



Congregational Meetings -- Policy & Procedure

Rationale: This Policy & Procedure is intended to promote FUUSM’s democratic governance process by facilitating congregational meetings that are efficient while providing adequate information on congregational issues, so members may exercise their voting rights meaningfully.

References:

- Bylaws Articles III (Membership) & IV (Congregational Meetings)
- Fifth Principle & FUUSM Affirmation (democratic process)

Definitions:

Voting member (aka active member): A FUUSM member* who, within the last 12 months, has made recorded financial contributions to FUUSM or participated in church activities. (Bylaws III.B.) (*Membership requires signing the official membership book and contributing to FUUSM life financially or through service supporting its activities. (Bylaws III.A)).

Policy: Our democratic process means that FUUSM members have the right to be adequately informed about issues to be determined by congregational vote, so that voting members can freely and meaningfully exercise their right to vote. Such issues are determined at congregational meetings, both regular (called by the Board of Trustees, including our Annual Meeting), and special meetings (called in response to petition by FUUSM members). Ideally, all such meetings should balance efficiency (respect for others’ time) with members’ rights to engage in meaningful and informed discussion and voting. We strive to make all congregational meetings as open as possible, including by electronic (e.g. Zoom) quorum when necessary.

Procedure: (1) *Agenda & Items requiring congregational vote*); (2) *Quorum – Electronic (Zoom) attendees*); (3) *Special congregational meetings (called by member petition)*.

The following is not an exhaustive list of practice for the conduct of congregational meetings, which by FUUSM practice and tradition have followed the style preference of the presiding officer (generally, the Board President). Most have found it helpful to follow some degree of parliamentary practice (e.g Roberts Rules), but not necessarily with exacting formality, and with appropriate allowance for the size and nature of our meetings.

However, the following rules should be observed:

1. AGENDA & items requiring congregational vote --

On any item of business to be voted on by the congregation, no such vote may be taken unless the item has been placed on the meeting Agenda. The Board shall send the Agenda to members within a reasonable time before the meeting (and in the case of a “special meeting” no less than two weeks before the meeting). Such business items should come in the appropriate business section of the Agenda (e.g. “new business”). The Agenda should clearly and concisely indicate, in substance, the main point of business sought to be



conducted for each such business item. This rule does not mandate the listing of every question requiring a vote that may arise, so long as the question sufficiently relates to, is subsidiary to, or concerns the procedure for, any main business item listed on the Agenda.

According to FUUSM tradition and practice, our Annual Meeting allows members and friends to raise “items for the good of the Society.” The Annual meeting Agenda should contain a place for such items to be raised without each being specifically identified. However, any such unlisted item that constitutes congregational business may not be put to a vote; the opinion of the chair shall be final (but should favor allowing vote on items tending toward the salutorial, the ceremonial, or the informal endorsement of observations).

2. QUORUM – electronic (e.g. Zoom) attendees

The quorum count will include any voting members who attend a congregational meeting through electronic audio + visual connection (e.g., Zoom), if one is hosted for that meeting. Such members also have the right to vote.

3. SPECIAL Congregational meetings (called by member petition)

Our Bylaws (Article IV) provide two types of congregational meeting -- meetings called by the Board of Trustees, including but not limited to the Annual Meeting (Bylaws IV.A); and “special meetings” called “upon written petition of ten voting members” (IV.B).

While not fully stated in the Bylaws, the following rules will apply to such special meetings:

- a. The petition for the special meeting MUST be in writing and signed by the ten (10) voting members. (Bylaws IV.B). The petition should be addressed to the Board of Trustees.
- b. The petition MUST identify the business to be transacted at the special meeting – this enables the Board (Secretary) to communicate “the business to be transacted” to the congregation, with the meeting notice (required by Bylaws IV.B). As with the Agenda ((1) above), this does not mandate identifying every question requiring a vote that may arise in that business, so long as sufficiently related or subsidiary to, or procedural with respect to, the main business item.
- c. The Board of Trustees, after receiving a petition that meets the above requirements, shall promptly schedule the requested meeting at the earliest practicable date, but at least two weeks after the notice of the meeting is sent by the Board (Bylaws IV.B).
- d. The usual presiding officer (generally, the Board President) shall preside at all special meetings, and quorum requirements apply as with any congregational meeting.