

## **Bylaws Revision 2015**

### **Shared Leadership: Clarity and Transparency**

#### **Part 1 Who Leads USSB?**

Dear USSB members and friends,

When we update the USSB bylaws, the board invites the members of the congregation to learn about the changes they will have the opportunity to approve at the annual meeting.

#### **Annual meeting June 7**

There will also be other matters for your vote at the annual meeting, including voting for board members and members of the nominating committee, and revisions to the endowment bylaws. Separately, you will also be sent short biographies and other information about these voting opportunities. We hope you can attend the annual meeting, or if you can't attend, vote by absentee ballot so we can benefit from your participation.

#### **Bylaws Revision Calendar**

Before that annual meeting, the board is offering opportunities for you to engage in the bylaws process.

Over the next few weeks we are offering a series of informational pieces titled **Bylaws Revision 2015, Shared Leadership: Clarity and Transparency**. We welcome your questions and other responses.

On **Sunday, April 12 at 12:15**, you will be invited to a **workshop** for members to hear about the bylaws revision and to offer questions and insights in facilitated break-out groups. You will be hearing more about this workshop.

Before April 23, you will receive the **notice of the finalized proposed bylaws revisions**.

A week before the annual meeting, at a **Town Hall meeting** we will present and answer questions about the bylaws revisions.

**Absentee ballots** will be available the week before and leading up to the annual meeting.

## **Bylaws Revision 2015**

#### **Part 1 Who Leads USSB?**

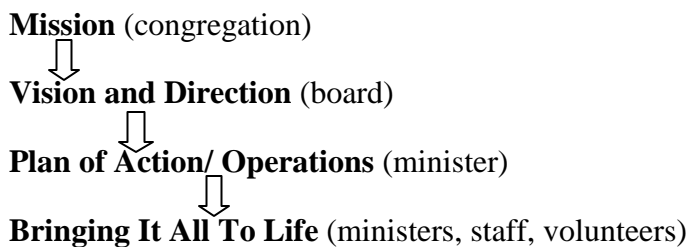
This is the first part of the Umail series, *Bylaws Revision 2015*. We will briefly review how leadership works at USSB, what the board’s goals are for the leadership at USSB, and how the bylaws revisions help us to meet those goals. The series will be also posted on the USSB website under “Leadership and Ministry, Board of Trustees”.

1. **Who Leads USSB?**
2. Policies and Bylaws
3. Frequently Asked Questions

## **Who Leads USSB?**

Before we can answer this we need to answer “leads where?” What are our goals? What do we agree to be and do together? **It all starts with the congregation** which articulates our values and intentions (values and mission) every few years. If you were here in 2012-13 you will remember meeting together to create these. The board bases the goals (ends) on the mission and values, and sees to it that in all we do, we stay aligned with them. The volunteers and staff, inspired and led by the lead minister, bring our mission and values to life through our community life. The Values and Ends are the first part of the USSB Policies document which can be found at this link:

<http://www.ussb.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2014/06/USSB-Policy-Manual-revised-11-18-141.pdf>



## **Representative Democracy**

Without the organization and specialization of roles, it would be very difficult to achieve any kind of organized or unified direction. It is impractical for a committee of 450 people to create plans, organize the work, and keep us focused. So we elect a board of trustees to represent us. We are a representative democracy.

## **Shared Leadership: Clarity and Transparency**

The board is responsible for seeing to it that we are achieving our goals and caring for the health of USSB in the long run. We need a way that is based in our values and principles to assign and manage roles and responsibilities. How do we do this? Our board's goals for leadership reflect the values of our USSB community: we expect our life together at USSB to model Shared Leadership, Clarity, and Transparency. How do we achieve these?

### Shared Leadership

Democracy and shared leadership are key elements in our UU culture and in the culture of USSB. It is our tradition and practice to collaborate, consult widely, and be inclusive in decision-making. The board is the elected leadership, and we have traditionally looked to our Minister for leadership. What is the distinction in these leadership roles? How do we share that leadership?

