



**UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

JUNE 14 – 21, 2026

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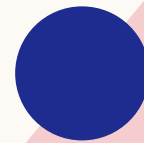
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# **BUSINESS RESOLUTION**

UUA Task Force on Ministerial Fellowship

Committee Policies and Rules

for Interim and Developmental Ministers



**PURPOSE: THIS PROPOSAL ASKS THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION (UUA) TO CHARGE A TASK FORCE WITH RECOMMENDING UPDATES TO MINISTERIAL FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE (MFC) POLICIES AND RULES FOR INTERIM AND DEVELOPMENTAL MINISTERS.**

- **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) shall establish a task force to:
- (a) review the policies and rules relating to Interim and Developmental Ministers, and
- (b) make any recommendations to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC) for modifications to the policies and rules relating to Interim and Developmental Ministers.

# MOTIVATION

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- The MFC has jurisdiction over all phases of ministerial credentialing, including fellowship removal, and the authority to disallow participation in the UUA’s ministerial search process.
- A complaint to the UUA Office of Ethics and Safety can result in the MFC Executive Committee conducting a Fellowship Review, placing a minister on Administrative Hold (suspending a minister from search), and potentially removing a minister from Fellowship.
- **Expectations of Transition Ministry** (Interim, Development, Contract) (quotations from the UUA’s *Ministry Search Handbook*<sup>1</sup>)
  - “**Interim Ministry** helps congregations process transition, **address unproductive practices**, and prepare for new leadership”
  - “**Developmental Ministry** serves congregations with repeated short ministries, chronic conflict, or systemic issues, requiring more time to make structural or cultural changes”
  - “It is **better to use an interim time** to deal with these frustrations in a **period of purposeful disequilibrium...** Additionally, **congregations may have areas of neglect and/or unproductive patterns that need attention.**”
  - And, from the UUA’s *Interim Ministry Appraisal Guidelines*<sup>2</sup>, “**Is the interim minister courageously raising the needful issues in the congregation?**”

1. UUA Ministry Search Handbook: the unified guide to transitional and settled ministry searches, January 2026.

2. UUA Transitions Office Interim Ministry Appraisal Form, from UUA Leader Lab, December 8, 2025, Overview of the Interim Ministry Partnership.

## WHAT'S NEEDED

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- With these expectations and guidelines, Transitional Ministers aim to guide a congregation successfully from one settled ministry to the next, often through necessary—and sometimes difficult—change.
- Because such change can spark conflict, and difficult circumstances, **MFC processes need to account for the unique purposes and challenges of Transitional Ministers – Interim, Developmental, and Contract - but they don't.**
- There's no mention of Interim or Developmental Ministries in the MFC's Rules and Policies for complaint intake and evaluation; none for fellowship review; none for placing a minister on Administrative Hold; and none for procedures to terminate fellowship.<sup>1</sup>
- Neither the UUA Bylaws Renewal project (launched in 2022), nor the UUA's Transitions Review Task Force (2025) will address these needs - the Policies and Rules of the MFC are not within their scope.

1. Rules and Policies of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, as amended July 2024.

## THE TASK FORCE

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- **Some possibilities for the Task Force to consider:**
  - MFC Policy and Rules modifications that reflect the challenges of transitional ministry.
  - Ensure MFC Committees include accredited Interim and Developmental Ministers.
  - Include the Board of Trustees of the Minister's (most recent) congregation in any review or investigation.
  - Changes to reflect the range of code of conduct violations in the UUMA Guidelines.
  - Review appeals processes, including for Congregational Life referrals to the "UUA Review Team".
  - Restore a safeguard, such as an independent audit, to help protect ministers against complaints made in bad faith (without requiring complainants be subjected to a 2nd full review). [Until 2022, MFC investigations included a 2nd independent review of a complaint investigation – it was removed out of deference to the complainant.<sup>1</sup>]
  - For continuity, include this Resolution submitter on the Task Force, and in member selection. Members of the Task Force should include experienced Transitional Ministers, and Congregational Leaders with Transition experience.
- **Thank you for your consideration of this resolution!**
- **Thanks to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee for their important work.**

1. [uua.org](https://www.uua.org) March 23 2022 Draft Updates to MFC Rules regarding Termination of Fellowship



