

# Unity Church of North Easton (Unitarian Universalist)

## Bylaws

As adopted 4/30/95  
And amended 7/23/95, 3/9/1997, 6/6/2004, 2/6/2005

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## **ARTICLE I NAME & DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION**

The name of this religious congregation shall be Unity Church of North Easton (Unitarian Universalist), originally known as the Unitarian Society in North Easton. Whenever the phrase "Unity Church" is used in these bylaws or amendments it will be referring to Unity Church of North Easton (Unitarian Universalist). Unity Church shall be a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and of the Ballou Channing District (BCD) or their successors.

## **ARTICLE II PURPOSE, COVENANT AND INTENTIONS**

The purpose of Unity Church shall be:

- To provide its members with a place to unite for spiritual growth and the service of humanity,
- To uphold and extend the philosophy of liberal religion,
- To contribute to the education and vision of its members,
- To serve the social and spiritual needs of religious liberals everywhere,
- To develop an understanding of love and truth,
- To make decisions using an open and democratic process.

This is our great covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, to help one another, and to respect the interdependent web of all existence.

The intentions of Unity Church shall be:

- To make annual financial contributions equal to its full fair share as determined by the UUA and the BCD.
- To be a Welcoming Congregation as set forth in the UUA guidelines.
- To be a safe congregation as per the policy adopted by Unity Church on October 24, 2004 and any subsequent amendments thereof.

## **ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP**

### Section 3.1 Voting Members

A Voting Member of Unity Church is a person who is at least 18 years of age, is in sympathy with its purposes and program, has signed the Membership Book, and who desires to participate in and support the activities of Unity Church. Signing the Membership Book does not signify affirmation of any particular doctrine, creed, or covenant.

It is specifically understood that membership is open to all qualified persons regardless of race, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability, or economic status.

### Section 3.2 Associate Members

An Associate Member of Unity Church is a person between 12 and 17 years of age who is in sympathy with its program and purpose and who has signed the Membership Book. Associate Members may become Voting Members at the age of 18.

### Section 3.3 Non-Voting Members

Non-Voting Members are members who have not participated in the activities of Unity Church or who have not made a contribution of record within the past year. A Non-Voting Member may not vote at a meeting or serve as an elected officer or be included in the church population count. Non-Voting Members shall be asked by the Clerk at the request of the Executive Committee if they wish to continue their membership. If a clear, affirmative answer is not received, such persons will be removed from the membership rolls. A Member who has submitted a letter of termination to the Minister or Executive Committee will be removed from the membership rolls.

## **ARTICLE IV CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

### Section 4.1 Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting shall be held each year on the third or fourth Sunday in May, to be chosen by the Executive Committee. Only under extenuating circumstances may the Executive Committee change the meeting date via a 2/3 Executive Committee vote.

All Congregational Meetings shall be warned by the Clerk, or such members of the Church as the Executive Committee may name, by causing a copy of the warrant to be posted in the Church and by direct notification of such warrant to every Voting Member of the Church at least eight days, including two Sundays, before the day of holding the meeting.

The business to be transacted at an Annual Meeting shall be specified in the warrant for the meeting and will include the filling of elected positions as required, approval of a budget for the ensuing year, and transaction of any other appropriate business.

### Section 4.2 Special Meetings

Special meetings of the Church may be called by the Executive Committee, or shall be called by them upon the written request of five Voting Members of the Church. No business other than that specifically delineated on the warrant for any such Special Meeting shall be transacted at that particular meeting. Special Meetings shall be warned in the same manner as that for the Annual Meeting.

### Section 4.3 Quorum Requirements

The Annual Meeting and Special Meetings require a quorum. Fifteen percent (15%) of the Voting Members but no less than 25 Voting Members shall constitute a quorum except as outlined below:

- The quorum for a Special Meeting for the Calling of a Minister shall be 40% of the Voting Members but no less than 25 Voting Members. See Section 10.2.
- The quorum for a Special Meeting for the Release of a Minister shall be 40% of the Voting Members but no less than 25 Voting Members. See Section 10.5.

Appropriate quorums must be maintained for all votes taken at any Congregational Meeting.

### Section 4.4 Voting Requirements

A simple majority of those votes cast shall be sufficient to either approve or disapprove matters submitted for determination by vote, except for those votes taken at certain Congregational Meetings as outlined below or specified elsewhere in these Bylaws.

