

**ST. JOHN'S UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH  
BY-LAWS**

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The following edition includes the amendments adopted by the Congregation at the June 1, 2008 Congregational Meeting. This supersedes the edition adopted September 17, 1967 as amended May 16, 1976, February 24, 1980, March 3, 1984, March 5, 1989, September 23, 1990, May 21, 1995, November 16, 1997, September 20, 1998, September 19, 1999, November 19, 2000, September 22, 2002, November 24, 2002 and June 1, 2003.

**ARTICLE I**

**Name**

The name of this Congregation shall be St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church.

**ARTICLE II**

**Affiliation**

This church shall be affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Heartland District.

**ARTICLE III**

**Church Property**

All properties of whatsoever nature shall be the indivisible property of the Congregation, its successors, and assigns, provided however, in the event of a dissolution or abandonment, all property shall be turned over to and become the indivisible property of the Unitarian Universalist Association and its successors, so that it may continue the purpose for which it was contributed.

**ARTICLE IV**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this Congregation is to aid in the free and progressive development of the human mind and spirit. No doctrinal or political test shall ever be made a condition of membership.

Our Mission: St. John's is committed to creating a safe and caring community, working for peace and social justice, and celebrating beliefs that respect freedom of thought.

St. John's is a Welcoming Congregation, affirming and promoting the full participation of all persons in our activities and endeavors. Eligibility for membership, hiring of staff or call of ministry shall not be limited or restricted by birth, national origin, race or color, gender, sexual or affectional orientation or preference, or physical challenge.

The members and Minister shall enjoy freedom in their religious beliefs and utterances save that they are never to indicate expressly or by implication that they speak for the Congregation unless the Congregation has, in a Congregational Meeting, given them the authority to do so.

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**ARTICLE V**

**Written Communication**

**Section 1. Communication from the Church:**

Official notices from the Church may be sent electronically and/or via standard U.S. mail ensuring that all members are notified. Notices may include, but are not limited to: notice of annual congregational meetings, notice of special congregational meetings and other official business of the church.

**Section 2. Communication to the Church:**

Official communication to the Church may be transmitted in either electronic format or via standard U.S. mail. Official communication may include, but is not limited to: notification of termination of membership or other official business with the church.

**ARTICLE VI**

**Membership**

St. John's has three types of members Full, Youth, and Inactive as outlined in the following sections.

**Section 1. Full Membership:**

a. Conditions of Full Membership:

Any person who (1) signs a Pledge of Membership, as set forth below, and who has (2) reached the age of sixteen, becomes a member by signing and (3) signs the Membership Register in the presence of the Minister or the chairperson of the Membership Committee, and one member of the Board of Trustees (hereafter referred to as the Board) shall become a Full Member.

b. Pledge of Membership:

The Pledge of Membership reads as follows: "I am in accord with the purpose of this church and its guarantee of religious freedom to its Minister and members. I pledge myself, as far as possible, to contribute my time and talents and money to the support of the church and to share in its work. I understand that responsible financial support for church programs and denominational affiliation is an expectation of membership. I wish to become a member of St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church." The purpose (Article IV) shall be on the Pledge of Membership.

c. Privileges of Full Membership:

Full members acquire the right to vote in the Annual Meeting and Special Congregational Meetings 90 days following the signing of the membership register. Eligibility for serving in elected positions is also acquired 90 days following the signing the membership register.

**Section 2. Youth Membership:**

a. Conditions of Youth Membership:

Any youth who has reached the age of twelve and has not reached the age of sixteen and who has completed the Coming of Age Program shall become a youth member of the church by

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signing the Youth Membership Register in the presence of the Minister or the chairperson of the Membership Committee and a member of the Board.

b. Status:

The youth membership status recognizes the individual as having taken the first step toward Full adult membership in the church. Youth membership does not entitle the individual to the privilege of voting in Congregational Meetings and elections although youth members are encouraged to participate in Congregational Meetings.

c. Transition and Termination of Youth Membership:

At age sixteen, a youth member will be eligible to join the church as an adult member as elsewhere provided in this section. A youth member may resign from youth membership by notifying the Board in writing. Receipt of such a notice will be acknowledged by the Secretary of the Board in writing. No youth member shall be dropped from youth membership prior to age sixteen except after written notice of resignation.

