

BOARD GOVERNANCE POLICIES

Main Line Unitarian Church

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BOARD GOVERNANCE POLICIES

Main Line Unitarian Church

The following Board of Trustee policies are guided by our shared mission statement and the eight Unitarian Universalist principles [and](#) seven values which are the grounding and guiding light for the shared ministry of our staff and congregation as a community. In keeping with the spirit of our covenantal faith, the Board has adopted its own policies that align and supplement the MLUC Bylaws and guide its work on behalf of the congregation.

1. Mission Statement

The following is the mission statement as established by congregational vote.

Together, we transform lives through love, service, and our welcoming faith.

2. Shared Ministry

Shared ministry is the understanding that the Board, Minister, Staff, lay leaders, and other volunteers work together with mutual trust and support toward a common mission, through collaboration and with willingness to participate actively in fostering vibrant congregational life. It means that all contribute to and support the ministries of the congregation.

In its work and leadership of the congregation, the Board is committed to governing in the spirit of shared ministry.

3. Board Covenant

We are committed to focusing our work on pursuing the mission of MLUC. We also covenant to:

- Advance the long-term mission and vitality of the congregation, placing collective well-being above personal or factional interests,
- Exercise responsibility in using church assets and resources,
- Encourage change and innovation in our work and in the life of the congregation,
- Make decisions inclusively and transparently,
- Uphold and implement the church's policies that safeguard the congregation's safety and programs,
- Be actively engaged in the life of the congregation,

- Embrace shared ministry and work collaboratively with each other, Staff and other leaders,
- Prepare for, attend, and participate in meetings,
- Act and use communications, in all forms, in ways that build mutual trust within the congregation and reflect and support the church's values and reputation in the broader community,
- Model Right Relations by engaging others constructively, with respect, humility, and integrity in all settings and communications,
- Use appropriate communication channels to share information, resolve misunderstandings, and provide feedback,
- Respect the confidentiality of sensitive church information and board deliberations, Speak respectfully of the Board and its decisions and with one voice to the congregation and the public, even when personally not in agreement,
- Abide by our bylaws, these Board Governance Policies and the Expectations Following Board Service Policy, applicable laws and ethical standards.

Consistent with our bylaws, the Board has adopted the following policies. The Board is solely responsible for maintaining these policies. Changes, including additions, edits, and deletions, require a majority vote of the entire Board.

4. Board Governance

Role of the Board

As stated in the Bylaws (Article 5.1), the Board acts on behalf of the congregation as the overall governing body of the Church. The Board is accountable to the mission and the membership, which assigns the Board the responsibility to provide strategic leadership in the achievement of the Church's purpose, and the authority to oversee the finances, business, property, programs, personnel and affairs of the Church.

Board Work Products

In addition to the Board requirements in the MLUC Bylaws (specifically the annual congregational meeting and budget presentation, a mission statement, strategic plan, Board policies, and an annual financial report), the Board will also produce:

- **Annual Priorities** outlining a short list of areas where MLUC will advance its work in the coming year to be shared with the congregation.

- **Annual Review** of the progress on the annual priorities to document the year's activities to be shared with the congregation.
- Annual mutual **Performance Evaluation** of the Senior Minister's and the Board's effectiveness in their respective roles.
- **Triennial Performance Review** of the Senior Minister (for settled ministers only)
- **Longer-range Plan(s)**, that define the most important results the Board intends to achieve through MLUC's ministry, updated as needed every 3 years and shared with the congregation.
- As needed, an updated Statement of the **Church's Mission**.

Board Officers

In addition to the duties defined in the MLUC Bylaws, Officers have the following responsibilities:

The President prepares the Board's agenda, facilitates, or arranges for facilitation of Board meetings.

The Vice President assists and substitutes for the President upon request and performs other tasks as assigned by the President.

The Secretary ensures the safety and accuracy of Board records, including the Board's minutes, Policies, financial and other documents. The Secretary organizes the Annual Meeting. The Secretary ensures that minutes and Board Policies are promptly made available on the Church website.

