

ARTICLES OF GOVERNMENT

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First Unitarian Church
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**FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
ARTICLES OF GOVERNMENT (By-Laws)
(Revised 01/30/2010)**

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ARTICLE 1 GENERAL

Sec. 1.1 Name

The name of this Society is the Second Parish in the Town of Worcester, called the First Unitarian Church.

Sec. 1.2 Purpose

The purpose of the Parish is to maintain regular services for the worship of God in this community and to up build in the hearts of all the high ideals of a rational, progressive and exalting religion.

ARTICLE 2 MEMBERS

Sec. 2.1 Membership

Any person in sympathy with the purpose and principles of the Parish, upon nomination by the Membership Committee and approval by the Prudential Committee, may then become a member of the Parish by signing the Membership Book. The Membership Committee shall ensure that all persons nominated have an understanding of the Parish and the responsibilities of membership, according to standards adopted by the Prudential Committee from time to time.

Responsibilities of membership include maintaining current personal contact information with the church office, submitting an annual pledge card, and meeting any other standards adopted by the Prudential Committee from time to time.

Benefits of membership include use of Church facilities, participating in Parish programs, participating in annual and special meetings of the Parish, representing the Parish if elected as a delegate to regional and national meetings, and such other benefits as adopted by the Prudential Committee from time to time.

Sec. 2.2 Right to Vote

The right to vote at annual and special meetings of the Parish shall be reserved for members who have attained the age of sixteen years. The Membership Committee shall annually review the Parish membership list prior to the annual meeting. The Membership Committee shall provide a list of Members at the time of the call for the annual or a special meeting, and, if requested, shall credential members at the meeting.

Sec. 2.3 Termination of Membership

Any member may withdraw from membership by notifying the Church Office in writing.

Beginning in May, 2010, any member who fails to submit a current pledge card or current personal contact information within thirty days after a request from the Church Office may be removed from membership. If a former member submits a current pledge card and current personal contact information within six months, the membership shall be restored without nomination by the Membership Committee or approval by the Prudential Committee.

A member may be dismissed from membership by a vote of the two-thirds majority of the Prudential Committee for cause. The Prudential Committee shall make a reasonable effort to provide written notice to such members of such intended action not less than thirty days prior to such action.

Sec. 2.4 Reporting

The Membership Committee shall submit a tally of members to the Prudential Committee by January 31 annually, and at such other times as may be requested by a Minister or the Prudential Committee. The January 31 tally shall be reported to the UUA as the member count of the Parish.

ARTICLE 3 MEETINGS

Sec. 3.1 Annual Meeting

An Annual Meeting of the Parish shall be held at the Church on the fourth Monday in January at 7:30 o'clock p.m., or at such other time as the Prudential Committee shall determine, for the election of officers, assessors, members of the Lay Leadership Council, and trustees of parish funds, for the approval of the budget, and for the transaction of such other business as may come before the meeting.

Sec. 3.2 Special Meetings

Special meetings of the Parish may be called by the Prudential Committee, and shall be called by the Prudential Committee at the written request of twenty-five members entitled to vote, for such purposes only as shall be specified in the call for the meeting.

Sec. 3.3 Notice of Meeting

Notice of all annual and special meetings shall be posted on the doors of the Church at least seven days prior to each meeting, and shall be mailed to all members entitled to vote at least ten days prior to each meeting.

Sec. 3.4 Quorum

Fifty members of the Parish entitled to vote shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

ARTICLE 4 OFFICERS

Sec. 4.1 Designation

The Officers of the Parish shall be a Moderator, a Vice Moderator, a Clerk, a Treasurer, and, if elected, an Assistant Treasurer.

Sec. 4.2 Election and Term of Office

Officers shall be elected by ballot at the Annual Meeting and shall hold office for one year or until their successors are elected and qualified.

Sec. 4.3 Duties of Moderator

The Moderator shall preside at all meetings of the Parish and of the Prudential Committee, but the Moderator shall vote at such meetings only in the event of a tie. Under the direction of the Prudential Committee, the Moderator shall ensure the effective governance of the Parish, in collaboration with the Minister. The Moderator shall be an ex-officio non-voting member of all committees of the Parish. No Moderator who shall have served three years in succession shall be eligible for re-election as Moderator until the lapse of one year.