### **Section 3. Inactive Membership:**

a. Inactivity:

In the event that the church records do not show any activity in the church by a member for a one-year period (as shown by the absence of any participation in the church or any contribution of time or talents or money to the support of the church), this member shall be contacted by the Membership Committee and asked if he or she would like to be placed on the list of "Inactive Members." If so, the member's name shall be transferred to the list of "Inactive Members." If not, the member's name shall be retained on the list of "Active Members." If, however, the member remains inactive for another year, the Board of Trustees shall then transfer her/his name to the list of "Inactive Members". The Secretary of the Board of Trustees shall then notify this person of this action in writing by ordinary mail.

b. Conditions of Inactive Membership:

An inactive member will not be shown on the lists or statistics of membership and will not be a voting member at Annual or Special Congregational meetings and may not serve in elected positions.

c. Reactivation of Membership:

Transfer to the list of active members will occur if the inactive member notifies the Membership Committee in writing of this wish to become active and renews a pledge to contribute, as far as possible, of time, talents and money to the support of this church and to share in its work. The member shall acquire the privilege of voting and the ability to run for elected positions on the ninetieth (90) day following receipt of the notice of intent to become active.

d. Suspension after Disruptive or Threatening Behavior:

The Committee on Achieving Congregational Harmony (COACH) may recommend that the Board suspend from active membership an individual whose behavior seriously threatens the community. The Minister and Board President may jointly refer an individual to the Committee, or either one may do so in conjunction with another Member of the Board. Unless overruled at a Congregational Meeting, the Board may suspend an individual from active membership and all St. John's activities and presence on church property for up to three years and identify pre-conditions for reinstatement. The individual may apply in writing to the Board President for reinstatement at the end of the suspension period. The Board President refers the application

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to, COACH, which reviews adherence to pre-conditions for reinstatement. As a part of this review process, personally affected members of the community will be given an opportunity to appear before COACH to discuss information relevant to the applicant's adherence to pre-conditions. If, in the view of COACH, all pre-conditions have been met, reinstatement will be recommended to the Board of Trustees.

**Section 4. Termination of Membership:**

No member shall be dropped from the membership in the church except after receipt of written notice of resignation or after the member's death.

**ARTICLE VII**

**Congregational Meetings**

**Section 1. Annual Meetings**

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation shall be held on a Sunday between May 1 and June 15 to be set by the Board of Trustees. The Board shall notify all members of the Congregation at least thirty (30) days in advance of the date set. At least 10 days prior to the annual meeting, the proposed budget and information on any other substantive matter to be voted upon must be made available in writing to the members.

**Section 2. Special Meetings**

a. Called by the President

Special meetings of the Congregation may be called by the President with the approval of the Executive Committee.

b. Called by Special Request

Special meetings of the Congregation must be called by the President upon written request of ten (10) or more members addressed to the Executive Committee of the Board.

c. Method of Calling and Agenda

Members shall be notified of special meetings at least ten (10) days prior to the date of the meeting. Notices of the meeting shall state clearly the agenda of items to be considered. Only items on the agenda may be considered at special meetings.

**Section 3. Quorum**

Fifty-one (51) members shall constitute a quorum at the Annual and all other Congregational Meetings. Members shall sign the register and such signatures shall be checked against the membership rolls. There shall be provision for absentee voting at either the Annual or a special Congregational Meeting as outlined in Article XI, Section 5.

**ARTICLE VIII**

**Church Year**

The Church Fiscal Year shall begin on **July 1** of each year, and end on **June 30** of each year.

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**ARTICLE IX**

**Trustees, Church Officers, and Councils**

**Section 1. Board of Trustees**

There shall be a Board of Trustees (hereafter referred to as the Board) composed of nine (9) members with the following positions: President, Vice-President, Director of Mission Council, Director of Property Council, Director of Community Council, Director of Religious Development Council, Director of Administrative Council, Director of Finance Council and Secretary of the Board.

