

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie By-Laws

(Revised *May, 2015*)

Article I

Name

Section I. The name of this organization shall be “The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie”.

Section II. Bond of Union

We unite ourselves together for the study and practice of morality and religion, as interpreted by the growing thought and noblest lives of humanity, believing that we may thereby prove helpful, one to another, and promote the cause of truth, righteousness, and love, in the world. (March 22, 1898)

Section III. We are a Welcoming Congregation.

We affirm and promote the full participation of ALL persons in ALL of our activities, including membership, programming, hiring practices, and the calling of religious professionals.

Section IV. We are a Safe Congregation.

We affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of all persons. We strive to provide a safe environment in which all can participate in the life of the Congregation.

Section V. We support the programs and services of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and the Ohio-Meadville District (OMD), to the best of our ability.

*NOTE: Originally the name of this organization was “The First Unitarian Society of Erie, Pennsylvania”, as incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, May 24, 1898.

Article II

Membership

Section I. Any person, 16 years of age or older, who is in sympathy with the spirit and purpose of this congregation as expressed in the Bond of Union, may become a member. The membership becomes official by signing the membership book, in the presence of the minister, any member of the Board of Trustees, or any member of the Membership Committee.

Section II. A voting member is one who has complied with the requirements of Section I, at least 30 days prior to voting, continues to evidence an interest in the congregation's affairs, and who makes a regular stated financial contribution to the support of the congregation. A new member shall make an initial payment on their signed financial pledge prior to voting. The Board of Trustees may waive the stated financial contribution requirement for voting membership, on an individual member basis, by recognizing long and faithful association with the congregation.

Article III

Officers

Section I. Any person who has been a voting member of this congregation for 6 months or more shall be qualified to hold office.

Section II. The officers of this congregation shall consist of a Board of seven Trustees and a Treasurer who shall be elected at the Annual Meeting. Members of the Board of Trustees are elected to a term of three years and the Treasurer to a term of one year.

Section III. Members of the Board of Trustees shall not be eligible for election as Treasurer.

Section IV. The Trustees shall have the power to fill vacancies in their number and in the office of Treasurer until the next Annual Meeting following such vacancies. At the Annual meeting, the congregation shall elect the required number of Trustees or Treasurer for the unexpired term(s). Trustees and Treasurer who have been elected for unexpired terms shall be eligible for re-election.

Section V. The Board shall elect from its own members a President, Vice-President, and Secretary, who will constitute the Executive Committee and such officers as are required to fulfill the functions of the Board. These officers shall serve in the same capacity for the Congregation.

Article IV

Duties of Officers

Section I. The Board of Trustees shall hold regular monthly meetings. Special meetings shall be held at the call of the President, or upon written request of three members of the Board.

Section II. The President or, in the absence of the President, the Vice-President shall preside at Board and Congregation Meetings.

Section III. The Treasurer shall administer the system of collection, care and disbursement of all funds belonging to the Congregation, subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees, and shall give such bond as the Board of Trustees may elect. The Treasurer shall present the Treasurer's report and participate in discussions of financial issues at the Board meetings.

Section IV. The Secretary shall fulfill such duties as are customarily assigned to the office and shall have a list of voting members at each meeting of the Congregation.

Section V. The Board of Trustees may appoint an Auditor to review all financial records of the Congregation periodically and present an accounting of the records at the time of a Congregational Meeting.

Section VI. The Board of Trustees shall appoint an Historian who shall organize and manage the historical and contemporary history of the Congregation.

Section VII. It shall be the duty of the Board of Trustees to arrange the terms of settlement of the Minister elected by the Congregation. It shall be the duty of the Board of Trustees to supply the pulpit when no regular Minister is settled, in collaboration with the Sunday Services Committee.

Section VIII . The Board of Trustees shall study the needs of the Congregation , and in consultation with the Minister, determine the policies of the Congregation.

Section IX.

A. The Board of Trustees shall administer the funds of the Congregation and care for its property. The budget shall be approved by the congregation at the Annual Meeting. All cases of expenditures exceeding two thousand dollars (\$2,000), on matters not included in the annual budget , shall require Congregational approval by a majority of the voting members present at a regular or special congregational meeting.

B. The manner and time of raising funds are at the discretion of the Board of Trustees, in collaboration with the Finance Committee.

C. The fiscal year of this Congregation shall be from July first through June thirtieth.

Article V

Election and Resignation of Minister

Section I. The Board of Trustees may call a Minister to be duly elected to settlement. This election is held at a special meeting called for this purpose. To be elected, the Minister shall receive a three fourths affirmative ballot vote cast by those voting members present, at the time of the vote. The Board of Trustees may seek guidance from the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) or the Ohio Meadville District (OMD), as they deem necessary.

Section II. A Minister, duly elected and installed by the Congregation, shall continue in office until

A. The Minister, of free will, presents a resignation to the Board of Trustees, or

B. The Minister is requested to resign by forty percent of all voting members. This vote is taken at a special Congregational meeting called for this purpose.