Sec. 4.4 Duties of the Vice Moderator

The Vice Moderator shall perform the duties of the Moderator in the event of the Moderator's absence or incapacity. The Vice Moderator shall chair the Personnel Committee, and shall have such other duties as the Prudential Committee shall assign from time to time. No Vice Moderator who shall have served three years in succession shall be eligible for re-election as Vice Moderator until the lapse of one year.

Sec. 4.5 Duties of Clerk

The Clerk shall keep a record of meetings of the Parish and of the Prudential Committee and give notice of annual and special meetings. The Clerk shall be sworn as provided by law.

Sec. 4.6 Duties of the Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be the chief financial officer of the Parish. The Treasurer shall collect pledges and other funds due to the Parish and shall make distributions thereof on duly authorized approval. With the assistance of the Finance Committee, the Treasurer shall prepare a proposed annual budget for review of the Prudential Committee. Upon approval by the Prudential Committee, the Treasurer shall present the proposed budget to the Parish for adoption, together with an annual report on the financial affairs of the Parish. The Treasurer shall be a member of the Finance Committee. The Treasurer shall be sworn as provided by law.

Sec. 4.7 Duties of Assistant Treasurer

The Assistant Treasurer shall perform the duties of the Treasurer in the event of the Treasurer's absence or incapacity, together with such other duties as the Prudential Committee shall assign from time to time. The Assistant Treasurer shall be a member of the Prudential Committee, but shall not vote nor count towards the quorum unless the Treasurer is absent. The Assistant Treasurer shall be sworn as provided by law.

Sec. 4.8 Vacancies

Vacancies in any office shall be filled by persons appointed by the Prudential Committee, such persons to serve until the next Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE 5 PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE

Sec. 5.1 Members

The Prudential Committee shall consist of the Officers, the Head Assessor, the Head Trustee of Parish Funds, and the chairs of the Standing Committees. The Minister, Director of Religious Education and Director of Music shall serve as ex-officio, non-voting members of the Prudential Committee.

Sec. 5.2 Duties

The property and affairs of the Parish shall be under the general direction and control of the Prudential Committee which shall exercise all the powers of the Parish except such as are required by law or by these Articles to be otherwise exercised. The meetings of the Prudential Committee shall be open to any member of the Parish unless the Prudential Committee, for good cause, shall vote to go into executive session.

Sec. 5.3 Quorum

A majority of the Prudential Committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Sec. 5.4 Vacancies

Vacancies on the Prudential Committee shall be filled by persons appointed by the Prudential Committee, such persons to serve until the next Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE 6 ASSESSORS

Sec. 6.1 Election and Term

There shall be three Assessors, chosen by ballot at the Annual Meeting for three years or for such shorter length of term as will result in the term of office of one Assessor to expire each year. The Assessor whose term is due to expire shall be Head Assessor. There is no limit on the number of consecutive terms for Assessors.

Sec. 6.2 Duties

The Board of Assessors shall raise the funds to meet the Parish budget, and shall provide the Prudential Committee with advice and recommendations respecting Parish ways and means. The Head Assessor shall be a member of the Prudential Committee and a member of the Finance Committee, and shall report annually to the Parish concerning the activities of the Board of Assessors.

ARTICLE 7 TRUSTEES OF PARISH FUNDS

Sec. 7.1 Election and Term

There shall be three Trustees of Parish Funds, chosen by ballot at the Annual Meeting for three years or for such shorter length of term as will result in the term of office of one Trustee to expire each year. The Trustee whose term is due to expire shall be the Head Trustee. Trustees may be re-elected for a second term, but after serving six years in succession shall not be eligible for re-election until after a lapse of one year.

Sec. 7.2 Duties

The Trustees of the Parish Funds shall invest and manage all permanent funds and permanent gifts to the Parish, and such other funds as may be committed to the Trustees of Parish Funds by the Prudential Committee or by the Parish. With the approval of the Prudential Committee, the Trustees of Parish Funds may employ professional investment managers. In accordance with the procedures, in Article 11, the Trustees of Parish Funds shall turn over income and other funds to the Prudential Committee for the support of the Parish or to be expended in conformity with the intent of the donors. The Head Trustee shall be a member of the Prudential Committee and the Finance Committee, and shall report annually to the Parish concerning the activities of the Trustees of Parish Funds.