**Section 2. Terms of Office**

With the exception of the President and Vice President, each member of the Board shall be elected for a two-year term. A new Vice President is elected each year and will fill the office of President after one year. The other Board members shall be elected by position as follows: Director of Mission Council, Director of Property Council, Secretary of the Board, and Director of Community Council will be chosen in elections held in even numbered years. The Director of Religious Development Council, Director of Finance Council and the Director of Administrative Council will be chosen in elections held in odd numbered years.

The terms of office will begin on the first day of the church fiscal year. No member of the Board of Trustees may serve more than five (5) consecutive years on the Board. If any member is absent from three (3) meetings during any twelve-month period, the remaining members may declare that office vacant.

**Section 3. Election of Members of the Board:**

The election of members to the Board shall be held on the day of the Annual Meeting of the Congregation. All candidates for positions on the Board must be voting members of the Congregation. No person who is an employee of St. John's or who provides contracted services in exchange for a fee or other consideration shall be eligible to serve.

**Section 4. Powers and Duties of the Board:**

On behalf of the Congregation, the Board is responsible for policy development and compliance, and the administrative management of the real and personal property of the church, its business affairs, and all contracts. The Board shall keep the Congregation informed of its decisions and activities.

Through its President, the Board shall call special Congregational Meetings as needed. At the Annual Meeting of the Congregation, the Board shall present a budget in itemized form for the Congregation's approval. Neither the Board, nor its officers, shall incur any further financial obligation(s) totaling in excess of two percent (2%) of the total operating budget most recently approved during the fiscal year without specific authorization at a called Congregational Meeting.

**Section 5. Meetings:**

The Board shall meet at least once a month. A majority of the members constitutes a quorum.

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## Section 6. Powers and Duties of the Officers:

- a. The President is the chief administrator of the Congregation and shall preside at all meetings of the Congregation and all meetings of the Board. The President will work with the Minister to coordinate relations with the staff.
- b. The Vice-President assists the President in the execution of his or her duties, facilitates inter-council functioning, monitors task force development and assumes the duties of the President when the President is unavailable.
- c. The Secretary of the Board has responsibility for all non-financial records of the church and keeps accurate minutes of all meetings of the Congregation and the Board.
- d. The Director of Finance Council is in charge of developing and administering the financial program of the church. The Director of Finance Council, working with a Board appointed ~~bonded~~ Treasurer, supervises the expenditure of church monies and provides for the written accounting of all the financial transactions of the church. The Director of Finance Council keeps informed of the financial condition of the church, reports to the Board and the Congregation, and prepares financial forecasts as required.
- e. The Executive Committee is composed of the President, Vice President, Secretary of the Board, Director of the Finance Council and the minister.
- f. Council Directors are responsible for organizing and administering the work of their respective Council as provided in Section 7.
- g. In addition to exercising the powers and duties set forth, each officer shall have those powers and duties assigned to them by the Board.

## Section 7. The Councils:

There are six Councils organized to assist the Board in the administration of church affairs. A Director leads each Council. The Councils are composed of committee chairs and individuals with special tasks. Each Council Director serves as the liaison to the Board for activities, issues and concerns of the associated committees and volunteers.

- a. The Administrative Council coordinates administrative functions of the church including, but not limited to, office support, office purchases, office technology, newsletter production, building rentals and church directory.
- b. The Community Council supports and encourages a strong sense of community within the congregation through its coordination of social groups and committees that bring members and friends of the church together.
- c. The Finance Council is responsible for all matters concerning church finances.
- d. The Mission Council supports and encourages church relationships beyond its doors through social witness and action. This Council is also responsible for facilitating the church's involvement in denominational affairs.
- e. The Property Council is responsible for coordinating matters concerning church property, including maintenance, improvements and aesthetics.
- f. The Religious Development Council works with the Minister to coordinate, Sunday morning experience and activities related to religious education and musical programming.

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**Section 8. Committees and Individuals Reporting to Councils:**

The Board authorizes operating committees and assigns them to a Council. The Board may also create positions to be held by individuals who report to a Council Director. These individuals perform specific tasks that are best handled by one person. The Board may appoint other committees, and all committees shall report to the Board through their respective Council Director.

