

By-Laws and Constitution

of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association

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PREAMBLE

To enhance our ministerial skills, effectiveness, and leadership, we, the ministers of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), do provide and maintain the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, which in this document shall hereinafter be called the UUMA.

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ARTICLE I - FUNCTIONS AND PURPOSES

The functions and purposes of the UUMA shall be:

Section 1: To support and promote the Unitarian Universalist movement, its societies and agencies, and its Association.

Section 2: To assist ministers, congregations, agencies, and the denomination in interpreting the ministry.

Section 3: To improve the professional capabilities and skills of the ministers in the UUMA.

Section 4: To assist the UUA and other denominational agencies in efforts relating to the ministry.

Section 5: To aid ministers through chapters and support groups to feel an important tie to colleagues, a sense of commitment to one another, and a concern for the professional rights of the ministry.

Section 6: To promote the professional rights of UUMA members and to protect these rights against any violation.

Section 7: To maintain a Code of Professional Practice and to support that Code through provisions for handling grievances, censuring violators, and sanctioning offending parties.

Section 8: To covenant together to abide by the sanctions duly arrived at through the accepted procedures of the UUMA.

Section 9: To defend the tradition of freedom in all church, denominational, and ministerial relations, tempered only by our obligations to one another as colleagues and the standards set forth in the Code of Professional Practice.

ARTICLE II - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Voting membership shall be restricted to members who meet the following standards:

A. **ACTIVE:** All Unitarian Universalist ministers granted fellowship by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the UUA; and such other ministers serving Unitarian Universalist institutions, who meet our generally accepted academic and other standards. All applicants not in ministerial fellowship with the UUA shall apply under such procedures as the Executive Committee may provide.

B. **LIFE:** UUMA members who retire from the active ministry as defined by the UUA Ministerial Fellowship Committee shall be granted life membership. Dues payments shall be optional for life members. In case of any question about life membership status, the decision of the Executive Board shall be final.

Section 2: **ASSOCIATE** members have all the privileges and responsibilities of membership except voting. No person in active membership shall be involuntarily moved to associate status except as provided by these bylaws. Associate membership shall be restricted to:

A. Ministers whose primary fellowship is not with the UUA.

B. Other ministers as determined by the UUMA Executive Committee.

C: **ASSOCIATE LIFE:** UUMA - Associate Members who retire from the active ministry may be granted Associate Life membership upon application verifying their retired status. Dues payments shall be optional for Associate Life members. Associate Life members shall retain all the rights of Associate Members. In case of any question about Associate Life membership

status, the decision of the Executive Committee shall be final.

Section 3: STUDENTS who have attained Candidate status with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee shall be eligible for Candidate membership. Such membership shall be non-voting and include such privileges as the Executive Committee may determine, but shall include the right to attend UUMA meetings and to be covered by the provisions of the Code of Professional Practice.

Section 4: HONORARY members shall be elected at a UUMA meeting upon nomination by the Executive Committee. Such members shall not be obligated for dues, shall have no vote, and shall be allowed such privileges as the UUMA shall determine.

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION, OBLIGATION, AND REMOVAL

Section 1: Membership applications shall be considered in the categories listed in Article II under the following provisions:

- A. The applicant shall apply for membership to the Administrator in writing.
- B. Any applicant for voting membership shall be in ministerial fellowship with the UUA, or submit such documents as the Executive Committee may require.
- C. Applicants for any category of non-voting membership should so indicate and submit such documentation as the Executive Committee may require.

Section 2: All applications for any category of membership, or change of category, shall come before the Executive Committee at its next meeting. Each applicant shall be informed of the decision made. Any applicant denied membership may appeal for reconsideration to the Executive Committee and/or the next UUMA meeting through a notice filed with the Secretary of the UUMA. Action by a UUMA meeting shall be final. All those approved for membership shall have their names posted through the UUMA newsletter.

Section 3: The acceptance of membership in the UUMA entails agreement by the member to abide by the UUMA's Constitution and Bylaws and Code of Professional Practice.

Section 4: A member may be removed from membership or changed to non-voting category in the UUMA when:

- A. The member resigns from ministerial fellowship in the UUA.
- B. The member is removed from ministerial fellowship in the UUA and the decision is upheld if appealed.
- C. The member is not serving as minister to a Unitarian Universalist institution; or is not active as a minister, as the Executive Committee may determine.
- D. The member commits a gross violation of ethical or professional conduct.