### Clarity

Our policies **clarify the roles** of the board and the lead minister. The board governs and the lead minister leads the work of the congregation. This means that the board is concerned with keeping us aligned with the congregation's mission and vision, and the minister leads the interpretation of that mission and vision into action.

Further, the policies set by the board guide the work at all times, even when the board is not in session. This way **the lead minister has clarity** about what they, the staff and the volunteers are authorized to do. As the lead minister works with staff members and volunteers, they in turn have **clarity** about their authority.

**The board's role is clear:** to represent the USSB community, to establish policy, to hold USSB to its values, goals and policies, and to look ahead to the future.

### Transparency

Our governing policies are written down and posted on the website. **Everyone may know the principles** we use to make decisions and the measures by which to evaluate our success. Everyone may know the way we delegate and oversee authority.

**Transparency** is the window on decision-making. **Everyone may know how choices are made** and who makes them.

### The Practice of Shared Leadership

Having authority does not mean being autocratic or making decisions in isolation. That is not the way we do things. Because shared leadership and collaboration are a central strand of our UU and our congregation's culture, our policies, as well as our ministerial job descriptions and contracts, require the lead minister to consult, collaborate and to share leadership. The lead minister is expected to wear authority lightly, listening broadly and deeply, knowing that the best decisions are made by integrating many perspectives. The best leaders listen, channel and guide rather than leading "from above". Being open

to hearing everyone's ideas, we gain the advantage of our individual and collective wisdom.

**Benefits for Members: confidence, trust, inclusive decision-making, responsive board, user-friendliness, effectiveness**

What are the benefits of **shared leadership, clarity, and transparency** to a member of the congregation?

**Clarity and transparency mean confidence and trust** in the way things work.

Because we have articulated values and goals, roles and responsibilities, members and others may also know the goals and the policies of the congregation, including the roles and responsibilities.

They know that the responsibility for decisions, from adopting the budget, to hiring, to new member procedures, to the plans for the fountain during a drought, is either through a vote of the congregation, or rests with those who are elected or entrusted to make them.

If a member has a concern, there is a fair, established process for addressing it. Matters that belong to the operations of USSB will be addressed by a committee, staff member or minister.

Members can know, for each area of congregational life, who is responsible and accountable for it.

**Shared Leadership** means **decisions are broadly-based**. Planning is done with the benefit of the wisdom of the appropriate leaders and groups. For example, the budget is created based on broad consultation across the various committees and program areas. Members of the worship committee are consulted about the calendar and innovations in the worship services. The board is in communication with the congregation about important matters such as budget priorities.

**Clarity and Transparency about the board's role** means we know what the board's job is and is not. The policies eliminate any mystery about roles. This allows us all to **hold the board responsible** for engaging with the membership, sharing information, being transparent, seeing to it that policies are followed, and looking to the future.

**Clarity and Shared Leadership** makes USSB **user-friendly and dynamic**. If a member has an interpretation of our mission, a good idea for a new fund raiser or an innovation in worship, the idea will be heard and can be evaluated and implemented collaboratively by the people (committee chair or staff member) who have authority in that area of congregational life. This eliminates initiatives getting bogged down or lost in questions about who has the authority, or by a long wait for the next board meeting. In this way, **the energy and creativity of our members is encouraged and supported, making us a livelier and more effective congregation.**

**Benefits for the Board**

**Board work is meaningful** for a board member who sees how board work can be effective. Board work can be effective when board members know what the congregation is committed to, how the board works, and what the minister's job is. Our model provides this clarity through our policies.

### **Benefits for Ministers and Staff**

The lead minister, and with their leadership, the rest of the staff, clearly understand our focus, our board policies, our culture of shared leadership, their roles and responsibilities, and their authority. They know what standards they will be held to and can be confident that the target will not be moved. **Within this structure, they are free to take initiative and make good things happen.** And they do!

### **Next: Part 2, Bylaws and Policies**

**We welcome your questions and ideas.** Please call or email any board member or talk to us at the "Board is In" table on Sunday mornings. Board meetings are open and there is an opportunity for members to share their thoughts during the open forum. Thank you for your participation!

The 2014-2015 Board of Trustees

Craig Bennett

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