**Section 9. Committee on Ministry:**

There shall be a Committee on Ministry with six members, three recommended by the Minister subject to Board approval and three recommended by the Board subject to the Minister's approval.

**Section 10. Fund Trustees:**

The Fund Trustees shall consist of the following six (6) members: the Director of Finance Council, the Director of Property Council, and four Fund Trustees elected by the congregation, two elected each year. The elected Fund Trustees shall be Full members of the congregation, may not be members of the Board, and shall serve for two-year terms. Fund Trustees may not serve more than three consecutive full terms.

The Fund Trustees shall serve as trustees of all endowment and other special funds authorized by the Congregation or the Board. Four (4) of the six (6) Trustees must consent to all decisions made with respect to funds under their trusteeship. They shall abide by separate guidelines established by the Board or Congregation for each of the funds.

**Section 11. Vacancies:**

If the position of the President becomes vacant, it shall be filled by the Vice-President for the remainder of the year and for the subsequent year. When vacancies occur on the Board, other than for the Presidency, or among the Fund Trustees, the Nominating Committee shall recommend a replacement to the Board. If the Board disapproves the replacement, the Nominating Committee shall continue to suggest alternate replacements until the Board approves one. All replacements must meet the requirements for being elected to the position. Replacements will serve only for the duration of the church fiscal year, and the Congregation will elect a permanent replacement to serve any unexpired time in the vacant position.

**Section 12. Financial Audit:**

The board will arrange for an audit or review of the church's accounting records in even numbered fiscal years by an independent, outside professional and will report the results to the Congregation.

**ARTICLE X**

**Special Committees Reporting to the Congregation**

**Section 1. Nominating Committee:**

There shall be a standing Nominating Committee consisting of the Vice-President *ex officio* and four members of the Congregation serving staggered two year terms with two elected each year from a slate of at least two candidates on the day of the Annual Congregational Meeting. The Vice-President shall convene the first meeting of the Nominating Committee, at which time the committee will select its chairperson.

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The primary duties of the Nominating Committee are to nominate candidates for elected offices and to administer the elections.

### **Section 2. Ministerial Search Committee:**

Whenever it becomes necessary to select a new Minister, a ministerial search committee shall be elected by the Congregation to conduct the search. The plan prepared by the Board for selection of the Minister shall specify the size and responsibilities of this committee.

### **Section 3. Other Committees:**

From time to time, the Congregation may create and elect other committees to perform special tasks that the Congregation deems to be necessary.

## **ARTICLE XI**

### **Rules Governing the Conduct of Elections**

#### **Section 1. Time of Elections:**

The election of members to the Board of Trustees, The Fund Trustees, and the Nominating Committee shall occur on the day of the Annual Meeting of the Congregation, and balloting shall end at the start of that meeting.

#### **Section 2. Nominations:**

At least ten weeks prior to the elections, the Nominating Committee publishes a list of positions be voted on and instructions on how individuals may request nomination for these position. The Nominating Committee shall then actively recruit and nominate one or more suitable and willing candidates for each open position. In addition to nominations made by the committee, individuals who wish to run for a specific office may also nominate themselves by submitting a written statement to the chairperson of the Nominating Committee before the nomination deadline. This statement must be signed by five members of the Congregation. The deadline for all nominations is five weeks prior to the election. All candidates must be Full members (see Article VI, Section 1) of the Congregation. Members of the Nominating Committee, other than the Vice President who serves ex-officio, may not be candidates for office (including membership on the Nominating Committee) in the elections for which they nominate candidates.

#### **Section 3. Publishing the list of Candidates:**

The Nominating Committee posts the list of candidates for all offices in a public place at least four weeks prior to the election. In addition, the Nominating Committee shall publish the list of candidates in the church newsletter as soon as possible after the close of nominations to inform the Congregation about the candidates, their backgrounds, and their reasons for seeking the office.