The Treasurer ensures the accuracy of the financial reports and that all appropriate financial information is updated, clear, and made available to board members on a timely basis. The Treasurer is also responsible for the annual Financial and Procedures Review (or audit) to be done on a timely basis.

Board Committees

The Board appoints committees, advisors, task forces and teams to provide the board with feedback, ideas and innovations to help the Board determine how MLUC might better live its mission. Teams and task forces may undertake specific tasks as delegated by the Board.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee assists the board in its oversight of the congregation's

finances, ensuring adherence to board policies. The Finance Committee is guided by the Finance Committee Charter. The Chair of the Finance Committee will be a member of the Board and shall be appointed annually by the Board. [Finance Committee Charter](#)

Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Committee assists the board in fostering a culture of generosity and shared financial responsibility for MLUC. The goal of the Stewardship Committee is to encourage and inspire MLUC members and friends to generously invest their financial gifts to support the church's mission and activities for today and for the future. The Stewardship Committee will coordinate the solicitation of leadership gifts, bequests and other legacy gifts, develop and execute a Stewardship Strategic Plan, and promote financial giving within the MLUC community. The Chair of the Stewardship Committee shall be appointed annually by the Board. The committee is guided by the Stewardship Committee Charter. [Stewardship Committee Charter](#)

Buildings & Grounds Committee

The Building & Grounds Committee oversees the physical assets of MLUC and seeks to ensure ongoing stewardship and care of the congregation's buildings, property, major plant equipment, appliances and furnishings. The committee makes decisions on improvements or repairs under \$5,000 and recommends the investments and priorities for improvements, repair, security, and accessibility of MLUC's building facilities, grounds, and interior over \$5,000 for Board approval. The committee is guided by the [Buildings and Grounds Committee Charter](#).

Right Relations Team

The Right Relations Team helps the congregation live into its Covenant by fostering healthy communication, constructive conflict engagement, and compassionate relationships within the community. The RRT supports congregants, staff and lay leaders in practicing covenantal behavior and helps ensure the covenant remains relevant and meaningful over time. Its ongoing role as a standing committee of the Board reflects the congregation's commitment to our covenant, at the heart of our faith and our community. This team is guided by the [Right Relations Team Charter](#).

Church Safety Committee

The Church Safety Committee works collaboratively with the staff and congregation to safeguard the physical security of the congregation, staff and visitors while on church property. The committee will assess threats, recommend preventative strategies and investments, and plan effective responses to emergencies. The team will work to help foster a culture of safety awareness in the congregation. The Church Safety Committee reports to the Board of Trustees. [Church Safety Committee Charter](#)

Church Auditor

The Church Auditor conducts an independent annual examination of the Church financial, and accounting records, controls, practices and procedures to assess the accuracy and reliability of the information and provide reasonable assurances on the stewardship of MLUC's financial assets, including the Endowment funds. All Financial and Procedure Reviews (or audits) will be led by a Certified Public Accountant to be recommended by the Finance Committee to the Board.

Church Legal Advisor

The Legal Advisor is an attorney at law and member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association who assists the board in understanding legal requirements and ensuring compliance with applicable laws as needed. (*Advisor to be selected*)

Conflicts of Interest

The Board expects its members to carry out their duties with undivided loyalty to the Church and its mission. A conflict of interest exists whenever a Board Member has interests or duties that may hinder or appear to hinder the Board Member from fulfilling this duty.

Conflicts of interest arise when a Board Member:

- Stands to gain or lose financially because of an action of the Church in which he or she has a decision-making role.
- Cannot set aside his or her personal preferences as an individual consumer of the Church's services to act on behalf of the whole Church and its mission.
- Faces any other situation that impairs or reasonably appears to impair his or her independence of judgment.
- Has a close relationship with someone who has a conflict of interest, as defined above. A close relation includes any person, corporation, or other business entity with which the Board Member has a close personal, family, or business relationship.

