

Document #:	General Operating – G-19	Created:	6-15-2010
Title/Subject:	Congregational Resolutions	Revised:	none
Purpose:	Define policy, purpose, procedures	Reviewed/Unchanged:	
Operational Authority:	Board of Directors		

Policy

Purpose:

To provide a process for the consideration of Congregational Resolutions on Matters of Social Justice, hereinafter called the "Congregational Resolutions Process."

The First Unitarian Universalist Church of Rochester is a religious community with a commitment to a fair, open and democratic process for considering congregational resolutions on matters of social justice. Social justice resolutions proposed for consideration by the congregation are properly only those with the following characteristics:

- They address enduring social justice issues.
- They are intended to communicate beyond our congregation.
- They are part of a larger strategic effort to address a social justice issue rather than to simply make a statement for public dissemination.
- They build awareness within our congregation.
- They are supported by Unitarian Universalist principles of:
 - 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.

Procedure

Process:

1. Any member of the Church may co-sponsor a congregational resolution on matters of social justice.
2. A minimum of seven co-sponsors is required to initiate this process.
3. This process begins with the submission of a written social justice resolution and the names of its co-sponsors to the Social Justice Council
4. The Social Justice Council will review the resolution to ensure that it will meet the following criteria:

- It addresses an enduring social justice issue.
 - Its purposes include communication and collaboration beyond our congregation as part of an overall social justice strategy.
 - Its purposes include building awareness within our congregation.
 - It honors the values and traditions of our religious community and is supported by one or more of the Unitarian Universalist principles.
 - It does not support or criticize a candidate for public office, a political party or specific legislation.
5. Upon the satisfaction of the Social Justice Council that the aforesaid criteria are met, it will ask the co-sponsors to submit a written plan that addresses the following matters:
- The co-sponsors' commitment to active involvement in the resolutions process;
 - Proposals for engaging the congregation in study, discernment and discussion that provide an opportunity for the full range of beliefs and opinions in the congregation to be heard;
 - A timeline for completing congregational engagement activities;
 - Identities of the resolution's allies beyond the boundaries of our congregation;
 - Proposals for post-resolution actions.
6. When prepared, the co-sponsors will submit their plan to the Social Justice Council at a second meeting. The Minister and the President of the Board of Directors will be invited to this meeting. At this meeting the Social Justice Council will either approve the plan or identify and explain the changes needed to secure approval.
7. When the plan is approved, the co-sponsors are encouraged to seek the endorsement of the Social Justice Council for the resolution. Approval of the plan and endorsement of the resolution are independent considerations and the Social Justice Council's approval of the plan does not foreordain its endorsement of the resolution.
8. The co-sponsors share responsibility for engaging the congregation in study, discernment and discussion activities. The Social Justice Council may serve as a resource for guidance and logistics.
9. The Council may provide funds from its budget for support of activities related to the resolution's consideration, and in instances of necessity, may request additional financial support from the Board of Directors.
10. Once the congregation is engaged in consideration of the resolution, it may be amended only with the consent of the co-sponsors.
11. In the absence of active support from the co-sponsors for the resolution's consideration the Social Justice Council will ask the co-sponsors to withdraw the resolution.
12. When the study, discernment and discussion activities are complete, the Social Justice Council will request the Board of Directors to schedule voting by the congregation. The Board of Directors will schedule voting no sooner than thirty days but no later than sixty days following the Board meeting at which the request is made. The Board of Directors will cause the text of the resolution, and the date and place for voting to be posted in the main entrance of the Church, and announced on the Church website, in the Church newsletter, and during Sunday services. Once a vote has been scheduled, amendments to the resolution are not allowed.



Voting:

1. The Board of Directors will designate three of its members to supervise the voting process as judges, to count the ballots and announce the congregation's decision. Instructions for voting and the option to vote absentee will be communicated to the members at the time the vote is announced.
2. Church office staff will assist the judges in determining voting eligibility and will assist in managing and recording members who are voting absentee.
3. Eligible voting membership will be determined using Article III of the Church's bylaws.
4. Voting will occur on a Sunday coincidental to Church service(s). The opportunity to vote will begin an hour before the service(s) and continue for an hour past the service(s).
5. Voting will be by written ballot on the day of the vote or by absentee ballot. Each member will have one vote and there will be no voting by proxy. The judges will use the roster of eligible voters to ensure that only one vote is cast per member.
6. Members may vote absentee starting the day after the Board sets the voting date. Absentee voting can be done by mail, by delivering a ballot to the church office, or electronically as directed. The judge's decisions regarding any special voting considerations are final.
7. Signs, literature and activities favoring approval or disapproval of the resolution are prohibited at the Church and on its grounds on the day of the vote.
8. Approval of the resolution requires affirmative votes from more than 50% of the congregation's eligible voting members and, in addition, at least 60% of the votes cast must be in the affirmative.
9. The results of the vote are not binding on any individual member, since our Principles value the right of conscience equally with the use of the democratic process in our congregation.

Associated Documents

Congregational Resolution on Support of Marriage Equality; adopted

Congregational Resolution Addressing Immigration Rights and Sanctuary; adopted 10-1/2017

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