ARTICLE 8 STANDING AND SERVICE COMMITTEES

Sec. 8.1 Standing Committees

The Standing Committees of the Church shall be the Building and Grounds Committee, the Finance Committee, the Personnel Committee and the Lay Leadership Council.

Sec. 8.2 Appointment and Terms

With the exception of the Lay Leadership Council (whose election and terms are detailed below in section 8.8), the chairs and members of the Standing Committees shall be appointed annually by the Prudential Committee and shall hold those positions for one year or until their successors are appointed. There shall be no limitation on the number of times that a chair or member may be reappointed.

Sec. 8.3 Duties

In addition to such tasks as may be assigned to them by the Prudential Committee from time to time, the Standing Committees shall have the following duties:

Sec. 8.4 Building and Grounds Committee

The Building and Grounds Committee shall consist of a chair and such additional members as the Prudential Committee may appoint. The Committee shall be generally responsible for the maintenance and repair of the Church buildings and grounds, including working with the Treasurer to prepare a budget each year. The Committee shall provide its recommendation for all expenditures, contracts, and personnel decisions involving the Church buildings and grounds.

Sec. 8.5 Finance Committee

The Finance Committee shall consist of a chair and another member appointed by the Prudential Committee, and the Treasurer, the Head Assessor, and the Head Trustee of Parish Funds. The Finance Committee shall advise the Treasurer concerning the proposed budget. The Finance Committee shall provide its recommendation to the Prudential Committee concerning the budget, all proposed expenditures not specifically provided in the budget as adopted by the Parish, all changes proposed from the budget as adopted by the Parish, and all proposed fund-raising activities.

Sec. 8.6 Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee shall consist of the Vice Moderator who shall be chair, the Minister, and such additional members as the Prudential Committee may appoint. The Personnel Committee shall ensure that the Church has up-to-date personnel policies and practices which provide for selection, orientation, performance expectations and review, and which help with personal growth and equitable salary administration. The Minister shall report annually to the Personnel Committee on the performance of all staff. The Chair shall collaborate with the Treasurer and the Finance Committee to prepare a personnel budget each year. The Committee shall report to the Prudential Committee not less frequently than annually.

Sec. 8.7 Lay Leadership Council

The Lay Leadership Council shall facilitate programming which responds to the educational, social, community action and community care needs of the congregation. This committee is charged with recognizing and encouraging the skills and passions of church members and finding ways to connect and give voice to them. Programs and services are to be carried out by Service Committees made up of volunteers. The Lay Leadership Council will review at least annually the accomplishments, programs and plans of the active Service Committees.

Sec. 8.8 Lay Leadership Council Election and Terms

The Lay Leadership Council shall be comprised of six members chosen by ballot at the Annual Meeting for a term of three years, or for such shorter length of term as will result in the term of office of two members to expire each year. Candidates for election shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee at least one month prior to the Annual Meeting, and may also be nominated by floor nominations at the Annual Meeting. The committee, once formed, will elect its own Chair each year. The Associate Minister shall serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Lay Leadership Council.

Sec. 8.9 Service Committees

Service committees actualize the vision and mission of the church and effect the day to day activities of the parish. Committee membership is on a volunteer basis. Committee Chairs are appointed annually by the Prudential Committee, upon the advice of the Lay Leadership Council.

Sec. 8.9(a) Music Committee

The Music Committee shall consist of a Chair and such additional members as the Prudential Committee, with the advice of the Lay Leadership Council, may appoint. The committee, working with the Director of Music, shall be generally responsible for the music program of the church, including working with the Treasurer to prepare a budget each year. The committee shall give its recommendation for all music program expenditures and contracts to the Finance Committee, and shall give its recommendation on all personnel decisions involving the church music program to the Personnel Committee.

Sec. 8.9(b) Religious Education Committee

The Religious Education Committee shall consist of a Chair and such additional members as the Prudential Committee, with the advice of the Lay Leadership Council, may appoint. The committee, working with the Director of Religious Education, shall be generally responsible for the religious education program of the Church, including working with the Treasurer to prepare a budget each year. The committee shall give its recommendation for all religious expenditures and contracts to the Finance Committee, and shall give its recommendation on all personnel decisions involving the church religious education program to the Personnel Committee.

