



ASBURY FIRST

— UNITED METHODIST CHURCH —

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AFUMC Board Policy Book

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ASBURY FIRST GOVERNING BOARD POLICY BOOK

Overview

Using the authority the Church has given it through the bylaws, the Board has adopted the following policies. The Board records all its actions in its minutes; for ease of reference, it also records in this policy book any action intended to authorize others to make decisions or to control multiple decisions over time.

1. BOARD GOVERNANCE

1.1. Role of the Board. The Board, operating as both the Church Council and Trustees of Asbury First, will govern primarily by discerning mission, planning, partnering with the Senior Minister and staff, and holding leaders of the church, including its own members, accountable for their performance. The Board, as well as its committees, will serve three-year staggered terms, and members will be selected per the procedure outlined in the United Methodist Book of Discipline (hereafter “Book of Discipline”).

1.1.1. Annual Board Work Products. In concert with the Senior Minister, staff, and the congregation, the Board will produce and adopt:

- Annual review of the 3–5-year Strategic Plan, updating as needed.
- An annual short list of Open Questions about the Church’s future, as the basis for ongoing planning conversation in the Board, with the Senior Minister and staff, and with the congregation at large.
- An annual Vision of Ministry, consisting of a short list of top-priority areas where the Church will advance its work in the coming year, as a starting point for budgeting and staff planning.
- An annual Ministry Evaluation of the Church’s success or difficulties in achieving the prior year’s Vision of Ministry.
- An annual, mutual Performance Evaluation of the Senior Minister’s effectiveness conducted and coordinated through the Pastor Parish Relations Committee, and Board’s effectiveness, in their respective roles as outlined in the Book of Discipline.
- Nominations and overall responsibility for succession planning – including a nominations report for committees.
- An annual affirmation of the Board Covenant and Asbury First Conflict of Interest policy by each of the Board members.

1.1.2. Less Frequent Board Work Products. In concert with the Senior Minister, staff, and the congregation, the Board will produce and adopt:

- A Strategic Plan, to be updated every three to five years, consisting of a short list of the most important results the Board intends to achieve through the Church’s ministry, and the strategic choices (regarding program, membership, capital and operating budgets, staffing, and program) the Board has made about how to achieve those results.
- A Mission Statement, to be updated as needed, that articulates the Church’s purpose, and related statements (vision, values, and a tagline) to communicate the reasons for the Church’s work.

1.2. Board Officers. In addition to the duties defined by the bylaws, Board officers have the following responsibilities:

- 1.2.1. Board Chair:** Works in partnership with the Senior Minister to ensure productive partnership between the Board and staff. The Chair sets goals and objectives for the Board and ensures they are met, serves as a point of contact for all Board members, ensures all Board members are assigned and involved in congregational activities, and oversees all Board meetings to include setting the agenda and meeting facilitation.
- 1.2.2. Vice Chair:** Assists and substitutes for the Board Chair upon request. The Vice Chair is responsible for leading work and projects as defined by the Chair.
- 1.2.3. Secretary:** Ensures the safety and accuracy of Board records, including the minutes and these Policies. With the assistance of the Church Administrator or other staff, the Secretary ensures meeting materials are emailed to the Board with ample time for review prior to Board meetings. The Secretary ensures that materials are also appropriately available to the congregation.
- 1.2.4. Treasurer:** Supports the fulfilment of the Board's financial oversight responsibilities by working with the staff to ensure that appropriate financial reports are made available to Board Members on a timely basis. The Treasurer chairs the Finance Committee and is responsible for directing the annual outside financial audit or review, and therefore plays no direct role in day-to-day financial management.

1.3. Board Committees. Committees exist to help the Board to govern and provide oversight, as opposed to direct administration or activity management. (To manage programs, finances, and operations, the Church uses Ministry Teams responsible to the staff.) The standing Board committees are:

- 1.3.1. Finance Committee:** Assists the Board in its oversight of the congregation's finances, including receiving the Annual Operating Plan (AOP) from the Senior Minister and vetting it before presenting it to the Board for approval. Additionally, it ensures the completion of the annual audit and that financial reports are clear and helpful. From time to time, it holds educational sessions to ensure that Board members have adequate understanding of the congregation's financial status and goals. The committee has no management authority and does not participate in day-to-day financial decision-making.
- 1.3.2. Pastor Parish Relations Committee:** Assists the Board in developing employee policies, liaising with bishops on clergy and pastor evaluations, ensuring compliance with applicable laws, and carrying out the staff grievance process as defined by these policies. The committee has no staff management authority and does not participate in supervision or staff decision making.
- 1.3.3. Outreach Center Committee:** Assists the Board by coordinating the services, priorities and operations of outreach ministries planned for or already housed in the on-campus Outreach Center, ensuring these activities are aligned with the various Board work products. This Committee will include the Pastor assigned to Outreach Ministries and at least four to seven others as determined by the Nominations Committee. This Committee does not have day-to-day outreach operational responsibility.
- 1.3.4. Property Stewardship Committee:** Provides ongoing property oversight and care,

annual review of insurance coverage and the annual accessibility audit. Responsible for the creation of the 5-year capital improvement plan and shepherding it through approval by the Board.

