

UUCF Leaders Guide

Updated April 2024

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a leader at UUCF. You will likely have questions about your role and how to help your team carry out its work. In this Guide, you will find the foundational information every leader at UUCF needs. Please familiarize yourself with the kind of information it contains, and turn to it first when you have a question. If you can't find the answer here, then turn to whomever is the immediate leader of your area of ministry. If you are a committee member, ask the committee chair. If you are a committee chair, ask the minister who oversees your committee (lay or Senior Minister). If you are a lay minister, speak to the Senior Minister.

This Leader's Guide was created and is updated periodically by the Leadership and Nominating Committee (LNC), in consultation with the minister and the Coordinating Team (CT). For questions regarding this Guide, please contact the LNC at Inc@uucf.org.

In this Guide, you will find:

[A Welcome From the Minister](#)

[UUCF Mission and Vision](#)

[UUCF Organizational Chart](#)

[Major Responsibilities of a Leader](#)

[Resources for Leaders:](#)

- [UUCF Governance](#) – how UUCF is organized and governed
- [Policies](#) – 30+ policies, procedures, guidelines
- [Events at UUCF](#) – for events scheduled throughout the year
- [UUCF's Connection to the UUA](#) – We've got connections!
- [Useful Contacts](#) – for when in doubt about contact info

A Welcome from the Minister

Thank you so much for making the choice to serve as a leader at UUCF. This congregation could not exist without the energy, passion, and dedication of leaders like you.

In answering the call to leadership, you will be digging deep into a lived experience of UUCF's mission: To transform ourselves, our community, and the world through acts of love and justice; and vision: Grow, Connect and Serve. Serving, you will certainly do. We trust this role will also help you connect more deeply with others on your team and in the community. And we hope your leadership role will help you grow spiritually as well.

As you serve, please remember that you are not alone. I, along with the lay ministers of the congregation, are here to support you. Please call on us whenever you need us. May this be a joyous journey!

With appreciation,

Rev. David A. Miller
Senior Minister

Mission

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax is a progressive religious congregation founded in 1955 whose **mission is to transform ourselves, our community and the world through acts of love and justice.**

Vision

Our vision is to **Grow. Connect. Serve.**

- We grow as individuals and as a community through worship, service, play and caring for one another, thereby deepening our appreciation of the gifts of life and love.
- We connect to and care for our families, our congregation and our community.
- We serve our world through our work and commitment.

Organization

Please review the [UUCF Organization Chart](#) showing the relationships between committees, lay ministries, the Coordinating Team (CT), and the Board of Directors.

Major Responsibilities of a Leader

Hopefully, you have had a chance to review your committee charter and job description, and meet with others to gain more perspective: your committee's chair, the lay minister, or the Senior Minister. Continue to meet with those leaders to keep them informed of your team's work and to coordinate your team's work with the efforts of other UUCF teams. In addition, reach out to the [Leadership and Nominating Committee](#) (LNC, Inc@uucf.org) for additional insight on process and techniques that can help you become the best team leader/team member you can be.

The major responsibilities of a leader include:

1. [Modeling spirituality in leadership](#)
2. [Leading through caring: the team's health](#)
3. [Tending to the foundation](#)
4. [Reserving a meeting space](#) (in-person or virtual)
5. [Coordinating special events](#)
6. [Making announcements for group meetings/events](#)
7. [Managing meeting support](#)
8. [Managing finances](#)

[\(back to Cover Page\)](#)

1. Spirituality in Leadership

As leaders of the congregation, you are a valuable part of its ministry. In our shared search for truth and meaning, it is important for us to reflect on how we, as leaders, approach and respond to the tasks we undertake at UUCF and the people who collaborate with us.

Below you will find a list of questions designed to assist you in two areas of personal leadership development: Reflection and Curiosity. These suggested questions can help you (and your team, if you use them in a team setting) set the stage for more intentional and empathic engagement as you work together to transform ourselves, our community, and the world through acts of love and justice.

- How often do I speak and how often do I listen? Am I attached to being right?
- What is my story about the dynamics involved in our work? For example, am I coming from a place of doing “for” people or doing “with” people?
- In what ways have I been challenged in this work, activity, and/or event to move beyond the edges of my comfort? What is my discomfort inviting me to consider?
- How often do I feel a sense of connection with things beyond myself, or glimpse something that feels holy or sacred (however defined)? What might that sense (or lack thereof) suggest?
- What about this work, activity, and/or event reinforces or challenges my personal outlook/framework? What is becoming clearer to me about myself?
- In what ways does being on this committee (or leading this committee) connect me to my deepest desire/inner voice/calling?
- What has surprised me while doing this work?
- How have I been changed because of being in this team (or doing this work)?
- What aspects of this work inspire me or fill me with dread?
- In what ways has being on this team (or doing this work) grounded my religious beliefs and values?
- What story from my life and/or our faith tradition inspires or informs my work?
- Where did I find joy or hope in this work?

