study and growth in personal religion; to sponsor and provide social and educational activities for its members; to express its religious faith in service to the community and to all humankind; and to advance the cause of liberal religion and Unitarian Universalism.

Article III (Governance and Affiliation)

- Establishes the government of the church as being vested in its members
 - The members have control of ALL church affairs, subject to law.

- Establishes our affiliation with the UUA, the CBD, and pledges our cooperation with the association and district.

Article IV (Membership)

- Establishes criteria for membership
 - Any person in harmony with our purpose and is willing to cooperate in supporting our work may join.
- Who may vote
 - Active members 18 years of age or older, who have been a member for at least 30 days.
 - Some specific matters require at least 2 years of membership before voting eligibility
 - Sale of real estate
 - Purchases greater than 10% of the value of our invested funds.
 - 2/3 Majority required for such matters.
- Members may resign voluntarily by notifying the clerk.
- Membership committee and Board reviews participation annually and places those who are no longer active to inactive status.

Article V (Board of Trustees and Other Officers)

- Establishes Board of Trustees and delegates administrative affairs to the Board.
 - Nine Members
 - Moderator, Moderator Elect, Clerk, Treasurer
 - Finance Chair, Property Chair
 - 3 Members At Large
- Board has the power to act on behalf of the congregation, except for specific exceptions:
 - Actions reserved by the Bylaws to the Congregation itself.
 - Sale of Real Estate
 - Withdrawals of invested funds, except as authorized in the approved budget.
- The Board is responsible for managing property belonging to the church
- The Board has control of investment decisions, unless otherwise directed by the Congregation.
- The Board must keep accurate financial records, and make annual reports to the Congregation.
- The Minister, Collector, and Assistant Treasurer are officers of the church, but not members of the Board.
- Board members are elected by the congregation for two-year terms.
 - Moderator Elect serves for 1 year and becomes the new Moderator.
 - Terms are staggered so as not to replace the entire Board at once.
 - Service on the Board is limited to six consecutive years.
- Other than the Minister, no office may be held by a non-member.
- Vacancies, other than Moderator or Moderator Elect are filled by the Board until the next annual meeting.
 - If Moderator position becomes vacant, Moderator Elect becomes Moderator.

- If Moderator Elect position becomes vacant, a congregational meeting is called (within 60 days) to elect a new Moderator Elect.
- The Board must hold regular meetings (at least 4 per year)
 - Five members make a quorum.
 - Special meetings may be called by the Moderator
 - If 3 Members of the Board request a meeting, one MUST be called by the Moderator.
 - Board members must be notified at least 3 days in advance of any special meeting.
- Board members who miss three consecutive meetings are automatically removed.
- Fiscal Year for the Church is July 1st to June 30th.

Article VI (Duties of Officers)

- Moderator
 - Presides at all meetings of the Church and the Board.
 - Appoints all committees (except those established in the Bylaws)
 - Board has the right to approve or disapprove of new committees.
 - With Moderator Elect is ex-officio member of all committees.
 - Exception: Committee on Ministry
 - Moderator and Moderator Elect have right to vote on all committees.
 - Exceptions: Personnel Committee, Minister or DRE Search Committee.
 - Moderator may not vote at Board Meetings, except to break a tie.
 - Moderator Elect acts in place of the Moderator if absent or unable to serve.
- Clerk
 - Gives notice of all meetings of the Church and the Board
 - Keeps records of proceedings of Congregational and Board Meetings
 - Keeps custody of all administrative records.
 - Keeps membership register
 - Keeps record of Board members.
- Treasurer
 - Maintains custody of funds
 - Keeps accurate records of receipts, disbursements, and bills.
 - Makes payments as authorized by the Board or designees.
 - Makes annual reports to the Church
 - Makes regular reports to the Board.
 - Is responsible for making deposits on behalf of the Church
 - Has custody of all insurance policies and property records.
 - Books must be audited once per year.

- Assistant Treasurer
 - Assists treasurer, as directed by Board.
- Collector
 - Collects payments on pledges and other offerings, and turns them over to the Treasurer.
 - Keeps records of pledges and pledge payments
 - Makes annual report to the church
 - Records must be audited once per year.
 - May be required by Board to post security bond (Church pays for this)
- Finance Chair
 - Presides over Finance Committee
 - Committee must have at least 3 members
 - Oversees funds of the Church
 - Reports investment status to Board
 - Participates in the annual canvass
 - Prepares annual budget.
- Property Trustee
 - Presides over Property Committee
 - Committee must have at least 3 members
 - In charge of maintenance and usage of church property.
- At Large Members
 - Serve as liaisons to committees, as directed by the Board as a whole.
 - Other capacities as directed by the Board.
- Minister
 - Responsible for the conduct of all Religious Services
 - Attends Board Meetings (Unless minister is the subject of discussion)
 - Member ex-officio and without vote of all committees.
 - Called by a vote of the Congregation
 - Vote of the Congregation required to dismiss
 - Settled minister must give 3 months notice before leaving, unless mutually agreed.
 - Must be in fellowship with the UUA
- Contract Execution
 - Moderator, Moderator Elect, Treasurer, and Finance Chair have authority to sign contracts and other documents as approved by the Board.
 - Sale of Real Estate or transactions over \$10,000 require two signatures and must be authorized in writing by two other Board Members.

Article VII (Standard Operating Procedures)

- Board establishes SOPs to carry out its duties.
- Must be reviewed by Board every five years
- Define all committees appointed by Board.
- Provides for auditing and nominating committees
- Establishes job descriptions of paid staff.

Article VII (Meetings of the Church)

- Annual Meeting must be held at end of each fiscal year.
 - Election of officers
 - Reports of committees
 - Transaction of other business
- Special meetings may be called by the Board.
- Special meetings must be called on petition of 10 or more voting members.
 - Only items listed in the call to meeting may be voted upon at a special meeting.
- All members must be notified by the Clerk at least 10 days prior to any meeting.
- Fifteen members are a quorum for Church meetings.

Article IX (Affiliated Organizations)

- The Board may allow organizations in harmony with our purpose to affiliate.
 - They may use our facilities
 - They are regarded as part of the Church
 - They must report their activities at each annual meeting
- If their activities are deemed detrimental to the best interest of the Church, they may be dissolved by a 2/3 vote of the Church.

Article X (Dissolution)

- If we dissolve, all of our property is turned over to the Clara Barton District.

Article XI (Amendment)

- Bylaws may be amended by Congregation
 - 2/3 vote required
 - Amendment must be stated in Call to Meeting
 - Articles II, III, X, and XI require 4/5 vote.