1.3.5. Investment Committee: Sets investment policies for the Asbury First endowment(s) and provides oversight as outlined in investment policy. on-going receipt and administration of bequests.

1.3.6. Nominations Committee: As set forth in the Book of Discipline, the Nominations Committee is chaired by the Senior Minister. The committee will work with appropriate ministry teams to identify individuals for nominations to the Board and Board Committees.

1.4. Expectations of Board Members

1.4.1. Board covenant. We, the members of the Board, enter into a covenant of mutual expectations for Board service. New members of the Board will be asked to join us in these commitments, and the Board will review and reaffirm this covenant at least annually. As Board members, in addition to living a life becoming of the gospel and acting in the church's best interest, we will:

- **Actively Participate in the life of the Asbury First Congregation** through our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.
- **Prepare for Board meetings**. We will read the Board packet sent prior to each meeting and accept responsibility to seek and provide information necessary for the Board to make well-informed decisions.
- **Attend Board meetings**. We will commit to attending all duly called Board meetings, calling-in when out of town commitments preclude in-person attendance. If it is necessary to miss a Board meeting, we will inform the Board Chair as early as possible. If we do not expect to be able to attend meetings consistently, we will resign from the Board.
- **Participate in Board meetings**. We will listen carefully to each other, seeking clarification as needed and giving special attention to ideas and perspectives different from our own. We will ask questions when we do not understand. We will speak forthrightly in Board meetings and vote according to our understanding of Asbury First's mission and our responsibility to the congregation.
- **Share the work of the Board**. We will respond to emails and other communications in a timely manner. We will accept assignments and other tasks and complete them as agreed. Each Board member is equally responsible for speaking up to ensure compliance with the Book of Discipline, Board policies and this covenant.
- **Treat one another with respect and courtesy**. When we have disagreements or conflicts we will address those directly with the people concerned, seeking assistance from others as necessary to sustain a positive working atmosphere at the Board table.
- **Use discretion in communication around Board discussions**. We will refrain from publicly sharing in-process Board discussions and from reporting the opinions of Board members to others. We will speak respectfully of the Board, and once decisions have been made, we will support agreed upon actions. When the Board agrees that certain matters will be kept confidential, we will honor those agreements.

1.4.2. Conflicts of Interest. The Board expects all members to carry out their duties with undivided loyalty to Asbury First and its mission. A conflict of interest exists whenever a Board Member has interests or duties that may hinder or appear to hinder the Board Member from fulfilling this duty.

1.4.3. Definition. Conflicts of interest arise when a Board Member:

- Stands to gain or lose financially because of an action of Asbury First in which they have a decision-making role.
- Cannot set aside personal preference on a particular component of ministry to act for the overall good of the church and organization.
- Faces any other situation that impairs or reasonably appears to impair independence of judgment.
- Has a close relationship with someone who has a conflict of interest, as defined above. A close relation includes any person, corporation, or other business entity with which the Board Member has a close personal, family, or business relationship.

1.4.4. Conflict of Interest Disclosure. The Board will annually require its members to disclose in writing all existing or foreseeable conflicts of interest, using Asbury First's Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form. Disclosure forms must be kept by the Secretary and made available to any member of the Board who asks to see them.

1.4.5. Conflicts of Interest. When a Board Member reports a potential conflict of interest related to a matter before the Board, the Board (minus the affected member) will determine how to handle the situation. Possible responses include:

- Disclosure in Board minutes of the nature of the conflict.
- Leaving the room during all Board discussions and votes related to the conflict of interest.
- Resignation from the Board.

1.4.6. Removal of Board Members. In exercising its power to remove a Board Member, the Board will follow the established procedures outlined in the Book of Discipline relative to Trustees.

1.5. Leadership Position Terms in Three-Year Classes

The start and end dates for all leadership positions shall be divided into three-year classes and ensures all leaders serve for a consistent duration, allowing for orderly transitions and reducing confusion around term limits. Additionally, it aligns leadership turnover with the calendar year, facilitating strategic planning and continuity within church programs. Setting specific dates will facilitate smoother transitions, better planning, and clearer expectations for those serving in leadership roles.