The Board will annually require its members to disclose in writing all existing or foreseeable conflicts of interest.

When a Board Member raises a potential conflict of interest related to a matter before the Board, the Board will determine how to respond, taking into consideration the nature of the conflict, the applicable policies and the bylaws.

5. Care and Safety of Church Community

Members and Guests

MLUC is committed to be a safe congregation in which all persons, programs and activities are protected and respected. The staff, congregation and Board must take all reasonable care to prevent harm to members, guests, program participants and other people connected to the Church, acting in ways guided by the Right Relations Covenant and by the responsibilities and expectations outlined in the [Conflict Management and Disruptive Behavior Policy](#). The board will review this policy annually and make necessary changes with Board approval and the [MLUC Safe Congregation Policies and Procedures](#).

Staff

MLUC intends to be a fair, ethical and attractive employer, to support high Staff morale and productivity, and to protect Staff members from all forms of injustice and abuse related to their employment. The MLUC Personnel Manual will serve to guide the Board and Staff and ensure employment policies comply with all applicable legal requirements. The Board and staff will review the policies annually and make any changes with Board approval. [MLUC Personnel Manual](#).

All Staff will individually and jointly direct their efforts toward the fulfillment of the Church's mission and goals, ensure compliance with the bylaws, Board Policies, and applicable laws and regulations, uphold a high standard of ethical and professional conduct and work to accomplish the goals contained in the Annual Priorities by developing annual goals for its work as a team.

Board Members

Board members are expected to uphold the Right Relations Covenant and the Conflict Management and Disruptive Behavior Policy in all Board and committee settings and communications. Disruptive behavior among Board members is addressed within the Board of Trustees through these escalating levels of response.

- Level 1 – Direct Conversation
Board members will first proactively seek to resolve concerns through direct, in-person, respectful conversation, making multiple good-faith efforts before moving to the next level. Because Board members hold fiduciary and leadership responsibilities, patterns of disruptive or covenant-breaking behavior may move more quickly to Levels 2 and 3 than for general congregants.
- Level 2 – President Warning and Meeting Management
If behavior that conflicts with the Board, staff or church covenant escalates or

disrupts the Board's work or relationships, the President (or designee) shall issue a clear warning that the behavior is not in line with the covenant and may call a recess, require the member to step out or leave the meeting, arrange a follow-up or facilitated conversation, and/or temporarily limit that member's Board roles (such as officer duties, committee assignments, or speaking privileges) pending further Board discussion. The Board will then confer to determine any further steps, including whether to move to Level 3.

- **Level 3 – Formal Board Action**

If the concern is severe or remains unresolved after Levels 1 and 2, the Board shall take formal action under the Disruptive Behavior policies and bylaws, which may include censure, removal from officer roles, or initiation of removal from the Board in accordance with the bylaws. Significant incidents and responses shall be documented and handled with appropriate confidentiality.

Minister

The Board of Trustees shall respond to any serious concern about the Minister's conduct that may be perceived as a breach of congregational policy or covenant, in coordination with the UUA and the UU Minister Association processes, as applicable.

6. Authority - Hiring and Expenditures

Staff hiring decisions will be made in shared ministry as follows:

- The Board will appoint a search committee to conduct the search for positions with programmatic ministry responsibility. With the search committee's recommendations, the Senior Minister will select and present a final candidate to the Board for approval.
- Before filling other Staff positions, the Senior Minister will consult with the Board and others, including the direct supervisor for the position.
- Board approval is required to hire a church member in any staff position.
- New positions require approval from the Board. The Senior Minister may create and fill temporary positions if they can be funded within established budgetary limits.
- Board approval is required to change compensation for any full-time Staff position, to make a part-time staff position a full-time position, or to change the basis on which benefits are calculated.
- Before discharging a Staff member, the Senior Minister must ensure that the decision complies with applicable laws, Board Policies, contracts, and the MLUC

Personnel Manual. Any potential termination must be brought to the Board and at an Executive Session of the Board before any action is taken.