[Back to Leader's List](#)

2. Healthy Teams Checklist for Leaders

As a leader, your most influential task may well be creating a culture that invites your team members to share their talents, participate fully, learn and grow from their participation, and enjoy every bit of their time on the team. Make time to nurture healthy engagement in your team.

At the beginning of the team's life, dedicate intentional time to set the stage for safe and active participation:

- ___ Invite voice, e.g., ask team members to share their name, personal interests, involvement at UUCF, why they said Yes to this group, etc.
- ___ Create a shared understanding about the team's work: who are we, why are we here, what are our charges, how do we operate, a timeline of expected "deliverables" for the year. Leaders may need to distill their charter into a one-pager to help focus the group at this stage (see more on charters below, in [The Foundation](#)).
- ___ Facilitate a conversation to co-create the team: what atmosphere/culture do we want to have together, how do we want to be together when things get difficult, what else would help this group thrive. Use your own tools to help the team form. For example, use the Team Life Cycle (see below) to show the normal evolution of teams and how team members can help the process.
- ___ Bring it back to the individual level: how might your friendships/affinity/years as a congregant affect the way you perform your role in this group, what would you like to walk away with at the end of the congregational year, what area of personal growth would you like to work on in this group.
- ___ Document the conversation and share the notes with all team members. The document now contains a team agreement (aka covenant) and team members' intentions for themselves, which can be used for check-ins.

During the year, check in regularly and adjust accordingly:

(using the covenant and the intentions as basis)

- ___ Invite feedback, reflection, and self-accountability
- ___ Encourage team members to tap their passions in accomplishing the group's work
- ___ Celebrate success, acknowledge setbacks, and correct course

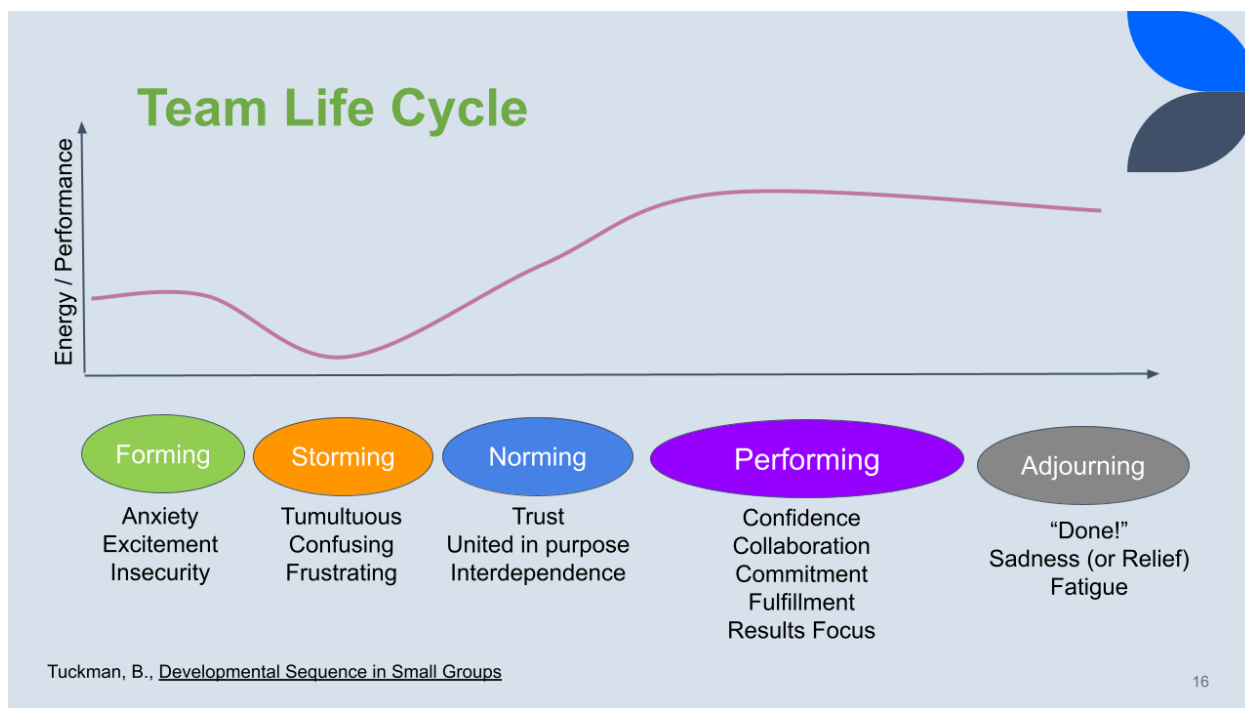
At the end of the year, take stock and set up for the future:

- ___ Collectively: highlight the group’s accomplishments, acknowledge unfinished work
- ___ Individually: share accomplishments and areas for further learning/future participation
- ___ Collectively: decide on a handover process for the next group—priorities, unfinished business, focus for upcoming teams, team culture.

Useful Links

[Leaders Guide](#) - A very useful resource for all leaders and congregants

[UUCF Calendar](#) - Congregational life at a glance



Contact the LNC (lnc@uucf.org) for further info on creating Healthy Teams.

[Back to Leader's List](#)

3. The Foundation

The Charter

Your task as leader is to provide clarity for your team's work and accomplishments. Does your team have a charter that describes its purpose, who you report to, and any specifics on how you accomplish your goals? Does it have any standard operating procedures or checklist for doing specific tasks? It is useful to review these documents annually with your team to keep them current and use them to educate your team on how to accomplish specific tasks.

If your charter is longer and complex, it is critical that you provide a clear version of the purpose, desired outcomes, and a path to reach the outcomes for the current year. As a leader, with your insights informed by connections within the leadership ranks, you would be in the best position to provide this clarity, whether through a one-pager synopsis or through discussion with your team.

For all matters related to charters, please contact the CT (coordinatingteam@uucf.org).

The Covenant

Groups co-create norms, whether explicitly or implicitly. Your job as a leader is to ensure everyone can participate in co-creating a set of shared norms.

Every member of every group arrives with their own unique expectations about what the group should be like. These expectations, whether large or small, can have a dramatic impact on whether the group is successful. Expectations of group members that are not expressed or not met can hold groups back: unspoken expectations guide our behaviors, and behaviors over time become the norms of the group (whether intended or not).

That's why a group covenant is so important in building trust and community. It provides communication of standards and goals for everyone in the group, allowing members to have a shared vision and language, which leads to mutual accountability. A covenant not only helps clarify and unify members in their expectations, it also highlights the values and behaviors that are needed for a group to be successful.

Developing a Group Covenant

Because each small group is unique in its values and expectations, each small group's covenant will be unique. Based on Bill Donahue's book, "Leading Life-Changing Small Groups," here are guidelines for developing a covenant:

- The covenant's values need to be generated by the group, not imposed by the leader. Get everyone's opinions and then give them time (maybe even as much as a month) to think about them before agreeing to them.
- Be sure that expectations are clear, not ambiguous or open to interpretation. A covenant should be in writing. Group covenants should always be in the form of "we" statements.
- Each person must affirm the covenant. Ask that everyone sign their names on the covenant to show their commitment.
- Covenants should be reaffirmed or reinterpreted on a periodic basis so that members are reminded and/or clarified about group expectations ... and can reaffirm their commitment to one another.
- Covenants should be created around logistics and values that support group goals and purposes. Logistics include how often the group will meet and where, attendance expectations, and who will handle different needs. Values include confidentiality, authenticity, transparency, acceptance, and invitation.

Expect to spend at least 20 minutes with your group on developing a covenant. After a covenant is drafted, allow some more time for members to fully understand and respond to the draft. Once everybody gives input and agrees to the final draft, then it becomes the covenant to be affirmed by everyone. While everyone in the group "owns" the covenant and the agreed behaviors, your role as a leader is to observe how well the covenant is being "lived" and call out when you see a discrepancy. Review periodically or as needed.

Suggested Key Questions in Covenanting

- What kind of atmosphere do we want on this team?
- What behaviors will help create this atmosphere?
- What else is also OK for us to do?
- What is not OK for us to do?
- How shall we handle it when things get difficult?
- What role do we want the team leader to have when things get difficult?

Contact the LNC (lnc@uucf.org) for ideas and tips on how you can most effectively work with your group to co-create a covenant or for sample covenants.