1.5.1. Term Dates: All leadership terms shall begin on January 1st of the first year of the term. All leadership terms shall conclude on December 31st of the third year of the term.

1.5.2. Transition and Overlap:

a. Individuals concluding their terms on December 31st are encouraged to facilitate a smooth transition by providing orientation and support to incoming leaders during January of the following year.

b. Newly elected leaders will officially begin their responsibilities on January 1st but may

participate in board meetings and training sessions prior to their start date as deemed necessary.

1.5.3. Vacancies and Mid-Term Appointments: Should a vacancy occur mid-term, the appointed individual shall serve until the original term's end date of December 31, unless otherwise determined by the Governing Board.

1.5.4. Implementation: This policy shall take effect immediately and apply to all current and future leadership positions.

2. DELEGATION TO THE STAFF

2.1. Global Delegation to the Head of Staff. The Board hereby delegates all its authority to manage the work and resources of the church, except as expressly limited by these policies or the Book of Discipline, to the Senior Minister as head of staff.

2.2. Executive Team. The Senior Minister manages the work of the church in collaboration with an Executive Team. The Executive Team, determined by the Senior Minister, may include: the Associate Ministers, the Church Administrator, the Director of Music, and the Director of Development, all of whom report directly to the Senior Minister. The Board expects the Executive Team, individually and jointly:

- To lead and unify the paid and volunteer staff in directing their efforts toward the fulfillment of the church's mission and goals.
- To ensure compliance with the Book of Discipline, Board policies, and applicable laws and regulations.
- To uphold a high standard of Christian, ethical, and professional conduct.
- To accomplish the goals contained in the *Annual Vision of Ministry* by developing annual goals for its work as a team.

2.3. Church Administrator. The Board hereby entrusts the Church Administrator with management of the financial, personnel, and operational aspects of the church, and with special responsibility for staff compliance with its policies on Care of Paid Staff (3.2), Care of Members and Guests (3.3), and Care of Material Resources (3.4). The Board expects the Church Administrator to exercise independent professional judgment in reporting to the Board and Senior Minister regarding matters in their purview.

2.4. Staff Accountability. All staff members are accountable to the Senior Minister, who is accountable to the Board, for their performance.

3. GUIDANCE AND LIMITATIONS

3.1. Personnel Decisions. The Senior Minister is accountable for the selection, hiring, supervision, and discharge of all paid and unpaid staff.

3.1.1. Hiring of Clergy. As per the Book of Discipline, the presiding Bishop will appoint clergy to Asbury First. For those special circumstances in which associate-level clergy are hired by the church outside of the appointive process, the policy for hiring of non-clergy Executive will be followed.

3.1.2. Hiring of (non-clergy) Executive Team positions. Before filling Executive Team positions (other than appointed clergy), the Senior Minister must nominate a search committee for appointment by the Board. After receiving the search committee's recommendation, the Senior Minister selects and presents a final

candidate to the Board for approval.

- 3.1.3. Hiring Non-Executive Team.** Before filling in non-Executive Team positions, the direct supervisor must consult the Senior Minister and/or Church Administrator in advance of issuing an offer.
 - 3.1.4. The Church Administrator.** Because of its special reliance on the Church Administrator, the Board will play an active role in the selection of candidates for this position by appointing most members for the search committee. If the Board formally expresses a loss of confidence in the Church Administrator, the Senior Minister must initiate disciplinary proceedings up to and including termination.
 - 3.1.5. The Church Financial Administrator.** The Financial Administrator reports to the Church Administrator, subject to appropriate Governing Board oversight including approval of candidates for the position proposed by the Senior Minister.
 - 3.1.6. New Positions.** New positions are normally created through the budget process. The Senior Minister may create and fill temporary positions, if they can be funded.
 - 3.1.7. Discipline and Termination.** Prior to discharging a paid staff member, the Senior Minister must ensure that the decision complies with applicable laws, Board policies, contracts, and the employee handbook. The Senior Minister will notify the Board within 72 hours when an employee has been terminated.
- 3.2. Care for Paid Staff.** The church intends to be a fair, ethical, and attractive employer, to achieve high staff morale and productivity, and will adhere to all statues and requirements of NYS employment law.
- 3.2.1. Supervision and Evaluation.** Each employee will be assigned an immediate supervisor, who will provide an up-to-date job description and complete an annual process of goal- setting and performance review. Individual performance reviews are confidential, to be shared only as necessary to support church decision-making or as required by law.
 - 3.2.2. Compensation and benefits.** As part of the annual budget process, the PPRC will review compensation and benefits for all paid staff and recommend adjustments for the coming year. In its report to the Board, it must show evidence that it has:
 - 3.2.2.1.** Reviewed compensation and benefits practices from comparable employers.
 - 3.2.2.2.** Sought and considered recommendations from the Senior Minister regarding adjustments to staff compensation. These recommendations must be presented to the Board along with the committee report.
 - 3.2.2.3.** Considered the “Care for Paid Staff” goals (3.2 above) in relation to the Church’s financial capacity and strategic goals.
 - 3.2.3. Employee Handbook.** The staff maintains an up-to-date Employee Handbook that complies with all applicable legal requirements. The Employee Handbook must provide adequate policies to have practical effect to the following principles (among others):
 - Nondiscrimination
 - Harassment
 - Grievances
 - Whistleblower Protection