Sec. 8.9(c) Denominational Affairs Committee

The Denominational Affairs Committee shall consist of a Chair and such additional members as the Prudential Committee, with the advice of the Lay Leadership Council, may appoint. The committee shall be generally responsible for the Parish's participation in the Unitarian Universalist Association, including distribution of information from the denomination to the parish and communicating the views of the parish to the denomination.

Sec. 8.9(d) Hospitality Committee

The Hospitality Committee shall consist of a Chair and such additional members as the Prudential Committee, with the advice of the Lay Leadership Council, may appoint. The committee shall be generally responsible for the hospitality of the Parish in connection with worship services including recruiting greeters and ushers, arranging for flowers, and fellowship following services.

Sec. 8.9(e) Human Concerns Committee

The Human Concerns Committee shall consist of a Chair and such additional members as the Prudential Committee, with the advice of the Lay Leadership Council, may appoint. The committee shall be generally responsible for organizing the congregation's participation in programs to help the needy.

Sec. 8.9(f) Membership Committee

The Membership Committee shall consist of a Chair and such additional members as the Prudential Committee, with the advice of the Lay Leadership Council, may appoint. The committee shall nominate new members for approval by the Prudential Committee, and shall be generally responsible for welcoming and arranging programs for new members. The Committee shall be generally responsible for assisting the Minister in providing services to members of the Parish who are not able to attend worship services regularly.

Sec. 8.9(g) Parish Fellowship Committee

The Parish Fellowship Committee shall consist of a Chair and such additional members as the Prudential Committee, with the advice of the Lay Leadership Council, may appoint. The committee shall be generally responsible for arranging social programs for the church.

Sec. 8.9(h) Parish Services Committee

The Parish Services Committee shall consist of a Chair and such additional members as the Prudential Committee, with the advice of the Lay Leadership Council, may appoint. The committee shall be generally responsible for providing support services to people in the church community who are in crisis and/or in need of some form of assistance.

Sec. 8.9(i) Other Committees

The Prudential Committee, upon recommendation of the Lay Leadership Council, may establish new Service Committees and retire existing Service Committees as necessary to meet the needs of the congregation.

Sec. 8.10 Reporting

The Chairs of each Standing and Service Committee shall report no less than annually to the parish concerning membership and activities in their committees.

ARTICLE 9 NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Sec. 9.1 Election and Membership

The Nominating Committee shall consist of five members, chosen by ballot at the Annual Meeting for a term of three years, or for such shorter length of term as will result in the term of office of not more than two members to expire each year. Candidates for election shall be nominated by floor nominations at least one month prior to the Annual Meeting, and may also be nominated by floor nominations at the Annual Meeting. One member shall be elected chair by the Annual Meeting. No member of the Nominating Committee who shall have served for three years in succession shall be eligible for re-election until after the lapse of one year.

Sec. 9.2 Duties

The Nominating Committee shall nominate at the Annual Meeting a full list of Officers, Assessors and Trustees of Parish Funds.

ARTICLE 10 MINISTERIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Sec. 10.1 Membership

The Ministerial Review Committee shall consist of the Moderator as chair, the Vice Moderator, and at least two previous Moderators of the Church, appointed by the Moderator.

Sec. 10.2 Duties

The Ministerial Review Committee shall annually evaluate the Minister on criteria set jointly by the Minister and the Committee the previous year. The Committee shall also annually evaluate the Associate Minister on criteria set jointly by the Associate Minister, the Minister, and the Committee the previous year. The Committee shall review the Minister's and the Associate Minister's compensation and benefits and, working with the Treasurer and the Finance Committee, shall make recommendation on compensation and benefits to the Prudential Committee for the budget each year.

ARTICLE 11 PROCEDURES AND FINANCES

Sec. 11.1 Rules

The meetings of the Parish, the Prudential Committee, the Lay leadership Council and the other committees of the Parish shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order.