Section III. Unless otherwise agreed by the Board of Trustees and the Minister, three months notice is required before any resignation of the Minister shall become effective.

Section IV. The Board of Trustees, with guidance from the UUA & OMD, shall consider hiring an interim minister while conducting a search for a settled minister.

Section V. Upon request of the Board of Trustees, a lay leader, commissioned by the OMD, may be called upon to officiate on such occasions as weddings, dedications and funerals, and to provide counsel and leadership in denominational affairs.

Article VI

Meetings

Section I. The Annual Meeting of the Congregation shall be held in June at such time and place as the Trustees may decide. Prior to the annual meeting, the Nominating Committee shall publish the slate of officers to be presented.

Section II. Regular Congregational Meetings shall be held in the months of October and February, at such time and place as the Board of Trustees may designate.

Section III. Special meetings for stated purposes may be called by the President, or upon written request of ten voting members of the Congregation to the Board of Trustees.

Section IV. A published notice shall be provided to each voting member of the Congregation, at least fifteen days prior to any special meeting. No business pertaining to the disposal or purchase of property, settling or unsettling of a Minister, or amending the Charter or By-Laws shall be transacted without a Congregational meeting.

Section V. Twenty percent of the voting members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any Annual, Regular, or Special Congregational meeting (except as noted in Article V. Section II B).

Section VI. Meetings shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.

Article VII

Legacies and Gifts

Section I. All legacies to the Congregation, not restricted by the donor, shall be placed in the “Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie General Endowment Fund Account” at the UUA “Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund” with distribution of the net value of the fund at a rate of 4 ½ per annum, which distribution can be used as the Board of Trustees sees fit.

The principal of such Endowment Fund shall not be used for any purpose whatever, save three-quarter affirmative vote of the voting members present, at the time of the vote, at two successive Congregational meetings. Fifteen days published notice of the purpose of the meetings shall be provided to each voting member of the Congregation.

Section II. All gifts to the Congregation, not restricted by the donor, shall be placed in the Gift fund. Monies in the Gift fund will be used at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

Section III. Restricted legacies and gifts accepted by the Board of Trustees shall be used in accordance with the intentions and wishes of the donor.

Article VIII

Amendments

Section I. The By-Laws may be amended upon the affirmative vote of three-quarters of the votes cast by the voting members present, at the time of the vote, at any Congregational Meeting.

Section II . Should this Congregation cease to function and the membership vote to disband, any assets of the Congregation shall be assigned to the OMD or the UUA to be used for the extension of liberal religion in the vicinity.

Article IX

Social Responsibility

Section I. Before any statement of policy regarding Social Action is made in the name of the Congregation, the proposed policy shall be announced at a Sunday morning service and a published notice provided to each voting member. Decision on the policy shall be made at a subsequent meeting called for that purpose. An affirmative vote of eighty percent of the voting members present, at the time of the vote, shall be required for passage.

Article X

Memorial Garden Commission

Section I. The Memorial Garden Commission shall consist of five persons. Two members are to be elected each year for a term of two years. The fifth member is to be appointed by the Board of Trustees. The election of members shall be held at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

Section II. The purpose of this commission shall be to oversee the overall design of the memorial garden, its permanent plantings, its care and its administration.

Section III. The by-laws of this commission are drafted by the commission and approved by the Board of Trustees. This commission is to be a self-sustaining financial entity subject to an accounting by the Congregation's auditor.

Article XI

Standing Committees

Section I. The President and the Minister together shall appoint the standing committees and special committees, as the need arise, of which they shall be non-voting ex-officio members.

Section II. No committee may obligate the Congregation financially without the consent of the Executive Committee of the Board, except on items already in the approved budget of the Congregation.

Section III. The following standing committees are established to support the spiritual, social and organizational requirements of the Congregation:

Building and Grounds

Caring

Committee on Ministry

Finance

Hospitality

Membership

Religious Education

Social Responsibility

Sunday Service

Article XII

Branches of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie

Section I. A branch is any group, living more than 30 miles away from the location of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie, who wish to join together to worship under the by-laws and policies of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie.

Section II. To become a branch of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie, the group's spokesperson shall present a written request to the Board of Trustees. With approval from the Board of Trustees, such request will be submitted to the Congregation for final approval. A vote will be taken at a regular or special meeting of the Congregation. Approval to become a branch of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie will require three fourths affirmative vote, of the voting members present, at the time of the vote.

Section IV. Participants in the branch may become members of the congregation, with all the rights and responsibilities of membership. (See Article II)

Section V. Members of the Branch will make their annual financial pledge to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie. Monies from pledges, plate cash, and fundraisers will become part of the general fund.

Section VI. No branch may obligate the Congregation financially without the consent of the Executive Committee of the Board, except on items already in the approved budget of the Congregation.