- At a Special Meeting for the Calling of a Minister, four-fifths (4/5) of the Voting Members present must cast an affirmative vote to approve the ministerial candidate. See Section 10.2.
- At a Congregational Meeting to Amend the Bylaws, two-thirds (2/3) of those present must cast an affirmative vote to approve the Bylaw amendment. See ARTICLE XIII.

Written ballots may be authorized for a particular vote by the Executive Committee or at the request of at least five (5) Voting Members.

Absentee ballot and proxy voting will not be allowed at any duly called Congregational Meeting of Unity Church.

## **ARTICLE V OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### Section 5.1 Composition of Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of this church shall consist of four Officers (the President, Vice President, Clerk, Treasurer), and five (5) Members At Large, each of whom have Executive Committee voting

privileges. All Executive Committee members shall be Voting Members of Unity Church. The President and Treasurer shall be bonded.

#### Section 5.2 Collector and Assistant Treasurer

Two additional Officers, a Collector and an Assistant Treasurer, will be elected each year at the Annual Meeting. The Collector and Assistant Treasurer are not on the Executive Committee and are not limited to any number of consecutive terms. The Collector and Assistant Treasurer must be Voting Members and shall be bonded.

#### Section 5.3 Executive Committee Trustee Representative

The Church Building Trustees may choose one of their own to serve as a Trustee Representative to the Executive Committee. This Trustee Representative is not limited to any number of consecutive terms. The Trustee chosen by the Trustees will act as a non-voting member of the Executive Committee.

#### Section 5.4 Duties and Responsibilities

The Executive Committee shall have general charge of the use and daily upkeep of the property of the Church, the conduct of all its business affairs, and the control of its administration, including the appointment of such committees as they may deem necessary; but no individual contract involving any expenditure of money exceeding \$1,000 shall be made without an affirmative vote of the church Voting Membership.

The Executive Committee will assign its own members to act as liaisons between the Executive Committee and all Standing and Special Committees.

#### Section 5.5 Election and Terms of Executive Committee Members

All Officers shall be elected by a plurality vote of those Voting Members present at the Annual Meeting. The term for the President, Vice President, Clerk, and Treasurer is one year. These officers may be elected up to three consecutive terms.

Members At Large will be elected by a plurality vote at the Annual Meeting to serve one three-year term. A Member At Large who has served a full three-year term shall be ineligible for re-election as a Member At Large until the expiration of one year.

All Officers, Members At Large, and the Trustee Representative will serve without compensation. No employee of Unity Church or its associated Trusts may hold elective office.

#### Section 5.6 Resignation and removal

Any Executive Committee member may resign by delivering a written resignation to the President, or, in the case of the President, to the Vice President. The Executive Committee may remove any Executive Committee member with good cause by a two-thirds (2/3) vote at a regular meeting of the Executive Committee at which a quorum is present. No one will be removed unless they have had an opportunity to address the committee prior to removal.

#### Section 5.7 Operating Procedures and Philosophy

A quorum for the Executive Committee is a majority of the Officers and Members At Large. To act on any measure before the Executive Committee requires a majority vote of the members present.

The members of the Executive Committee will endeavor to work together in a cooperative manner, keeping foremost in mind the purpose of Unity Church.

### **ARTICLE VI NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

There shall be a Nominating Committee consisting of three (3) Voting Members, each of whom will serve for a three-year term with one member to be elected annually. For each annual election, the Nominating Committee shall submit at least one (1) nominee for each opening.

- President
- Vice President

- Clerk
- Treasurer
- Any Executive Committee Members At Large Openings
- Assistant Treasurer
- Collector
- Nominating Committee
- Memorial Fund Trustees Positions if any vacancies (see ARTICLE XII)
- The Supporting Funds Trustees if any vacancies (see ARTICLE VIII)

At least 2 months (60 Days) prior to the Annual Meeting, the Nominating Committee shall solicit the congregation for the names of qualified candidates for all of the vacant positions. Members who desire to serve in a position shall apply to the Nominating Committee. The slate of nominees will be posted on the Annual Meeting Warrant. No further nominations will be accepted after the posting of the warrant. If vacancies occur during the year for any of these positions, it will be the Nominating Committee's task to make recommendations to the Executive Committee from among the eligible Voting Members for any and all replacements. The Executive Committee shall appoint a person or persons to fill any unexpired terms until the next Annual Meeting. These appointees would be eligible to serve out the term of their predecessor, and then be eligible for election to their own term.