3.3. Care for Members and Guests. The staff must take all reasonable care to prevent harm to members, guests, program participants, and other people affected by the Church.

3.3.1. Health and Safety. The staff must ensure that all Church programs are safe for participants and staff, that facilities are maintained in a safe, sanitary, and secure condition, that required licenses and inspections are kept up to date, and that hazards are corrected promptly.

3.3.2. Smoking. The Church prohibits smoking of any kind on Church premises or during off-site programs of the Church.

3.3.3. Alcohol. Consumption of alcohol will not be permitted on Church premises.

3.3.4. Firearms and other weapons. The Church prohibits anyone other than on-duty law enforcement officials, or off-duty law enforcement officials hired by the Church, from carrying a firearm/weapon on Church property.

3.4. Crisis Management. The staff must create and maintain a written plan for responding to reasonably foreseeable emergencies, including accident, illness, fire, toxic conditions, weather problems, threatening communications, power outages, and natural disasters. These topics are covered in detail in the Church Safe Sanctuary Policy, as well as the Crisis Management Plan. These plans address the following areas (among others):

- Child Protection
- Disruptive Behavior
- Building Security
- Universal Access

3.5. Care for Material Resources. The staff must take all reasonable care to prevent harm to the Church's finances, assets, property, credit, and tax exemptions, and develop administrative practices and procedures designed to prevent such harm and must report promptly to the Board on any significant shortcomings in their implementation. The Board must approve all fiscal policies of the church and have final approval of any policies created.

4. BOARD OVERSIGHT

4.1. Mission Focus. The Board's duty of care requires it to ensure that the Church's human and material resources are used for the benefit of its mission. The Board fulfills this duty in two ways: by monitoring regular reports provided by the Senior Minister, and by scheduled evaluation of the Church's progress toward achieving the goals established in the Annual Vision of Ministry.

4.2. Monitoring. The Senior Minister will provide regular written reports from the staff to the Board. Reports must focus on progress on priorities, as set by the Board through the annual vision of ministry, and on compliance with Board policy. Monitoring reports must be emailed to Board Members in advance of each meeting but will not normally be a subject of Board discussion except when they require Board action or raise issues of compliance with Board policy. Reports must include, at minimum:

4.3. Financial statements that show overall financial performance compared to budget and highlight and explain significant financial or operational issues. These reports will be filed and made available to any Church member who wishes to examine them.

4.4. Programmatic monitoring. On a schedule to be agreed upon annually by the Senior

Minister and the Board, the Senior Minister will provide reports to the Board regarding:

- Progress on achieving the Annual Vision of Ministry.
- Compliance with applicable Board policies.
- Each report will focus on selected areas of progress and compliance, so that all during the year the entire Vision of Ministry and all points of policy compliance are covered.

4.5. HR and Administration: Everyone responsible for work on behalf of the Church will engage in a continual process of evaluation – as outlined in the Book of Discipline. The purposes to be accomplished through evaluation are to foster excellence in ministry work by ensuring that all Church leaders:

- Practice open communication and regular feedback.
- Meet performance standards appropriate to their roles.
- Maintain effective working relationships with one another.
- Focus on achieving goals as approved by the Board and staff.

5. VERSION HISTORY

Record of changes to this policy and driver of change.

Version No.	Revision Date	Updated by	Description of change
V.1	October 29, 2020	Valerie Benjamin	Policy Book created and approved
V.2	April 25, 2022	Valerie Benjamin	
V.3	November 19, 2024	Cory Tylenda, Sec., Governing Board	Updated numbering as they were out of order. Also added wording in section 1.5 and subsections regarding three-year limits titled Leadership Position Terms in Three-Year Classes. Added revision table and page numbers. Fixed TOC.
V.4			
V.5			