



## **PROPOSED BYLAW CHANGES REGARDING PUBLIC EXPRESSION**

### **RATIONALE FOR PROPOSED CHANGE TO BYLAW, ARTICLE III CONGREGATION, SECTION 3 PUBLIC EXPRESSION:**

- The current bylaw was developed when UUCWC was small and issues moved more slowly. Our world now requires a nimbler ability to respond to issues of life. UUCWC operates under policy governance where by empowerment of our committees & ministries through policies enables a more participatory response. The proposed bylaws and related policy enables this process to be more fluid.

#### ***Current Bylaw:***

Section 3.1 Public Expression. The Congregation may express itself publicly on any issue of a moral nature, provided the position is approved by two thirds (2/3) of the members present at a Congregational meeting. The minority vote, if any, must be taken, recorded and included in any public announcement of this position.

#### ***Proposed Bylaw Revision 3.1:***

***Section 3.1: Public Expression outside of Church. The Congregation may express itself publicly on external issues or debates that are in alignment with Unitarian Universalist Principles. Such Congregational expression will be approved through the Council for Faith in Action (CFA), in accordance with current law governing tax-exempt organizations.***

#### ***Proposed Additional Revision (new) 3.2:***

***Section 3.2. Public Expression On Church Property. The Congregation may wish to express itself on an issue by placing a sign or banner on its property. These expressions, intended for public view, would require a majority vote during a congregational meeting.***

### **RATIONALE/EXPLANATION FOR PROPOSED SECTION 3.1 AND 3.2 PUBLIC EXPRESSION BYLAWS:**

The Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing (UUCWC) may wish to express itself publicly in alignment with our principles. This expression could include (but not be limited to):

- Endorsement of the work of an outside organization, including being identified as a supporter of the organization or a member of a coalition and/or expressing viewpoints on a current issue of social, racial or economic injustice or related issues.
- Endorsement of an outside event, including being listed on marketing/promotional materials and being present with a UUCWC banner or sign(s), etc. (Examples: Gay Pride March in New Hope and UUCWC wishes to utilize its banner in the parade; wearing of UUCWC T-shirts as a formal group at rallies/marches which infers the church supports the issue.)
- Expressions by UUCWC on church grounds via a banner or sign is of a more permanent nature hence the requirement for a congregational vote.



## PROPOSED CHANGE TO BYLAW ARTICLE VII –THE MINISTRY, SECTION 1:

### ***Current Bylaw:***

Section 1. Duties. Minister and any Minister of Religious Education or Associate Minister, shall provide guidance in the religious and spiritual life of the Church, and is expected to concern him/herself with all aspects of its activities and the furtherance of its programs. S/he shall have freedom of utterance as an individual, but shall issue statements on behalf of the Church only upon approval of the Congregation. S/he shall be a non-voting member of the Board, and shall bring to the attention of the Board such matters as seem pertinent to the welfare of the Church.

### ***Proposed Bylaw Revision:***

***Section 1. Duties. The Minister, as well as any Associate Minister, or Minister/Director of Lifespan Religious Education, shall be responsible for furthering the religious and spiritual life of the Church and Unitarian Universalist purposes and principles. The Minister shall have freedom of expression and freedom of the pulpit. The Minister shall be a non-voting member of the Board and shall bring to the attention of the Board such matters as seem pertinent to the welfare of the Church.***

### **RATIONALE:**

- The original guideline is no longer practical due to the infrequent congregational meetings, and the increase in fluidity of social media. Responses need to be timely.
- Wording on what specific staff are covered is updated to allow more flexibility for future situations.
- When a minister is called, the congregation has full knowledge of the minister's intent, values, positions and through our covenant we understand that public expression by these professionals should remain at their discretion with no further need of approval by the congregation.
- It is important that our religious leaders represent UUCWC's and Unitarian Universalism's voice freely.
- New wording removes redundancies of statements in current bylaw ("provide guidance in the religious and spiritual life of the Church" is part and parcel to "expected to concern him/herself with all aspects of its activities and the furtherance of its programs.")



**PUBLIC EXPRESSION BY THE CONGREGATION  
COUNCIL FOR FAITH IN ACTION**

**Background/Purpose**

The Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing (UUCWC) may wish to express itself publicly in alignment with our principles. This could include:

- Expressing our position on a current social, racial or economic justice issue;
- Endorsement of the work of an outside organization, including being identified as a supporter of the organization or member of a coalition;
- Endorsement of an outside event, including being listed on promotional materials and being present with a UUCWC banner or sign.

A practical procedure is needed to allow UUCWC to be able to make the decision to express itself in the public arena. UUCWC's Council for Faith in Action serves as the umbrella for our community's social justice initiatives, and is therefore suited to assume the responsibility for the decision making process, in conjunction with input from the Congregation.

Placing a banner in support of an issue or principle on our grounds is outside the scope of this policy and would require approval through a congregational meeting.

**Policy**

The Congregation may express itself publicly, on any issue, in alignment with Unitarian Universalist Principles. Such expression will be approved through the Council for Faith in Action (CFA) on behalf of and with input from the Congregation.

UUCWC does not engage in partisan politics, and does not endorse candidates for public office.

**Procedure**

The group or individual requesting UUCWC to make a public expression or endorsement will complete a form (Appendix) that provides information about the organization, event or issue to be endorsed and/or supported and details of what is requested of UUCWC. If a financial commitment is part of this support, that should also be indicated.

The individual/group making the request will forward the completed form to the CFA chair(s) and arrange to attend a CFA meeting to present the request and answer any questions that CFA members may have. If it is not possible to attend the meeting in person, arrangements may be made to be present through other means, such as a conference call.

After the discussion on the request, CFA members will vote on whether to proceed with the request; a two-thirds vote will be required to do so.



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**PUBLIC EXPRESSION BY THE CONGREGATION  
COUNCIL FOR FAITH IN ACTION**

The CFA chair, or a designee, will inform the UUCWC Board President and minister of the request.

CFA will seek input from the congregation on the request for public expression or endorsement.

This input will occur over a four-week period.

The input will include at least one listening session, as well as comments via email and phone to CFA.

Following the four-week comment period, CFA will vote on approval the request. A two-third majority of CFA members is required. Votes can be in person or submitted electronically.

CFA will communicate its decision in writing to the requestor, the Board and minister, and the UUCWC Community.

**Appendix**

Form – Public Expression (Being developed)