Section 5: In any case where a change of status is not initiated by the member, the Executive Committee shall notify the member of the proposed change at least 30 days prior to its meeting. The member may then make response in writing.

Section 6: After any change in a member's status by the Executive Committee, notification shall be sent by the President. A member always has the right to appeal to the next membership meeting of the UUMA. An appeal may also be heard by the Executive Committee. When an appeal is heard by the Executive Committee, the member shall be offered reasonable expenses to attend the meeting. If the

member attends such meeting and the appeal is denied, then the member may make a final appeal to the next meeting of the UUMA. In such cases the action of the Executive Committee shall stand until and unless overturned by the UUMA. All appeals regarding membership must be filed within 30 days after the notification of the action by certified mail.

ARTICLE IV - FUNDS AND DUES

Section 1: The major costs of operating the UUMA shall be met by the dues and contributions of members. No monies shall be accepted as a loan or contribution from the UUA in order to meet the regular operating expenses of the UUMA. Special funds and budget categories may be established from time to time as the Executive Committee or any meeting of the UUMA may determine. Any final decision on the creation or abolishment of special funds shall be lodged with the membership meeting of the UUMA.

Section 2: The Executive Committee shall submit to each membership meeting a recommended budget for the current fiscal year, together with an income and dues schedule necessary to maintain it. The budget and membership dues schedule for each category of membership shall be adopted at the membership meeting.

Section 3: Dues are payable on September 15 and are delinquent on November 15 of each year. Any delinquent membership may be terminated for non-payment provided a letter is sent to the address of record. Failure of the member to respond within 30 days shall lead to automatic membership termination without appeal. Any member suspended under this section shall be automatically reinstated if dues are paid within the fiscal year. After that period, any suspended member shall apply under the provisions for new members.

Section 4: Active members may request dues waivers. Application for waiver must be made annually to the President and include an explanation. Waivers shall be granted only for reasons of financial hardship. The President may consult with the Executive Committee in making the determination. No waiver granted by the President shall be for more than 50 percent of the active membership dues and all exceptions to this policy shall be granted only by the Executive Committee. Any dispute over the amount of dues payable shall be finally determined by the Executive Committee.

Section 5: Dues for associate members and Candidate members shall be set by the membership upon recommendation of the Executive Committee. Such dues schedule shall remain in force until changed at any membership meeting. The Executive Committee may set up such procedures for the waiver of dues for associate and student members as it deems best.

Section 6: The fiscal year of the UUMA shall be July 1 through June 30.

Section 7: The Treasurer and any other member of the UUMA shall be bonded in such amount as may be determined by the Executive Committee and the cost of said bond shall be assumed by the UUMA.

Section 8: There shall be an annual financial review and/or audit of the Treasurer's records under such provisions as the Executive Committee may decide. The cost of said action shall be borne by the Association and when filed, the audit shall be available to any voting member.

ARTICLE V - MEETINGS

Section 1: There shall be an annual membership meeting of the UUMA. It shall regularly be held at a time and at a place close to the General Assembly of the UUA.

Section 2: If at any time the UUA should vote for biennial General Assemblies, then it shall be the sense of this article that the UUMA shall automatically change its meetings to conform to the UUA's biennial policy until such time as the UUMA's members may act on necessary changes to these bylaws. The Executive Committee shall adopt any emergency procedures for the functioning of the UUMA until the next membership meeting.

Section 3: The Executive Committee may act to hold the annual meeting at a time and place apart from the UUA's General Assembly provided that the membership is notified of such action 90 days prior to the date of such meeting.

Section 4: Special meetings may be called by the Executive Committee or by a written petition signed by 20 percent of the voting members.

Section 5: Ten percent of the voting members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at all meetings of the UUMA.

Section 6: Notice of all regular and special meetings shall be mailed to all members not less than 30 days prior to the date of the meeting. In the case of special meetings of the UUMA, the call shall contain the agenda for consideration and no item not on that agenda may be considered at that special meeting.

Section 7: Except for the ballot for elective positions, no proxy (or absentee balloting) shall be allowed in the UUMA.

Section 8: Any meeting of the UUMA may exclude those who are not members in good standing.

ARTICLE VI - OFFICERS

Section 1: The officers shall be a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and six Executive Committee Members-at-Large.

Section 2: Members at large shall include portfolio-holders responsible for Professional Development; Good Offices; Communications; Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, and Multiculturalism; Chapter Visits; and Arrangements.

