

TO: FSA Leadership Council
FROM: David Wardlaw, George Jolink and Steve Elson
RE: **Next steps in FSA Governance**
DATE: January 7, 2026

The following memo was approved by Council on January 7, 2026.

Context

This paper is a follow-up to the materials circulated to Council following the June 24, 2025 meeting of Council – as well as the two-page article in the fall issue of Tidings (Vol.35, No.3, 2025).

It is intended to provide some additional clarity and specificity regarding how we plan to transition from the current Council model to the New Council model – on a one-year trial basis.

If supported by Council, this paper will become part of the material made available to the FSA community of faith in advance of the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 18, 2026.

The New Council

The United Church Manual (2025) requires that the governing body of each community of faith (usually referred to as a pastoral charge in UCC documents) include a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. It states that an ordained minister is to be present at each meeting. (At FSA, it is a long-standing practice to consider the lead minister as an ex officio member of Council.) The Manual also states that a representative of the Ministry and Personnel Committee should be present at each meeting (but there is no requirement that an M&P representative be a sitting member of Council).

In order to address the on-going challenges associated with the Chair role – and the many and varied responsibilities – either by design or by default – that fall to the incumbent of that role – it is proposed that rather than have a single chair position that a co-chair structure be implemented – more specifically three co-chairs are proposed. Each Co-Chair would have specific liaison responsibilities as well as general governance ones. The following is proposed:

- Co-Chair responsible for Administration and External Relations
 - Liaison with Finance, Ministry & Personnel, and Outreach portfolios, and with the staff group*
- Co-Chair responsible for Congregational Life
 - Liaison with Faith Development, Membership & Nurture, Music
- Co-Chair responsible for Physical Assets and Information Technology
 - Liaison with Property, Board of Trustees

* The liaison with the staff group would cover two-way communications between the staff group and Council, and assisting the staff group in the implementation of plans and policies (other than HR policies) approved by Council. The mandate of M&P would remain unchanged. M & P would remain responsible for providing all HR services, staff evaluations, and the administration of FSA's staff policies and procedures.

It is suggested that three co-chair model is an innovative solution to what has been an on-going challenge; namely, presenting the Chair role as one that is not overwhelming and therefore unattractive. Sharing the workload and responsibilities of this role is seen as a viable and workable approach.

In addition to the Co-Chairs, Secretary, Treasurer and Ministerial roles, it is proposed that two Members-at-Large be recruited to serve as members of the New Council. This will broaden the perspectives available to the decision-making and governance functions and these roles will be open to all members of FSA.

This brings the total number of New Council members to eight (8) – seven of whom would be elected by the congregation.

Meeting Frequency

It is proposed that the New Council schedule meetings on a quarterly basis – held to coincide with important decision-making times in the life of the church. For example, a meeting at the end of November could be planned to address the upcoming fiscal year budget. Of course, as needed, special meetings could be convened.

Terms of Office

Some of the roles on the New Council are filled, by default, by those who occupy the role – i.e. Treasurer, Secretary and the Ministerial role. The others are seen as being more time-limited with specific terms – this is the way the Board of Trustees currently functions. This would apply to both the Member-at-Large and Co-Chair roles. It is proposed that the people who are elected to these roles on the New Council make a commitment to serve for an initial two years (eight meetings) – following which one of the three incumbents would be replaced by a new member. This pattern would repeat itself on a bi-annual basis. The proposal is that each initial member would serve two, four or six years. Following this routine, replacement of members would occur every two years.

Policies and Procedures

It is proposed that the current Statement of Policies and Procedure's being used by FSA (circa 2020) continue to be used pending the longer-term decision by the congregation regarding the new governance model in January 2027.

https://www.fsaunited.com/files/ugd/25fec5_bd29f1a2bc4e4569a0dc680645c37756.pdf

Recruitment Status

Based on confirmed and preliminary conversations the following are proposed members of the New Council to date:

Co-Chair responsible for Administration and External Relations – David Wardlaw

Co-Chair responsible for Congregational Life – Steve Elson

Co-Chair responsible for Physical Assets and Information Technology – George Jolink

Secretary – Katherine Wonfor

Treasurer – Laura Wood

Ministerial member – Rev. Dr. Joshua Lawrence

Member-at-Large #1 – open

Member-at-Large #2 – open

It is proposed that the five (5) named non-ministerial members listed above be included in the nominations slate to be presented for approval at the congregational meeting. It is also proposed that the process of identification of nominees for the two member-at-large positions be deferred until the New Council model has been approved for a one-year trial (presumably this will occur at the congregational meeting on Jan. 18, 2026) and until there is an inaugural organizational meeting of the New Council (minus the two members-at-large), following which a call for nominations including a brief 'job' or role description would be issued. Any members-at-large recruited in this way would then be put forward for formal approval at the June congregational meeting.

Concluding Remarks

It is proposed that Council approve the implementation of the New Council model as described herein and including any modifications arising from Council discussion on Jan. 7, 2026.

NOTE: No changes to the text were made by Council.

Steps to recruit the two Members-At-Large will be taken as soon as possible and the positions will be advertised through the usual FSA communications channels.