

GOVERNANCE POLICIES — *a sample beginning set*

from the fictional board of All Souls of Deluge Falls, Anywhere, USA

I. **ENDS:**

All Souls Church of Deluge Falls will embody Unitarian Universalist principles in congregational life and in the world at large, and enable its members to live them *[using ASDF's mission statement as a place-holder awaiting Ends development once governance is in place]*

II. **STAFF LIMITATIONS:**

The executive team shall not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision, or church circumstance that is unlawful, imprudent, or in violation of our Unitarian Universalist principles or of commonly accepted business and professional ethics and practices.

- A. **TREATMENT OF CONGREGANTS** (members, friends & visitors): With respect to interactions with congregants, the executive team shall not cause or allow conditions, procedures, or decisions that are unsafe, unnecessarily intrusive, or that fail to provide appropriate confidentiality or privacy.
- B. **TREATMENT OF STAFF:** With respect to the treatment of paid and volunteer staff, the executive team shall not cause or allow conditions that are unsafe, unfair, disorganized or unclear.
- C. **COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS:** With respect to employment, compensation and benefits to employees, consultants, contract workers and volunteers, the executive team shall not cause or allow jeopardy to fiscal integrity or public image.
- D. **FINANCIAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING:** Financial planning for any fiscal year or the remaining part of any fiscal year shall not risk financial jeopardy nor deviate materially from church bylaws or from the board's Ends priorities.
- E. **FINANCIAL CONDITION AND ACTIVITIES:** With respect to the actual, ongoing financial condition and activities, the executive team shall not cause or allow the development of fiscal jeopardy or a material deviation of actual expenditures from Ends priorities set by the board.
- F. **GRANTS AND CONTRACTS:** The executive team may not enter into any grant or contract arrangements that fail to emphasize the production of Ends and avoid unacceptable means.
- G. **ASSET PROTECTION:** The executive team shall not allow the assets to be unprotected, inadequately maintained, or unnecessarily risked.
- H. **ASSET UTILIZATION:** The executive team shall not devote church assets to endeavors that fail to support Ends policies or are incongruent with Unitarian Universalist principles.
- I. **COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT TO THE BOARD:** The executive team shall not cause or allow the board to be uninformed or unsupported in its work.
- J. **UNITY OF VOICE:** The executive team shall not fail to speak as one voice to all parties to whom the team is responsible.

K. **CONTINUOUS OPERATION:** In the event a member of the executive team is unable to participate due to absence or emergency, the remaining team members will not fail to continue operations while the board considers need for a replacement.

A “parking lot” issue awaiting consideration — the ASDF board wants to ensure that the capacity for creative leadership provided above extends beyond the Executive Team, and the following draft of an additional Limitation policy is pending: *Given that human capability is a vital church asset, the E.T. will not fail to enable staff and lay leaders to apply their skills and creativity to fulfill stated Ends within the limitations incumbent on the E.T.*

III. **BOARD-MANAGEMENT LINKAGE:**

The board’s formal connection to church operations, achievements and conduct is solely through its designated Executive Team.

A. **COMPOSITION OF THE EXECUTIVE TEAM:** The executive team will consist of the called ministers, the church administrator, and the volunteer coordinator, each of whom may share in report writing within their own areas of responsibility, while remaining accountable as a team to the board.

B. **UNITY OF VOICE:** Only decisions of the board as a body, stated in officially passed motions, are binding on the executive team.

C. **ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE EXECUTIVE TEAM:** The executive team is the board's link to operational achievement and conduct. All authority and accountability of paid staff and volunteers is considered by the board to be the authority and accountability of the executive team.

D. **DELEGATION TO THE EXECUTIVE TEAM:** The board shall instruct the executive team through written policies that prescribe the organizational Ends to be achieved and describe organizational situations and actions to be avoided, allowing the executive team to use any reasonable interpretation of these policies. The board will establish topmost policies on Ends and Staff Limitations, leaving implementation and subsidiary policy development to the executive team, who will further delegate implementation and development to staff and lay leaders.

E. **MONITORING EXECUTIVE TEAM PERFORMANCE:** Executive team performance will be solely measured by organizational accomplishment of ASDF Ends, congruent with priorities set by the board, and by organizational operation within the boundaries established in board policies on Staff Limitations. Performance will be monitored via regular and systematic reports, according to a schedule set by the board.

IV. **GOVERNANCE PROCESS:**

The Board of Trustees will ensure, on behalf of the congregation, that All Souls of Deluge Falls furthers its chosen Ends, with appropriate use of its resources, avoids unacceptable actions and situations, and upholds Unitarian Universalist principles.

A. **GOVERNING STYLE:** The board will govern lawfully and ethically, with emphasis on (1) outward vision rather than internal preoccupation, (2) encouragement of diversity in viewpoints, (3) spiritual and strategic leadership more than

- administrative detail, (4) clear distinction of board and executive team roles, (5) collective rather than individual decisions, (6) the future rather than the past or present, and (7) being proactive rather than reactive.
- B. **BOARD JOB DESCRIPTION:** The board is elected to represent the congregation in ensuring appropriate organizational performance and furthering its mission and vision.
 - C. **AGENDA PLANNING:** The board will follow an annual agenda that (1) re-explores Ends policies with congregants and lay-leaders in regular dialogue, (2) sets forth priorities for the upcoming ASDF fiscal year, (3) systematically monitors and reviews board policies, and (4) continually improves board performance through board education and enriched input and deliberation.
 - D. **PRESIDENT'S ROLE:** The president ensures the integrity of the board's process, and secondarily, occasionally represents the board to congregants and outside parties.
 - E. **BOARD MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT:** The board commits itself and its members to ethical and lawful conduct, including proper use of authority and appropriate decorum when acting as board members.
 - F. **BOARD COMMITTEE PRINCIPLES:** Committees of the board, when used, will be assigned so as to reinforce the wholeness of the board's job and so as never to alter or interfere in communication and delegation from board to executive team.
 - G. **BOARD COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:** A committee is a board committee only if its existence and charge come from the board, regardless of whether board members sit on the committee. Unless otherwise stated, board committees are ad hoc and cease to exist when their task is complete.
 - H. **GOVERNANCE INVESTMENT:** To sustain its capacity to govern well, the board will invest resources and ongoing attention to board education and training.
 - I. **COMPLAINT AND INQUIRY PROCESS:** The board will address any complaints or concerns the board or its members receive solely in relationship to board policies. For overall awareness and care, concerns received will be conveyed to the executive team.

NOTE: Not far away, the larger UU church in Megacity has implemented a similar governance model with its Senior Minister designated as solo executive. Thus, its board does not have policies II-J, II-K or III-A above. Rather than II-K, they have an Emergency Succession policy directing the Senior Minister to not fail to have at least two other key leaders sufficiently familiar with board and executive issues to assume the role in the event of sudden loss of Senior Minister services. The board also added a policy directing the Senior Minister to not fail to provide adequately for his or her own spiritual care.