Staff, Board and Committees will adhere to the following guidelines:

- Board approval is required for unbudgeted purchases or commitments exceeding \$5000 (including expenditures from the operating or capital reserves).
- Any expenditure exceeding \$5000 should have a minimum of three competitive bids, or where impractical to obtain bids, confirmation of competitive prices.
- The policy for disbursements from the Minister's Discretionary Fund is outlined in the
- Drawdowns from the Line of Credit require approval from the Finance Committee.
- Lending or borrowing of funds beyond a 90-day period requires Board approval.
- The MLUC Gift Acceptance Policies and Guidelines will govern any gifts or donations to MLUC. [MLUC Gift Acceptance Policies](#)

When making purchases or entering any contract, protection and/or disclosures against conflict of interest or the appearance of bias should be applied.

Staff, Board and Committees will adhere to the following guidelines on the Endowment distributions:

- All distributions from Endowment funds require Board approval. Requests for approval of distributions should be made in writing to the Board.
- Distributions from the General Endowment Fund may be made for any of the following purposes:
 - Community outreach
 - The wider mission of Unitarian Universalism
 - MLUC programming and operations
 - Capital improvements and renovations to the physical plant of MLUC, including the reduction of debt incurred in undertaking such work
- In no event shall annual distributions from the General Endowment Fund exceed an amount equal to five percent (5.0%) of the average market value of the Account on the last business day of the twelve immediately preceding calendar quarters.
- Distributions from any account that exceed the provisions and amounts set

forth above must be approved by the congregation in advance per the bylaws.

- The Board may also approve distributions in the event of an emergency; the emergency and the distribution must be addressed at the next congregational meeting.
- Distributions from the Patzau Fund and Greeley Fund must be made in strict accordance with the donors' written instructions.

The Board will consider the following operating budget guidelines:

- The Board will consider Fair Share contributions to the Unitarian Universalist Association.
- The budget should plan expenditures based on prudent projections of funds to be available.

7. Oversight

The Board's duty of care requires it to ensure that the Church's human and material resources are used for the benefit of its mission. The Board will fulfill its responsibility to oversee the finances, business, property, programs, personnel and affairs of the Church in two ways: by ongoing, collaborative discussions on the Church's activities and progress and by reviewing the reports listed below.

Minister Reports

- Monthly Reports to include progress on achieving the Annual Priorities
- Bi-Annually, a report on adherence to the MLUC Personnel Manual
- Annually, Report to the Congregation (as part of the Annual Review)
- Annually, a statement of the loss protections (reasonable steps) for the Church's intangible property, including intellectual property, electronic data, and paper files. The statement will include any changes to the Retention Policy for maintaining records and document procedures taken to backup, retain and protect key financial, personnel and church records. (Staff)

Finance Committee Reports

- Monthly, Operating Statement, Balance Sheet, and Endowment Funds Reports

- Quarterly, Treasurer's Report to be shared with the congregation
- Annually, a Three-Year Operating Statement with three years of comparable actual
- Ten Year Comp Report with 10 years of comparable income sources
- Bi-Annually, a Capital Planning Report outlining the major capital spending and anticipated plans. The report will be shared with the congregation annually.
- Annually, a Budget Proposal for vote at the Annual Congregational Meeting per the bylaws
- Annually, a Financial Review (Audit Report) prepared by the Church Auditor or designated CPA Firm and approved by the Finance Committee and Board to be shared with the congregation.

Other Reports

- Bi-Annually, a report on the Endowment Funds investments and planned participation growth strategy (Finance Committee)
- Annually, a statement confirming adequate insurance coverage for property loss, liability for injuries to others, corporate liability, personal liability of Board Members and Staff, and fidelity bonds for all personnel with access to significant funds. (Finance Committee and Auditor)
- Annually, a status report of the maintenance schedule of Church property and equipment (Buildings & Grounds Committee)

The Board will review this Policy document annually.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees: April 15, 2026