Additional responsibilities of the Nominating Committee are defined in Section 10.1.

## **ARTICLE VII STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

### Section 7.1 Standing Committees

Standing Committees are committees that are permanently in place and exist to help organize the ongoing activities of the church. They are responsible to the Executive Committee. Members may volunteer for service, or may be invited to serve on a committee by either the committee chair, or by the Executive Committee.

Each Standing Committee shall:

- Have duties as delegated to it by the Executive Committee,
- Create a charter to be approved by the Executive Committee and abide by it once created,
- Elect a chairperson. Committee chairperson terms may last from one to three years,
- Provide annual budget recommendations to the Executive Committee,
- Meet as often as necessary, but no less than once every year,
- Submit an annual report for the annual meeting.
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Standing Committees include but are not limited to: Audit Committee, Building and Grounds Committee, Canvass Committee, Finance Committee, Membership Committee, Lifespan Religious Education Committee, Social Justice Coordinating Committee, Worship Committee, Music Committee, Safe Congregation Committee and Parish Hall Association.

### Section 7.2 Special Committees

Special Committees may be created from time to time by the Executive Committee. Alternately, any three or more Voting Members wishing to compose a new committee may petition the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will clarify the charge of the committee. Such committees shall report to the Executive Committee or to the Congregation depending on their mission.

Special Committees, once established, shall exist until the purpose for which they were formed has been accomplished. The Executive Committee shall state the purpose of the committee at the next Congregational Meeting. The Executive Committee will grant a budget if needed. At the completion of their charge, Special Committees shall submit a written report to the Executive Committee.

Examples of Special Committees may include: Committees in charge of capital projects, special task projects, Ministerial Search Committee, and Bylaws Committee.

## **ARTICLE VIII TRUSTEES**

The church building and grounds are owned by nine (9) self-perpetuating Trustees as joint tenants, as deeded by Oliver Ames, August 23, 1875. For the purposes of this document these nine (9) trustees will be referred to as the Church Building Trustees. Church Building Trustees are also the trustees of the Cyrus Lothrop Trust, which benefits a book fund for the Lifespan Religious Education (formerly Sunday School) program of Unity Church.

The Henry W. French Trust, owned by two (2) self-perpetuating trustees, benefits the Parish Hall Association.

The parsonage (currently known as Holly House) and grounds are owned by two (2) Trustees who are appointed by Unity Church as given by will of Oliver Ames, 1877. For the purposes of this document they will be referred to as the Supporting Funds Trustees. The Supporting Funds Trustees are also the trustees of the Unity Church and Parsonage Repair Fund and the Unity Church and Parsonage M.A.F. & D.A. Fund and the Unity Church Music Fund. The Voting Members of Unity Church have the responsibility of appointing the two (2) Supporting Funds Trustees and filling any vacancies when they exist. It is the intent of the congregation that Supporting Funds Trustees will be Voting Members of Unity Church.

## **ARTICLE IX CHURCH CALENDER YEAR**

The Church Calendar Year shall begin July 1 and end June 30.

All church business including fiscal year and elected terms shall coincide with the Church Calendar Year.

## **ARTICLE X MINISTER**

### Section 10.1 Ministerial Search Committee

A Ministerial Search Committee, a special committee as outlined in Section 7.2, shall search out and recommend to the membership one minister for the church. The committee shall also negotiate an initial job description and terms of employment with the ministerial candidate and shall present both to the Executive Committee for approval.

The committee shall have seven members:

- Four (4) members will be elected by the Voting Members by a plurality vote at a Special Meeting called for that purpose. For the four elected members, the Nominating Committee shall present a slate of names to the church membership. All nominees must agree to serve on the Search Committee prior to the vote. No nominations will be accepted from the floor.
- Three (3) members will be appointed by the Executive Committee following the Special Meeting.

Employees of the church or its Trusts may not serve on the Ministerial Search Committee. All Ministerial Search Committee members must be Voting Members of Unity Church.