[*Back to Leader's List*](#)

4. Reserving a Meeting Space (in-person or virtual)

You can get a room scheduled for your team, either on a continuing basis or as needed, by contacting Administrative Coordinator Mary Foster at uucf@uucf.org. There are some days of the week where meeting space is at a premium, so work with Mary and your team to find the best date and time for your meetings. Mary can also schedule general purpose rooms (the Sanctuary, the Chapel, the Library, or the Sanctuary Commons area). Please ensure that you ask for space as soon as you know you need a room, as some spaces are in high demand. Similarly, note in your request any technical assistance for multi-platform (virtual) participation.

Please leave the table and chairs as they were when you came in, return A/V equipment where you got it, and turn out the lights. The doors leading out of the Program Building will automatically lock at a time set by the administrative staff.

You may also set up a one-time or a recurring Zoom meeting link. Contact Operations Manager Bill Braband (om@uucf.org).

[*Back to Leader's List*](#)

5. Coordinating Special Events

If your team or group wishes to hold a special event at UUCF, such as a film, musical performance, dinner, or other social event, there are a few important steps to take.

1. If a fundraiser, you must receive permission ahead of time from the UUCF Coordinating Team (CT), coordinatingteam@uucf.org.
2. Reserve space with Mary Foster (uucf@uucf.org, also see above). Inform her of your set-up needs at least a week in advance.
3. If you need A/V tech support for your event in the Sanctuary, Chapel or meeting room, request that support from Operations Manager Bill Braband (om@uucf.org).

[*Back to Leader's List*](#)

6. Announcements for Group Meetings/Events

Your go-to person for announcements is Director of Communications Mary Lareau (mlareau@uucf.org).

For events that your team organizes and wants to open up to the congregation and/or the public, please send your announcement information to Mary Lareau at least 4 weeks before the events. She will work with you to place your information in various communications vehicles.

For announcements from the pulpit during Sunday worship, please send your request to Mary Lareau by the Tuesday before the service when you wish your announcement to occur. Time for announcements from the pulpit is limited, so not all requests can be accommodated. It is best to send an email with the suggested words to be spoken. Please keep it as brief as possible (30 seconds or less).

To post a flyer on the Sanctuary Commons bulletin board, please contact Mary Lareau. Flyers posted without staff input will be removed.

For the web, please review your team's webpage on the UUCF website occasionally to ensure the information is up-to-date. If you need to revise your page, please copy and paste the text into a Google doc, make edits on this Google doc, and share the doc with Mary Lareau for review and posting. Mary can also help you with any major communications items such as design and scheduling promotions. Please also contact Mary prior to using the UUCF logo on your materials.

You might also consider using UUCF's social media to reach out to the community for special events or programs. Please contact Mary Lareau for social media assistance.

For a display in the Sanctuary Commons after services, please prepare your display and put it on one of the tables along the deck side of the Commons prior to the start of service. Please restrict your display size to one of the small 2x4 ft tables so that other groups may also share their displays. If no table is available, please ask the staff person on duty to get you a table. On Sundays throughout the fall, UUCF allocates the Commons for the "Get Connected Fair" where committees can display their work and recruit new members.

For newspaper announcements, Patch is the local newspaper that allows us to advertise our events to the surrounding community. To place announcements in the Patch, please contact Mary Lareau to ensure we do not duplicate announcements.

[Back to Leader's List](#)

7. Managing Meeting Support

If you need to make hard copies, please use the copy machines in the basement of the Administration Building during regular UUCF office hours. Contact Mary Foster ahead of time (uucf@uucf.org) if you need to make copies on Sunday mornings.

If you need other materials, please call the UUCF office and talk with a member of the staff about your specific needs. A/V equipment (screens and TVs) is available for use in team activities, and you may reserve them by contacting uucf@uucf.org. Staff can help you connect your laptop to TV monitors with internet connection in most spaces.

[Back to Leader's List](#)

8. Managing Financials

Occasionally you will need to spend money to buy materials, services, or food for events that your team organizes. Please keep in mind that, when we are spending UUCF funds, we are spending from carefully planned and allocated budgets. Such expenditures will need to be planned with your guiding leader (the ministry or program director who works most closely with your program). Please pay due diligence and compare prices to get the best value for the money. For significant expenditures, please explore competitive sources to be sure you get what you need at the most favorable price.

There are two main ways to fund your events or projects: via ad hoc reimbursements, or via an annual budget

Ad hoc reimbursements: request pre-approval from Finance Manager Gayathri Tillekeratne (gayathri@uucf.org) for the amount you anticipate spending, with an explanation of how the funds will be used. After the event, you (or your team members) need to complete a [Reimbursement form](#) and send it to Gayathri, signed by you and supported by documents or receipts. The reimbursement will be by way of a cheque.