Sec. 11.2 Operating Budget

The Treasurer, with the approval of the Prudential Committee, shall present an operating budget to the Annual Meeting for adoption. After adoption, the Prudential Committee, for good cause and after recommendation by the Finance Committee, may reallocate expenses within the budget, provided such changes are reported to the members of the Parish not later than the next Annual Meeting. No principal of the permanent funds of the Parish may be spent without a specific vote of the Parish at the Annual Meeting, or at a special meeting called for that purpose.

Sec. 11.3 Other Funds

The Prudential Committee, for good cause and after recommendation by the Finance Committee, may expend funds raised for capital improvements, or received as gifts or as income from gifts, in conformity with the intent of the donors.

Sec. 11.4 Expenditure of Funds by Committees

No committee shall expend or commit Parish funds other than those specifically appropriated to its use by the budget adopted by the Parish, or by the Prudential Committee within the limitations of the budget approved by the Parish.

Sec. 11.5 Audit

The financial records of the Parish shall be annually audited by an auditor appointed by the Finance Committee, with the approval of the Prudential Committee. An audit subcommittee of the Finance Committee, consisting of the chair, the member appointed by the Prudential Committee, and the Head Assessor, shall coordinate the audit.

Sec. 11.6 Employees

All employees of the Parish, except the Minister and the Associate Minister, shall be hired by the Prudential Committee on the recommendation of the appropriate Standing or Service Committees and the Minister.

ARTICLE 12 MINISTER

Sec. 12.1 Duties

The Minister shall be responsible for the worship of the Parish and its spiritual interests and affairs. Under the direction of the Prudential Committee, the Minister is responsible for the administration of the Parish including the selection, supervision, and review of all staff and the guidance and direction of the Associate Minister. The Minister is an ex-officio non-voting member of the Prudential Committee and all committees of the Parish.

Sec. 12.2 Ministerial Search Committee

In the event of the resignation, death, or dismissal of the Minister, a Ministerial Search Committee shall be chosen by ballot at a special meeting of the Parish called for such purpose. The Ministerial Search Committee shall consider possible candidates and recommend one candidate to a special meeting of the Parish.

Sec. 12.3 Call or Dismissal

Call or dismissal of the Minister shall require a two-thirds vote of those present and voting at a special meeting of the Parish called for that purpose.

Sec. 12.4 Contract

The terms of the Minister's contract shall be voted annually by the Prudential Committee. The Ministerial Review Committee shall annually review the Minister's performance, compensation and benefits and, working with the Treasurer and the Finance Committee, shall make a recommendation on compensation and benefits to the Prudential Committee for the budget each year.

Sec. 12.5 Notice of Resignation

The Minister shall give at least three months' notice of resignation. In the event of the Minister's dismissal, the Minister shall receive at least three months' notice, or a minimum of three months' salary and benefits in lieu of notice.

ARTICLE 13 ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Sec. 13.1 Duties

The Associate Minister, under the guidance and direction of the Minister, shall assist the Minister in the worship of the Parish and its spiritual interests and affairs, and in the administration of the Parish. The Associate Minister is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Lay Leadership Council.

Sec. 13.2 Ministerial Search Committee

A Ministerial Search Committee shall be chosen by ballot at a special meeting of the Parish called for such purpose. The Ministerial Search Committee shall consider possible candidates and recommend one candidate to a special meeting of the Parish.

Sec. 13.3 Call or Dismissal

Call or dismissal of the Associate Minister shall require a two-thirds vote of those present and voting at a special meeting of the Parish called for that purpose.

Sec. 13.4 Contract

The terms of the Associate Minister's contract shall be voted annually by the Prudential Committee. The Ministerial Review Committee shall annually review the Associate Minister's performance, compensation and benefits and, working with the Treasurer and Finance Committee, shall make a recommendation on compensation and benefits to the Prudential Committee for the budget each year.

Sec. 13.5 Notice of Resignation

The Associate Minister shall give at least three months' notice of resignation. In the event of the Associate Minister's dismissal, the Associate Minister shall receive at least three months' notice or a minimum of three months' salary and benefits in lieu of notice.

ARTICLE 14 AMENDMENTS

Sec. 14.1 Notice

Amendments to these Articles may be made at any duly called meeting of the Parish, provided the general character of the proposed amendments shall have been fully set forth in the call for such meeting.

Sec. 14.2 Vote

Adoption of an amendment shall require a vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting.