

**BYLAWS  
OF THE  
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL PARISH, UNITARIAN  
PETERSHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

As Adopted at the Annual Meeting, May 17, 1995  
*And as Amended, July 28, 1996, May 24, 2000 and January 16, 2002 and January 2007*

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**We, the member congregations of the  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
covenant to affirm and promote:**

**The Seven Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association**

*The inherent worth and dignity of every person;  
Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;  
Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;  
A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;  
The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations  
and in society at large;  
The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;  
Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.*

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**COVENANT**

*Our church shall be a fellowship of free minds, dedicated to the unending search for truth and to a quest for religious and ethical values.*

*Acknowledging our debt to the Judeo-Christian tradition, we unite in worship and in service to promote the universal dignity of each person, respect for freedom of belief, and the building of a better community and world according to the seven principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association.*

**VISION STATEMENT**  
*(Adopted May 23, 2001)*

*We are on a journey to welcome all those who cross our threshold. We invite everyone to walk with us regardless of national origin, race, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, or class. We endeavor to greet everyone with compassion and loving kindness. We embrace the rainbow of diversity, which is our great blessing.*

## **ARTICLE I - NAME**

The name of this church shall be First Congregational Parish, Unitarian, in Petersham.

## **ARTICLE II - PURPOSE**

Its purpose shall be to implement its covenant by maintaining a church for worship and fellowship.

## **ARTICLE III - DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION**

This Parish shall be a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

## **ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP**

Any person over thirteen years of ages who believes in the Covenant of this Church, may become a member by signing the membership book. The right to vote at Parish meetings, however, shall be limited to those members who have attained the age of seventeen in that calendar year and have been members not less than ninety days.

## **ARTICLE V - MEETINGS**

### **Section 1: Annual Meeting**

The fiscal year of the Parish shall be from January 1st to December 31st. The Annual Meeting of the Parish shall be held in January, the warrant for which shall be posted on the front door of the church building at least seven days before said meeting is to be held. Other meetings may be called at such times as the Parish Committee may designate, or upon the written request of ten (10) members. Announcements of meetings shall be made from the pulpit at least seven (7) days in advance. Twenty (20) voting members shall constitute a quorum.

### **Section 2: Elections/Appointments**

At the Annual Meeting the Moderator, Clerk, Collector and Treasurer shall be elected for three years if their terms have expired. The Standing Committees shall be Buildings and Grounds, Finance, House, Membership, Nominating, Program, Religious Education and Social Action. Terms of standing committees shall be two (2) years, except for the Parish Committee, which

shall be three (3) years. All officers and standing committees shall be elected by ballot, and all members of the Parish Committee shall be voting members of the Parish.

**Section 3: Vacancies**

In case an officer or a committee member is unable to complete the term of office, the Parish Committee shall appoint someone to fill the vacancy until the next Annual Meeting, when the Parish shall, if necessary, fill the unexpired term.

**ARTICLE VI – OFFICERS AND DUTIES**

**Section 1: Officers and Standing Committees**

The Officers and standing committees of the Parish shall consist of the following: a Moderator, a Clerk, a Collector, a Treasurer, a Parish Committee of five a Religious Education Committee, Finance Committee, Buildings and Grounds Committee, Nominating Committee, Program Committee, Membership Committee, House Committee and Social Action Committee. Other committees may be elected by the Parish or appointed by the Parish Committee as the need arises.

**Section 2: Moderator**

The Moderator shall conduct all meetings of the Parish.

**Section 3: Clerk**

The Clerk shall keep accurate records of all meetings of the Parish and a list of all its members. The Clerk shall have custody of official reports and records of the Parish except those relating to financial affairs. At the request of the Parish Committee, the Clerk shall make out warrants for meetings and see that they are posted. Any article requested by ten voting members shall be included in the warrant. The Clerk shall keep copies of all official documents.

**Section 4: Collector**

The Collector shall collect the Sunday morning offerings weekly, and at least once a month shall pay to the Treasurer the sums collected, and shall make a report to the Annual Meeting of the Parish.

**Section 5: Treasurer** is authorized, with the joint approval of the Finance and Parish Committees, to execute, deliver and receive all legal instruments relating to the Parish. The Treasurer shall work with the Finance Committee to oversee the performance of all financial responsibilities of the Parish.

### **Section 6: Parish Committee**

The Parish Committee shall be the executive committee of the church, shall have general charge of all the property of the Parish, and shall conduct its business affairs. It shall authorize by majority vote the payment of bills. It shall pass on all requests for the use of the facilities of the Parish. It shall fill any vacancies occurring in any office or committee. At its first meeting after the Annual Meeting, it shall elect a chair and a secretary. Regular meetings shall be held monthly, and other meetings at the call of the chair or at the written request of three members. The secretary shall keep full minutes of all meetings. Before the Annual Meeting the Parish Committee and the Finance Committee in consultation with the Treasurer and Chair of each committee shall prepare a budget of proposed income and expenses for the coming year. The Committee shall appoint an auditor to check the Treasurer's books between the end of the fiscal year and the date of the Annual Meeting. The auditor shall make a written report.

### **Section 7: Religious Education Committee**

The Religious Education Committee shall be responsible for the long-range objectives of liberal education in the Parish. It shall have charge of the Church School and shall supervise the Religious Education Coordinator and the teachers and decide the curriculum. The Parish Committee shall appoint the Religious Education Coordinator and the Adult Advisor to the Youth Group. The Committee shall submit a budget to the Parish Committee in time to be included in the general budget of the Parish.

### **Section 8: Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee, one of the members of which shall be the Treasurer, shall have charge of the Parish investments, and shall recommend methods of financing any project of the Parish. The committee shall receive and have custody of all income from Parish funds, of all collections, and of gifts, bequests, and legacies to the Parish, and all books and written correspondence relating to its property and financial affairs. The Finance Committee shall collect all monies due the Parish, and with the joint approval of the Parish Committee by majority vote, shall keep an accurate record of all receipts and expenditures, and before the Annual Meeting shall prepare a report for the preceding fiscal year which shall be presented, duly audited, at said meeting. A bookkeeper may be employed by the Parish Committee to executive some or all of these duties. The Committee shall pay salaries as voted at the Annual Meeting as die, and all bills approved by the Parish Committee.

### **Section 9: Buildings and Grounds Committee**

The Buildings and Grounds Committee shall have general oversight of all church buildings and grounds. It shall keep the buildings in good repair, and shall submit a budget to the Parish Committee in time to be included in the general budget of the Parish.

### **Section 10: Program Committee**

The Program Committee shall present programs on non-minister led Sundays, and other occasions when appropriate. These programs are to be meaningful and in keeping with the principles and purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

### **Section 11: Membership Committee**

The Membership Committee shall meet with all new members of the congregation. The committee shall inform new members about the financial cost of the congregation for each parish member, and shall empower and encourage new members to actively participate in church services, programs and activities with an educational component about Unitarianism. The committee, with the minister, shall receive members in Covenant with the Congregation at a church service.

### **Section 12: Reporting**

At the Annual Meeting, all committees shall submit written reports of their activities during the preceding fiscal year, these reports to be filed with the Clerk.

## **ARTICLE VII - MINISTER**

### **Section 1: Selection**

To select a new minister, the Parish Committee shall appoint an adhoc task force of three members to research options available for contract and/or settled ministries. The task force shall present one to three options from the choice of a settled ministry, and multiple choices of contract ministries, to the congregation at a congregational meeting, reporting to the meeting the pros and cons of each option. Having accomplished this responsibility, the task force shall then be dissolved. The Congregation shall by a majority vote, chose one of the subsequent options.

### **Contract Ministry:**

If the Parish approved a contract ministry, the Parish Committee shall find and contract with the ministry for a one year period. Annually, thereafter the Congregation shall vote on a renewal of the ministerial contract. A two-thirds vote shall be necessary to renew the contract.

### **Settled Ministry:**

If the Parish approved a settled ministry, the Parish Committee shall at the Annual Meeting or a special meeting, nominate a slate of five (5) voting members to constitute a Search Committee for the selection of a settled ministry. If additional nominations are made from the floor, each member

shall vote for five (5) persons, the five with the greatest number of votes constituting committee. A settled ministry of the Parish shall be chosen by 90% of those members voting at a congregational meeting called for such purpose.

Salary and benefits shall be determined by the Search Committee and the Negotiating Team and approved by the Parish at such a meeting. Quorum shall be constituted by forty (40) members. The Minister shall be in fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Association or have given written assurance of intention to become so associated in the immediate future and shall be Minister until such time as s/he or the Parish wishes to sever the connection. The Minister shall give three (three) months' notice in writing if the Minister plans to resign. The Minister may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote at a meeting called for such purpose. Quorum for such meeting is to be constituted by (forty) 40 members. The salary shall be continued for three (3) months from the date of the dismissal vote.

### **Section 2: Committee on the Ministry**

The function of the Committee on the Ministry shall be to recognize and nurture the needs of the Minister and to maintain a channel of communication between the Minister and the congregation. The Committee shall consist of one member selected by the minister, one by the Parish Committee, and one by the other two members. Members shall serve for one year and may be reappointed for no more than four consecutive terms. In consultation with the Minister, the Committee on the Ministry shall recommend to those preparing the proposed annual budget a salary and benefit package for the Minister. Annually, the committee shall review the minister's job description and terms of employment with the minister and renegotiate them if needed.

### **Section 3: Vacant Pulpit**

If the pulpit is vacant, the Parish Committee shall call a meeting of the Parish. The Parish Committee may present a slate of five (5) voting members to constitute a Search Committee, for the selection of a new Minister. If additional nominations to this committee are made from the floor, each member shall vote for five (5) persons, the five with the greatest number of votes constituting the committee.

### **Section 4: Responsibilities/Duties**

The Minister is the spiritual guide of the Parish and shall conduct worship services and s/he shall be a non-voting member of all committees of the Parish, other than the Nominating Committee, the Ministerial Committee and the Search Committee. The Minister shall make periodic reports to the Parish Committee and shall make a written report to the Annual Meeting.

## **ARTICLE VIII - DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY**

In case this Parish should go out of existence or join another denomination, all of its property whatever kind shall revert to the Unitarian Universalist Association.

## **ARTICLE IX - AMENDMENTS**

At any meeting of the Parish, these bylaws may be amended, provided that notice of the proposed changes is sent to each voting member at least three weeks prior to the meeting at which the proposed changes are to be voted.