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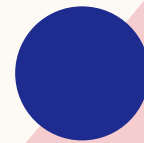
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# AMENDMENT TO BYLAWS

Authority to Suspend or Place a  
Minister's Search on Hold



**PURPOSE: THIS PROPOSAL IS FOR AMENDMENT OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION (UUA) BYLAWS AND RULES, ARTICLE XI MINISTRY, SECTION 11.5. TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUSPENSION, TO LIMIT THE AUTHORITY TO PLACE A MINISTER ON HOLD FROM SETTLEMENT, INTERIM, OR CONTRACT SEARCHES TO THE MINISTERIAL FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE (MFC)**

**TEXT OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT:** Section 11.5 of Article XI of the Bylaws shall be amended by adding the following sentence at the end, stating:  
“Notwithstanding Bylaw Section 11.2 that reserves to the Board of Trustees the exclusive power to approve proposed rules of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee governing ministerial fellowship, **the Ministerial Fellowship Committee shall have the exclusive authority to suspend or place a minister’s search on hold**, and may establish policies and rules to effectuate this authority.”

**EXISTING BYLAWS TEXT** Article XI, Section 11.5 (UUA Bylaws and Rules, as amended through JUNE 23, 2024):

*1417 The fellowship of a minister may be terminated by the Ministerial  
1418 Fellowship Committee for unbecoming conduct, incompetence or  
1419 other specified cause. Full fellowship may be terminated only after  
1420 notice by the Committee and opportunity for a Fellowship Review  
1421 before the Committee. During an investigation or the pendency of a  
1422 complaint, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee may suspend a  
1423 minister until a final determination can be made on the minister's  
1424 fellowship status.*

**IMPACTED RULES:** UUA Rules and Policies of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee (Policies of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee as amended December 2024), section 22, Administrative Hold from Settlement:

“When a minister experiences conflict or a difficult parting with a congregation or other institution, UUA Ministries and Faith Development Staff Group or Congregational Life staff (collectively, “MFD or CL staff”) may refer that minister to participate in a process of assessment by the UUA Review Team. MFD or CL staff may also refer ministers who show a pattern of conflicted ministries and/or inability to maintain positive congregational, collegial, staff, and/or community relations for a process of assessment by the UUA Review Team.

**MFD or CL staff have the right to place the minister on hold from settlement until the assessment process has been concluded, or for a period of not more than three years.”**

## BACKGROUND

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- MFC Rules and Policies describe that, when a minister experiences conflict or a difficult parting, or shows a pattern of conflicted ministries, **UUA MFD or CL staff may refer that minister to participate in a UUA Review Team process – and place the minister on hold.**
- **Congregations are discouraged from hiring any minister who is not applying through the Ministry Search system.**<sup>1</sup>
- Compensation is not available to ministers that are unemployed due to their search being placed on hold. [This was the subject of another proposed amendment, which has been replaced by a resolution for the UUA – see third proposal.]
- **The Review Team:** “Does not determine or change Fellowship status”<sup>2</sup>. Yet, they’re **delegated the power to revoke one of the major rights of Fellowship**, access to the search system; which is **in effect a change in status.**
- **The appeal process is for the minister to request an MFC Fellowship Review** – at the April ‘26 UUA Board meeting, it was stated that this never happens, the minister would risk losing fellowship. So, **effectively, there is no appeal process.**
- There are approximately 2% (or more) of ministers on hold<sup>2</sup>.