#### **Section 4. Administering the Election:**

The Nominating Committee is responsible for preparing ballots, administering the balloting, counting the ballots, and publishing the results. The candidate receiving the most votes for a given office will be the winner of the election for that office. If there is a tie vote for a Nominating Committee member, all such tied members shall be elected to the committee, and the committee shall be expanded for that year in order to accommodate the larger membership. If there is a tie for any Board or Fund Trustee position, the Nominating Committee administers a run-off election within three weeks among those tied for the position. The results of the election

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shall be announced to the Congregational Meeting before it ends unless a majority of the members attending the meeting vote to postpone the announcement of the election results.

**Section 5. Absentee Ballots:**

Absentee ballots shall be issued to voting members of the Congregation on request. This request may be made at any time prior to the last Friday preceding the election. The procedure for casting absentee ballots will be as follows: the completed ballot, or a reasonable facsimile thereof, shall be sealed in a blank envelope. This blank envelope shall be accompanied by a slip signed by the voter. Both shall be put in a second envelope which may be mailed or handed to any member of the Nominating Committee. Signatures shall be checked off against the membership list. All absentee ballots must arrive at St. John's in time for the sealed envelope (separated from the voter's signature) to be placed in the ballot box along with the votes cast on the day of the election.

**ARTICLE XII**

**Parliamentary Authority**

**Parliamentary Procedures**

Business sessions of the Board of Trustees and all congregational meetings are to be conducted as expeditiously and informally as possible. Whenever parliamentary authority is necessary, the meeting shall be conducted pursuant to Robert's Rules of Order, Revised. The President may appoint a member to serve as parliamentarian for any meeting of the Board or Congregation.

**ARTICLE XIII**

**Minister**

**Section 1. Method of Selection:**

When the selection of a minister becomes necessary, the Board of Trustees will take a plan of selection to the Congregation for approval.

**Section 2. Eligibility of Candidate:**

No candidate shall be called unless he or she is an ordained Minister in fellowship (preliminary or final) with the Unitarian Universalist Association.

**Section 3 Election of Minister:**

The Minister shall be elected by an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members present and voting at a Congregational Meeting called for that purpose.

**Section 4. Employment of Minister:**

Terms of employment of the Minister are determined by mutual consent between the Board of Trustees and the Minister.

**Section 5. Salary of Minister:**

The Minister's compensation, determined by the Board after consultation between the Minister and Budget and Finance Committee, is subject to ratification by the Congregation in the annual budget.

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**Section 6. Worship:**

The Minister shall have primary responsibility for the religious meetings of the Congregation and its spiritual interests and activities. The responsibility will be shared with the Congregation through the appropriate committees and staff.

**Section 7. Membership on Committees:**

The Minister is an ex-officio, but nonvoting, member of each Council, committee and task force in the Congregation with the exception of the Nominating Committees, the Ministerial Search Committee, COACH, and the Fund Trustees.

**ARTICLE XIV**

**Ministry Review**

The purpose of the review is to determine the health of the congregation and the effectiveness of the lay and professional ministry of the church. The Board of Trustees shall ensure that evaluation data is collected from the congregation (or a representative sample), summarized, and published or posted every even year. The Board will provide advance notice to the congregation identifying those responsible for collecting data, the evaluation timetable, and how members may participate if a representative sample is used.

**ARTICLE XV**

**Amendments**

**Section 1. Effective Date:**

These by-laws shall go into effect immediately upon their adoption and shall not be altered except by a 2/3 vote of those present at a meeting of the Congregation.

**Section 2. Amendments:**

- a. Initiated by the Board of Trustees.

Amendments initiated by the Board or by a committee thereof, shall be voted upon by the Congregation not sooner than ten (10) days nor more than ninety (90) days after formal approval by the Board.

- b. Initiated by Members of the Congregation.

Amendments, initiated by individual members of the Congregation, must be submitted in writing to the Board, signed by not less than twenty-five (25) members in good standing, and notice given to members in writing. Such notice may be made in the church newsletter. Such amendments shall be finally acted upon by the Congregation within 180 days, but not sooner than ninety (90) days after the notice has been given.

**Section 3. Method of Notification:**

Written copies of proposed by-law amendments to be submitted to the Congregation for vote of approval shall be made available to members at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting of the Congregation at which the vote shall be taken.