Annual budget: if you already know how much money you will need to carry out your group's work for the year, a good way for both you and UUCF to plan is via an annual budget request. To request a budget, email the amount you anticipate needing and a spending plan to Finance Manager Gayathri Tillekeratne (gayathri@uucf.org). Send your request in early-February to be considered for the following congregational year.

Even with an annual budget, you would still need to request for reimbursement. After the event, you (or your team members) need to complete a [Reimbursement form](#) and send it to Gayathri Tillekeratne (gayathri@uucf.org), signed by you and supported by documents or receipts. The reimbursement will be by way of a cheque.

For the annual budget, it would be good form to first check (with Gayathri) whether your team already has a budget for this year. If your team has a budget, then find out (from your predecessor or your guiding leader) how funds are to be used.

If your team is holding an event where funds will be collected (e.g., ticket sales, donations for entry to the event, donations for refreshments, etc.), please ensure that two people count the collected funds and a [Cash Collection Form](#) is completed. These funds should be placed in the slot box in the Partner Church room closet in the Sanctuary Building.

If you are managing an event that both spends and raises funds, keep income and expenditures separate so that they may be properly accounted for in the UUCF accounting system. Turn in all receipts to Gayathri Tillekeratne (gayathri@uucf.org), with information about their source and the account into which they should be placed. And then request [reimbursement](#) for expenses that you've incurred: never reimburse yourself or others by directly using receipts as, again, all funds need to be accounted for in the UUCF financial management system.

Regardless of whether or not you have an annual budget, track your team's expenses throughout the year, and talk with your guiding leader if you need additional funding.

Finally, when making purchases for UUCF use, remember that the congregation is a tax-exempt organization. To make tax-exempt purchases you will need to get a *Commonwealth of Virginia Sales and Use Tax Certificate of Exemption* from the UUCF office staff. It is also worth remembering that, for the same reason, any goods donated by vendors will also create charitable deductions for the vendor. And for any discount from fair market value, generally, retail prices may also be reported to the IRS by the vendor as a charitable contribution. So don't hesitate to ask vendors for a discount! Unfortunately, this only applies to material goods; labor costs, no matter how deeply discounted, may not be used as charitable exemptions.

[Back to Leader's List](#)

Connection to the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)

UUCF is a member congregation of the UUA. The 1000+ member congregations of the UUA provide the financial resources for the UUA. Congregations vote for the leaders of the UUA, who oversee the central staff and resources. The UUA supports congregations in their work by training ministers, publishing books and the “UU World” magazine, providing religious education curricula, offering shared services, coordinating social justice activities and more.

The UUA is divided into five regions with dedicated staff in each region. UUCF is part of the Central East Region (CER). UUCF’s primary contact at the UUA is Rev. Sana Saeed (ssaeed@uua.org, 267-495-4035). This staff person knows our congregation and is the first person to contact when the congregation needs assistance from the UUA. The primary contact either provides the needed services or arranges for someone else on the CER staff or UUA staff to do so.

CER provides assistance to the congregation for special circumstances, including ministerial transition and providing training and workshops on a regular basis. Online leadership training is provided by the [UU Institute](#).

The UUA holds a yearly General Assembly (GA) at the end of June. GA is held in a different city each year at a convention center or virtual only. There is always an option to attend virtually, even when it is in-person. Delegates from the member congregations gather along with ministers and other professional staff and the UUA staff for 5 days of worship, learning, workshops, social justice witness, networking, and conducting the business of the association.

For any questions related to GA and the UUA, please contact the Leadership & Nominating Committee (LNC, lnc@uucf.org).

[\(back to Cover Page\)](#)

Helpful Resources

Besides this Leader's Guide and the information on the UUCF website, here are several documents that explain how UUCF is organized and how it operates.

[UUCF Governance \(Manual, Bylaws, Ends\)](#) - This resource contains the current UUCF mission and vision, CT responsibilities and limitations, various policies including financial policies. It describes how strategic planning is done and the relationship between the board, the CT, and the congregation. In the Bylaws, you will find the rules established by an organization or community to regulate itself. In the Ends, you will find a more detailed description of UUCF's Ends.

[Policies](#) - There are 30+ current policies, procedures, and guidelines on this website, from weather cancellations to the use of alcohol on UUCF property. Please peruse so you know where you can find policy information.

[UUCF Events](#) – To see the current calendar and search for major events that have been scheduled throughout the year.

[Congregational Resolutions and Designations](#) – To see how our values inform how we present to the world.

[Useful Contacts](#) – To see a list of useful contacts when in doubt about contact info.

[*\(back to Cover Page\)*](#)