

# **UCC's Governing Structure**

## **January 2008**

### **A. We are a Denominational Church**

1. UCC is a member of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC). The ECC "is a rapidly growing multi-ethnic denomination in the United States and Canada with ministries on five continents of the world. Founded in 1885 by Swedish immigrants, the ECC values the Bible as the Word of God, the gift of God's grace and ever-deepening spiritual life that comes through faith in Jesus Christ, the importance of extending God's love and compassion to a hurting world, and the strength that comes from unity within diversity" (from the ECC web site, [www.covchurch.org](http://www.covchurch.org)).
2. We are also a member of the Pacific Southwest Conference of the ECC, which as of September 2007 has 149 churches throughout California, Arizona, and Hawaii with over 42,000 worship attendees. Thirty-one of the churches are new churches started in the last five years. The PSWC's "vision for mission is to be a mosaic of churches working interdependently to reach the unchurched and equip believers to transform lives and communities" ([www.pswc.org](http://www.pswc.org)).

### **B. We are a Congregational Church**

1. Though UCC belongs to a denomination, we are also a congregational church. This primarily means that (a) the congregation, not the denomination, chooses its pastor, and (b) ultimate authority for governing the church is invested in an elected group of lay leaders rather than the pastor and/or higher denominational authorities (Articles 6, 7, and 11.04 of the UCC Bylaws).
2. One might also add that a healthy congregational church is one where the members are energetically involved in ministry. That is, a primary purpose of the pastoral and ministry staff is not to do ministry mainly by themselves, but to equip and encourage lay people in doing so.

### **C. UCC's Leadership Structure**

1. Elder Team: Elders are lay leaders elected by the congregation to serve three-year terms as the spiritual (and legal) leaders of the church. The Senior Pastor and one to two ministry staff members also serve as Elders. The team consists of eight to twelve members total. It is the final decision-making body for the church, though it often seeks to delegate decision-making authority to the other individuals and teams listed below. (Two decision-making exceptions are the calling of ordained pastoral staff and buying or selling church property, which require congregational approval.) The team elects one of its members to serve as the Elder Team Leader.
2. Senior Pastor: An ordained pastoral staff member called by the congregation to be the lead pastor of the church. The Senior Pastor is spiritual co-leader of the church with the Elders.

3. Ministry Directors Team: Ministry Directors are in charge of one or more major areas of ministry. They lead and support the ministry teams and volunteer leaders involved in the day-to-day ministry. Individually and as a group, they develop vision, strategy and plans for the church's ministries. Ministry Directors may be pastors, other paid staff, or volunteers. The team is led by the Executive Pastor in conjunction with the Senior Pastor.
4. Management Team: A group of leaders from various teams (finances, personnel, buildings and grounds, communications and public relations, facility use and fellowship, information technology, office team, and University Covenant Nursery School) who oversee the administrative functions of the church. The team is led by the Executive Pastor.

## **D. Rights and Responsibilities of UCC Members**

1. Membership: "Membership in [UCC] is granted upon application to those who through their faith in God's son, our Lord Jesus Christ, have been born anew to a living hope; have been baptized according to the Holy Scriptures; desire to live a Christian life; and promise to support the total ministry of this church, and to share its fellowship and obligations" (Article 4.01 of the UCC Bylaws). In addition, every member "shall through his/her witness by life and work, consecrated service, prayer and financial support further the cause of Christ through the local church, the denomination, and the Church-at-large" (Article 4.08).
2. Election of church officers: Our bylaws require that "Annual church business meetings of members for the election of officers, members of the Elder Team and election and/or appointment of other church leaders shall be held in May or June of each year, at such time and place as shall be fixed by the Elder Team" (Article 5.01). A quorum of 25% of the members is required. Voting may be done without a meeting via written ballots (Article 5.07).
3. Calling ordained pastoral staff: UCC members shall call ordained pastoral staff by a two-thirds vote at a church business meeting (Article 11.04).
4. Selling or purchasing property: The membership must approve the selling or purchasing of property for the church (Article 7.03d).

## **E. Vision, Planning, and Budget**

1. Ministry vision and ideas: Although the Elder Team, Ministry Directors Team, and Senior Pastor each spend a good deal of time seeking wisdom and discernment about future directions for the church and making plans to turn vision into action, ideas for new or enhanced ministries can come from anyone in the church. University Covenant Nursery School, the Faith, Compassion and Justice Team, and the HELP ministry (mental illness ministry) are just a few recent examples. Visions and ideas must nevertheless be evaluated before moving forward with them. The necessary leadership and financial resources must be available and the new or enhanced ministry should fit well with the general direction and culture of UCC.

2. Developing new ministries: "Proposals for new ministry teams and their leaders must be approved by the Ministry Directors Team or its designees. New ministries may be created through either a top-down process initiated by the Ministry Director or a bottom-up process initiated by individuals with a vision and passion for a specific ministry. Individuals wishing to start a new ministry team must consult with the appropriate Ministry Director in submitting a proposal for approval. If they are unclear as to which existing area is appropriate, they should meet with the Senior Pastor or his/her designee for advice" (Article 8.03 of the Bylaws).
3. The budget process (basic outline for 2008-2009):
  - (a) In order to enable and encourage UCC members to participate more fully in the vision and planning process, in January 2008 we will hold a "Vision Forum." At this forum the Ministry Directors Team will present key aspects of their visions for ministry in the upcoming 12-18 months. Ideas and feedback will also be sought at and after the forum.
  - (b) Using guidelines established by the Finance Team and Elder Team, during January and February the Ministry Directors and their ministry teams will create their proposed budgets for the upcoming year. Other teams that have authority over certain budget line items (e.g., the Finance Team, the Information Technology Team, the Communications and PR Team, etc.) will do the same. January and February are thus the best and most useful months for members to provide input into the process.
  - (c) In March the Finance Team will put the budget together and present it to the Elder Team in April. The Elder Team will review the budget and make changes, if necessary, before presenting it to the congregation in May. Budget Q and A meetings will be held in May, and the final congregational vote will occur in June via a written ballot as in previous years.