Section 3: The President, or a person designated by the President, shall preside at all sessions of the UUMA. The President shall be charged with the upholding of the Constitution and Bylaws, Code of Professional Practice, and general policies of the UUMA. The President shall be the chief executive officer of the UUMA and responsible for the administrative supervision of the various offices and paid employees of the UUMA. Within the policies set by the membership and Executive Committee, the President shall be responsible for the continuing operations of the UUMA.

Section 4: The Vice-President and Secretary and Treasurer shall perform the functions inherent in their titles.

Section 5: The President-Designate:

A. In every third year beginning in 1997, a President-Designate shall be elected for a one-year term. Such President-Designate shall be automatically nominated the following year for the three-year term of President. Petition candidates may run against the President-Designate or the same person when he/she is nominated the following year for President. The President-Designate shall be a voting member of the Executive Committee.

B. The President-Designate, when such office is filled, shall work closely with the President to learn the duties, functions, and current efforts of the presidency. The President shall endeavor to

keep the President-Designate informed of the ongoing work of the UUMA. The President-Designate is charged during his/her term to learn about the presidential duties, rather than to function in a separate policy role.

Section 5: In the event of a vacancy in any elective office of the UUMA, the Executive Committee shall fill the vacancy until the next regular election for that office.

ARTICLE VII - THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 1: The Board of Trustees of the UUMA shall be the same as the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall consist of the four Officers (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer), six Members-at-Large, and the President-Designate when such office is filled.

Section 2: The Executive Committee shall conduct the work of the UUMA between membership meetings. The Executive Committee shall have responsibility for carrying on the general purposes and functions of the UUMA. The Executive Committee shall meet at least three times a year. Should it meet less often, it shall ask the next membership meeting for ratification of its policy of meeting less often.

Section 3: Six members of the Executive Committee shall constitute a quorum for the conduct of business.

Section 4: The Executive Committee or any group designated by it may review decisions and policies of the Unitarian Universalist Association and its agents and make appropriate recommendations. The Executive Committee has the authority to speak for the members of the UUMA. The Executive Committee at its discretion may bring a position it has taken on a UUA decision or policy to the annual membership meeting for direct endorsement.

ARTICLE VIII - STANDING COMMITTEES

Standing Committees of the UUMA include Professional Development; Guidelines; Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, and Multiculturalism; and Ethics and Collegiality. The Executive Committee shall appoint Standing Committees. The Executive Committee may set up or abolish such temporary committees as may be necessary from time to time except for those specified in these bylaws.

ARTICLE IX - NOMINATING COMMITTEE AND ELECTIONS

Section 1: The Nominating Committee shall consist of five members, two of whom shall be elected in the same year as the President to serve for terms of three years, and three of whom shall be elected in the same year as the President-Designate to serve for terms of three years. Dating from 1995, the Nominating Committee shall choose candidates for three year terms as President, Vice President, and two portfolio-holders. Every three years, dating from 1996, the Nominating Committee shall choose candidates for three-year terms for Treasurer, and three portfolio-holders. Every three years, dating from 2000, the Nominating Committee shall choose candidates for three-year terms for Secretary, two portfolio-holders and President Designate. In the case of the Professional Development and Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, and Multiculturalism portfolio-holders, significant weight will be given to the advice of CENTER and the Committee on Ministry for Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, and Multiculturalism, respectively.

Section 2: The President shall be responsible for making sure that the Nominating Committee selects a chairperson after its election. The President shall make certain that this chairperson observes the various

bylaws relating to nominating procedures. In the case of a failure of the Nominating Committee to perform its proper functions, the President may with the consent of the Executive Committee set up an emergency procedure for nominations. Such procedure shall be ratified by the next meeting of the UUMA. If the emergency proceeding is not ratified, the UUMA meeting shall set up its own procedures for a special election.

Section 3: All nominations of the Nominating Committee shall be submitted to the President at least 90 days prior to the date of the membership meeting. At least 75 days prior to the membership meeting, the President shall submit the names of all nominees to the membership, along with the bylaw provisions for nomination by petition.

Section 4: Nominations by petitions shall be made by a signed petition of ten or more voting members. Petitions shall indicate the office sought and must be submitted to the President not less than 45 days prior to the annual meeting, along with indication by the candidate of his/her willingness to accept nomination.

Section 5: The President shall cause to be mailed to every voting member in good standing a ballot listing all candidates for each office. This ballot shall be mailed at least 30 days prior to the annual meeting. The ballot shall be prepared in such manner as to insure that votes shall be secret.