1. UUA Settlement Handbook Revised 12/2024.

2. Presentation to the UUA Board of Trustees, April 2026, “Information About the Review Team \_Presentation to Board”.

## UUA REVIEW TEAM AND “ON HOLD” FOR TRANSITION MINISTERS

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- **Placing a Transition Minister on hold from search, especially during the April/May congregation matching period, can cause a minister to miss opportunities,** and effectively suspend them for months or more than a year, even if they're later exonerated, or successfully complete their Personal Development Plan. [Settled Ministers may not be as impacted by a hold from search; it's up to their congregation whether they continue to serve.]
- This can **conflict with a presumption of innocence,** equity, inclusion (full opportunity), dignity, and due process.
- The UUA Review Team's goals include structured care, and developmental support. **The Review Team process moves forward when they receive exit interviews from Congregational Life,** and a written reflection and Personal & Professional Development Plan from the minister.<sup>1</sup>
- **The Review Team's processes are not aligned with Human Resources' best practices,** which emphasize **regular check-ins, with prompt feedback and timely intervention, not episodic reviews.** The Review Team's **processes are initiated at the end of a ministry** - potentially putting the congregation at risk, and not observing congregational polity, and limiting the minister's opportunity to address concerns.
- **Restorative care could be completed prior to the end of a ministry** – with a goal to avoid placing a minister on hold - and **hold status could be authorized by a request to the MFC, not directly by the Review Team.**
- There are mechanisms for Congregational Life staff to protect future congregations other than placing a Minister's search on hold. These include the “Research Calls” with UUA regional staff, and reference checks.<sup>2</sup>
- Neither the UUA Bylaws Renewal project (launched in 2022), nor the UUA's Transitions Review Task Force (2025) will address these needs - the Policies and Rules of the MFC are not within their scope.
- **This Amendment ensures the Review Team processes do not include routinely placing a minister on hold from search.**

1. Presentation to the UUA Board of Trustees, April 2026, “Information About the Review Team \_Presentation to Board”.

2. UUA Leader Lab, December 8, 2025, Checking References: A Guide for Search Teams.

## BYLAW AUTHORITY

- **Congregational Life staff's authority** to place a minister on hold is stated in the MFC's Rules and Policies, and the UUA states that "the Review Team operates under the authority of the MFC"<sup>1</sup>. **However, this delegation of authority is not provided for in the Bylaws.** Section 11.5: "During an investigation or the pendency of a complaint, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee may suspend a minister until a final determination can be made on the minister's fellowship status."
- **The UUA's Feb. 2026 legal review of First Parish Brewster's proposed Bylaw amendment<sup>2</sup>** stated, regarding Termination of Fellowship and Administrative Suspension: "...the last sentence at Section 11.5 already appears to reserve to the MFC the sole power to suspend a minister during an investigation, thus making it unclear whether the Bylaw amendment is necessary." **i.e. the UUA Bylaws only grant hold authority to the MFC.**
- **This Amendment removes Congregational Life's ability to unilaterally place a Minister on Hold from Search.**
- **Thank you for your consideration of this Amendment!**
- **Thanks to CL & MFD for their important work.**

1. Presentation to the UUA Board of Trustees, April 2026, "Information About the Review Team \_Presentation to Board".

2. Memorandum, February 22, 2026, From Foley & Lardner LLP, To UUA Secretary; RE: Legal/Parliamentarian Considerations for Proposed Business Resolution and Bylaw Amendments.

## FYI, 3<sup>RD</sup> SUBMITTED AMENDMENT, REPLACED W/TASK FORCE

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- **First Parish Brewster UU (FPBUU) submitted a 3<sup>rd</sup> item for the 2026 General Assembly Agenda, which was withdrawn, based on UUA Legal Review**, which included that it was not actionable as it would “...require a forced employer/employee association...” The text of the proposed amendment (to be added as final paragraph in Section 11.5 of Article XI) was:  
  
“**When a minister’s Fellowship is suspended or placed on administrative hold** (other than for criminal charges or conviction), and they are not employed as a minister nor able to obtain such employment due to the suspension, the **UUA shall provide contract employment with salary, benefits,** and other compensation equivalent to the minister’s most recent active Fellowship position. This contract ends if the minister is removed from Fellowship. Payments from the UUA during this contract period shall be reduced by any other earnings the minister receives, except for income they had previously earned in addition to their ministerial salary.”
- The UUA Secretary notified FPBUU that the “Item is withdrawn and the Board of Trustees shall establish a Task Force according to the following: **The Board of Trustees of the UUA shall establish a Task Force to a) consider ways to mitigate the impact of suspension from ministerial search on the compensation and livelihood of Ministers and b) make any recommendations to the Ministerial Fellowship Committee related thereto.**”<sup>1</sup>
- At the April 2026 UUA Board of Trustees meeting, the co-moderator mentioned this resolution being included in a future UUA board agenda.
- Thanks to the UUA Board of Trustees for taking on this Resolution.

1. Email communication, From UUA Secretary, to Amendment Submitter, February 27, 2026



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# THANK YOU!

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