### Section 10.2 Calling the Minister

The Ministerial Search Committee shall present a ministerial candidate to the membership at a Special Meeting for the Calling of a Minister. The quorum for a Special Meeting for the Calling of a Minister shall be 40% of the Voting Members but no less than 25 Voting Members. Four-fifths (4/5) of the Voting Members present must cast an affirmative vote to approve the ministerial candidate. The vote will be taken via written ballot.

### Section 10.3 Ministerial Responsibilities

The Minister shall be in fellowship with the UUA. The Minister shall have charge of all meetings for worship, marriage, naming ceremonies, ceremonies of union, and funerals held at the church, and shall perform all parish duties associated with the Minister's office. The minister shall seek Executive Committee approval for any other meeting that the minister wishes to hold at the church.

The Minister shall be the administrator of the church, and shall supervise the church employees under the direction of the Executive Committee and in accordance with church policies. It shall be the Minister's duty to bring to the attention of the Executive Committee any matters which seem to be pertinent to the general interests of the Church and to make such recommendations as seem proper; but the final decision shall remain with the Executive Committee or a legal meeting of the Church membership.

The Minister shall be an ex officio member of all Committees except the Ministerial Search Committee, but shall have no vote. The Minister may assist and advise Officers, Trustees, and Committees in the performance of their duties.

### Section 10.4 Committee on Ministry

A Committee on Ministry shall consist of three (3) members who shall serve staggered three (3) year terms. One member shall be appointed by the Executive Committee, one by the Minister, and one jointly agreed upon. The previous Committee on Ministry will be dissolved and a new Committee will be appointed when the new Minister begins.

The primary purpose of this Committee is to strengthen the quality of ministry within the congregation by working with members of the congregation, church employees and the Minister.

In addition, the Committee on Ministry shall recognize and nurture the needs of the Minister and maintain a channel of communication between the Minister and the congregation. In consultation with the Minister, the Committee on Ministry shall recommend to those preparing the proposed Annual Budget a salary and benefits package for the Minister. Annually, the Committee shall review the Minister's Job Description and Contract with the Minister and recommend any changes to the Executive Committee.

### Section 10.5 Resignation/Release

The Minister must give ninety (90) days written notice of the intent to resign to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee may allow an interval of less time. The Minister can only be released at a Special Meeting called for that purpose. The quorum for a Special Meeting for the Release of a Minister shall be 40% of the Voting Members but no less than 25 Voting Members. The dismissal of the minister requires the majority vote of the members present.

## **ARTICLE XI NONDISCRIMINATION IN HIRING**

The Church shall not discriminate in its hiring practices on the basis of race, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability, economic status or religion.

## **ARTICLE XII UNITY CHURCH MEMORIAL FUND**

There shall be a Unity Church Memorial Fund. Donations to the fund may be accepted from members and friends of Unity Church made *in memoriam*, left in will or testament, or donated in any other manner. The fund is to be protected and invested by a group of three (3) Trustees chosen by a plurality vote at a Congregational Meeting. Memorial Fund Trustees must be Voting Members of Unity Church.

One of the three Trustees will serve as Treasurer and shall be bonded. Only when specifically bequeathed or designated by the donor may principle funds be spent. In all other cases, only interest or dividends accumulated in this fund may be spent. All expenditures of Memorial Fund monies must be approved by a majority vote at a Congregational Meeting.

### **ARTICLE XIII AMENDMENTS**

These Bylaws, so far as allowed by law, may be amended or repealed at any legally called Congregational Meeting of the Church by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those Voting Members present. The exact wording of the proposed amendment(s) must be contained in the warrant for the meeting. The proposed change shall be available at the church for review at least fifteen (15) days in advance of the meeting.

No changes to the proposed amendments as stated on the active warrant will be allowed.

### **ARTICLE XIV ENACTMENT**

These Bylaws when adopted by the Voting Members of Unity Church at a Congregational Meeting shall take the place of all previous Bylaws.

Once an amendment is enacted and voted on by the congregation, the only change that may be made to the bylaw document without a further vote is an adjustment of the bylaw numbering system to make the numbering system consistent throughout the document.

As adopted 4/30/95 and amended 7/23/95, 3/9/97, 6/6/04, and 2/6/05.