

JOB DESCRIPTION: First Universalist Board of Trustees

I. OVERVIEW

The Board of Trustees (“Board”) at First Universalist has 2 primary responsibilities. The first is the fiduciary and legal responsibility to oversee the activities of the church, ensuring that the church operates in compliance with applicable laws, regulations and accounting procedures. In its fiduciary role the Board has full authority to direct the activities of the church except for matters specifically reserved to the membership, such as calling ministers, amending the Bylaws and approving the annual budget.

The second responsibility of the Board is governance. Under First Universalist’s current form of governance, often referred to as “policy governance,” the Board is responsible for developing and articulating the church’s mission and visionary goals. Although the professional staff is responsible for developing and implementing programs and practices to achieve the mission and visionary goals, the Board is also responsible for developing policies and monitoring practices that ensure staff accountability in achieving those ends.

II. TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Prepare for and attend monthly Board meetings (currently the third Thursday of every month), the annual meeting of the congregation, the mid year congregational meeting, and a fall and/or spring retreat.
2. Adhere to the Board members’ code of conduct contained in the Board’s Governing Policy Handbook (GPH), including disclosing conflicts of interest and abiding by the Board’s covenant.
3. Serve on one or more Board Standing Committees/Teams (currently Finance, Governance, and Stewardship) or as the Board appointed member of the Nominating Committee. Serving on a committee often requires an additional meeting and responsibilities each month.
4. Be willing to serve on ad hoc teams or act as a Board liaison to other church committees or groups.
5. Model generosity as a church leader by being willing to assist with fundraising activities, and by making an annual pledge that is personally meaningful and feels like a stretch.
6. Participate in activities which link the Board with and strengthen its relationship with its stakeholders. Activities could include listening and asking questions; being visible, approachable, and accessible, and using tools such as congregational surveys or focus groups. Stakeholders are defined as current and potential members and friends of First Universalist; professional staff; programs and committees of the church; the UUA and the district; and the neighborhood and wider community.
7. Ensure that the church is governed effectively in a manner consistent with policy governance and the GPH. (The GPH contains, in addition to the mission and visionary goals of the church, policies which are designed to delegate authority to and establish constraints on the Senior Minister’s authority, provide for monitoring of achievement of visionary goals, and address, in general terms, how the board and Senior Minister will work together.)

III. KEY SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Effective Board leadership under policy governance requires an emphasis on strategic leadership as opposed to management or administrative skills, comfort with a clear distinction between Board and

professional staff roles, and a willingness to be proactive rather than reactive. As set forth in the GPH, the Board will direct and inspire the organization through the creation of visionary goals, ongoing discernment with the staff and congregation about those goals, and the establishment and monitoring of policies that create accountability and clarity about the achievement of those goals. To that end, the following skills and abilities are helpful to being an effective Trustee:

1. Strong creative and “big picture” thinking, combined with the ability to focus on detail when needed.
2. Ability to wrestle with ambiguity/shades of gray.
3. Sound judgment and strong critical thinking and analysis skills.
4. Ability to contribute to the constructive resolution of challenging and complex issues.
5. Willingness to express minority opinions and take an independent stand if necessary.
6. Ability to work collaboratively and to contribute to team building and teamwork.
7. Ability and willingness to listen to the needs, concerns and perspectives of stakeholders.
8. Excellent written and verbal communication skills.

IV. QUALIFICATIONS

1. Nominees for a Trustee position must be a member of the congregation in good standing.
2. Prior leadership experience at First Universalist, another UU church, as a volunteer or professional; or prior Board experience, especially non-profit, is recommended but not required.
3. An understanding of policy governance is recommended but not required. (Board orientation will be provided on policy governance.)
4. An understanding of the content of First Universalist’s intercultural competency is recommended. If not already done within the prior 2 years, new Board members will be asked to complete the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI).

V. TERMS

1. Trustees serve 3-year terms, commencing July 1 following the annual meeting. Terms are staggered so that, ideally, not more than 3 Board members join the Board every year.
2. Trustees are limited to two consecutive terms, meaning no trustee (other than those filling mid-term vacancies) can serve more than 6 consecutive years. If a Trustee serves a term of less than three (3) years to finish another Trustee’s unexpired term, that Trustee may be elected to a third term of one (1) or two (2) years, to allow a total of six (6) years of consecutive service. A Trustee who has served six (6) consecutive years may not be nominated to serve an additional term until that Trustee has been off the Board of Trustees for at least three (3) years after completion of their last term.

Adopted December 2012 by Board consensus; revised February 2013 by Board consensus; modified March 2016 by Board consensus.

Updated March 2026 by Board consensus