Section 6: All ballots shall be accompanied by statements and biographical information as provided by the candidates in such form as the Executive Committee may specify. All candidates are responsible for submitting the required information within one week of being requested to do so by the President. The ballot shall not indicate the method of a candidate's nomination, but any candidate may include this in his/her personal statement.

Section 7: Any absentee ballot shall be counted if it reaches the Secretary by any means prior to the opening of the membership meeting. Any person casting an absentee ballot shall be solely responsible for its safe receipt. Any voting member, who has not cast an absentee ballot, may vote in person at the membership meeting under such procedures as shall be adopted as the rules of the meeting. All balloting shall be secret.

Section 8: No ballot, however cast, shall be opened prior to the closing of the polls at the annual meeting. The Secretary shall be in charge of the ballot count along with two tellers either appointed by the President or elected, as the membership meeting shall decide. Any candidate for any office may appoint an observer to be present at the ballot count. In case of any dispute on the counting of a ballot the judgment of the Secretary and tellers shall be final.

ARTICLE X – CONCERNS, COMPLAINTS, AND GRIEVANCES

Section 1: A Code of Professional Practice and Guidelines to the UUMA shall be established and published. Such Code and Guidelines shall outline the standards and practices for the ministry as the Executive Committee or the membership shall from time to time deem relevant. All Guidelines procedures shall be reviewed at least every four years.

Section 2: Any member may raise a concern about the conduct or practice of another member as described in the UUMA Guidelines. The Guidelines describe a process for resolution of such concerns, and how a concern may become a complaint that is referred to the Committee on Ethics and Collegiality (CEC). The Executive Committee will only consider grievances about conduct or practice which have been referred to them by the CEC, and that are covered by the Code of Professional Practice. The procedures for the Executive Committee's consideration of grievances and appeals shall be determined

by the Executive Committee, and shall be published to the membership. All changes in procedures shall be publicized to the membership. The Executive Committee may appoint, usually not later than its next meeting, a committee to examine the grievance and to make recommendations. The committee's report shall then be acted upon by the Executive Committee and, unless the action of the Executive Committee is appealed to the membership, shall become the official position of the UUMA Executive Committee and binding on all members.

Section 3: An action under this process may also be initiated by the Executive Committee or the President.

Section 4: Any member against whom a grievance has been made may appeal the decision of the Executive Committee to a membership meeting. The action of the membership meeting shall be final.

ARTICLE XI - CHAPTERS

Section 1: The UUMA voting members in any geographical area may organize and apply for chapter status to the Executive Committee.

Section 2: On UUMA policy matters, the chapter shall record only the votes of active UUMA members in good standing.

Section 3: Chapter bylaws and policies shall be consistent with the bylaws and professional practices of the UUMA.

Section 4: The Executive Committee may delegate to chapters any exercise of authority which is mutually agreeable.

Section 5: Undesignated UUMA funds granted to each chapter shall be spent as the chapter determines in open meeting.

Section 6: Any action of a chapter regarding individual members may be appealed to the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE XII - AMENDMENTS

Section 1: This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at any annual meeting of the UUMA. Amendments must be submitted by the Executive Committee or by a petition of five or more members filed with the President at least 60 days prior to a UUMA meeting. The text of all proposed amendments shall accompany the call to the meeting and shall be mailed to all voting members not less than 30 days prior to the meeting. All proposed amendments shall be accompanied by the names of the sponsors or, if proposed by the Executive Committee, the names of the members voting in favor of the proposed amendment.

Section 2: A year long process shall be established for amending the UUMA Guidelines and Code of Professional Conduct. Prospective amendments must be submitted by the Executive Committee or by a petition of five or more members filed with the President at least 60 days prior to the UUMA Annual Meeting at which they will be presented. All proposed amendments shall be accompanied by the names of the sponsors or, if proposed by the Executive Committee, the names of the members voting in favor of the proposed amendment. If affirmed for study by a majority vote of the members present at this meeting, amendments will then be remanded to the Guidelines Committee for distribution with supporting materials for a year-long study consideration process by local UUMA Chapters. Prospective amendments shall then be presented by the Guidelines Committee at the next Annual Meeting of the UUMA for discussion and possible adoption following a two thirds (2/3) affirmative vote by members

present at this meeting. If, however, discussion on the floor of the Annual Meeting should result in the creation of an amendment which is substantially different from either the existing text or the proposal, that amendment shall be remanded to the Guidelines Committee and subject to the year-long study consideration process by local UUMA Chapters as outlined above.