

UUA Bylaws Renewal Team Charter

The Bylaws Renewal Team is a Board-appointed committee charged with a comprehensive, forward-looking renewal of the UUA bylaws. This work goes beyond routine updates to a values-driven reassessment of whether the bylaws reflect governance practices that enable Unitarian Universalism to more fully live into its mission in the world.

Whole Bylaws Review

The Bylaws Renewal Team approaches the bylaws, and our governance practices, as an integrated system rather than a collection of discrete sections.

The Team:

- reviews the full bylaws for coherence, internal logic, and alignment with current UU theology, not-for-profit governance practice, and organizational realities,
- identifies structural assumptions that no longer hold (such as legacy volunteer pipelines, timelines, or governance models), and
- names where incremental amendments have created complexity, redundancy, or unintended constraints.

This systems-level review supports coherent renewal rather than layered fixes.

Grounding in UU Identity and Future Needs

The Team centers its work in:

- the UUA's current purpose, covenant, and values,
- evolving understandings of authority, leadership, and accountability in a multigenerational, multicultural movement, and
- the Association's future needs, not only current operational challenges.

This keeps the focus on mission and meaning, not just governance mechanics.

Engaging Lived Experience

While accountable to the Board, the Team gathers insight from across the Association, including volunteers, staff, people with marginalized identities, and delegates. This engagement helps ensure the renewed bylaws are usable, understandable, accessible, and grounded in lived UU experience.

Values-Based and Anti-Oppressive Discernment

The Team evaluates structures through explicit UU and anti-oppressive lenses, prioritizing:

- Interdependence over individualism
- Trusting leadership over fear of authority
- Ending the centering of white culture
- Freedom to act over risk avoidance
- Strategy, objectives, and plans over monitoring and oversight
- Clarity and simplicity over complexity
- Authority placed where it best serves the mission
- Effective use of volunteer and staff time in service of the Association

These lenses shape both what is rewritten and how authority is distributed.

Iterative Drafting with Board Partnership

The Team develops drafts in partnership and conversation with the Board of Trustees, testing:

- whether proposed changes advance strategic governance,
- where simplification or delegation would better serve the Association, and
- what belongs in bylaws versus policy or practice.

Legal counsel is consulted as needed to ensure compliance and fiduciary integrity without eclipsing religious purpose.

The Board of Trustees decides what is contained in each proposal that appears on the General Assembly agenda for action.

Preparing the Association for Delegate Decision-Making

As the work concludes, the Team:

- explains the rationale for major structural changes,
- names tradeoffs and implications honestly, and
- supports transparent processes leading to delegate consideration and vote at General Assembly.

Bylaw renewal is framed as a shared act of covenantal governance, not a technical rewrite.

The Bylaws Renewal Team undertakes this work as a focused, time-limited act of institutional discernment, laying the foundation for adaptive, mission-aligned governance structures that will equip the Association to thrive and lead faithfully in the decades ahead.