

RIVER BOARD EXPLAINER

We are members of the River's board and we want to explain why our church has a board, what it does, and how people join it.

The current board members are Peter Eavis, Anthony Mariani, Molly McGregor, Alison Noll, Emily Noto, Charles Park (on medical leave), and Neysa Yoon-Cho. You can find more details on us below.

Why does the River have a board?

Many organizations and companies have a body of people that oversees and helps direct the institution. Churches are no exception. Weighty decisions – such as the River's deliberations over the years about where to hold our services – should not be made by one person. A board can provide diverse viewpoints, expertise, and discussions that can lead to sound decisions.

Many churches have a board of some form. Certain denominations have a presbytery of elders and deacons, for instance. The River is also a nonprofit entity, and, under New York state law, it must have a board.

What does the board do?

The board rarely gets involved in the week-to-week operations of the church. That's the work of the River's staff; they oversee groups, provide pastoral care, and decide what goes into our services.

The board, as an oversight body, aims to ensure that the River and its leaders are pursuing our core strategic goal of creating an affirming community where members can get closer to God and live full lives.

Among its specific duties, the board:

- Is responsible for staffing decisions, including hiring (and/or removing), reviewing performance of, and setting pay and benefits for staff members of the church, including the senior pastor(s).
- Offers guidance and support to staff members so they can better do their jobs.
- Helps leaders set the overall strategic direction of the church.
- Regularly reviews the finances of the church and gets involved with setting the budget.
- Weighs in on big spending decisions, like leasing space.
- Troubleshoots big problems and provides more hands-on governance when there are major disruptions or shocks (like the pandemic).
- Offers guidance and gets involved in important legal matters.
- Meets regularly, including approximately six formal meetings a year, ad hoc meetings to address items like the above, and ongoing communication with the staff.

Recent examples of board matters included deciding to relocate to our current space, reviewing the budget, and making staffing decisions related to Charles's medical leave.

Who can join the River's board?

Under New York law, the River is required to have from seven to 11 board members, and board members must be U.S. citizens and legal adults. There must also be more lay members than staff members on the board, and the majority must be New York state residents.

The River requires that board members have no plans to move in the near future. They must have been a member of the church for some time (preferably three years or longer), and be a leader in the church in significant ways.

What is a board member expected to do – and how big is the commitment?

Board members are expected to serve for a minimum of one year. Board members are expected to attend every meeting, and be involved in board discussions between meetings. In certain periods, the commitment can be significant, as it was when we were planning and executing our move to our location on 39th Street. Also, there have been times when the board has had to act quickly, which can mean being available on short notice to take up a matter.

Often, a board member will volunteer to do a specific task or project related to board business. Examples of this include work on fundraising, legal issues, and real estate activities. A board member may also meet with staff members and congregants when trying to understand an issue in the church. Sometimes those discussions may be confidential, sensitive, or difficult.

The viewpoint of each board member carries equal weight and we want to hear from the whole board in discussions. We also seek regular feedback and insights from the congregation, both through formal meetings like River Members Meetings and informational conversations with members/groups. We value rigor, vision, creativity, efficiency, frugality and a desire to get things done. We also seek to approach board business with fairness, collegiality, compassion, spiritual wisdom, and an open mind. We value differing viewpoints and like to reach consensus in a respectful manner. Board members must be good at working with other people and considering various perspectives.

Since the main responsibilities of the board are related to financial and staffing decisions, leaders with those backgrounds are well suited. There are, however, many other skills that would help the River's board do its job.

A board member cannot have business ties to the River.

How do we recruit and select board members?

In the past, the existing board has both reached out to a specific congregant (who meets legal and internal requirements) to gauge their interest and has announced openings to the membership for interest.

If a member is interested in joining the board, conversations will be scheduled with the lead pastor(s) and/or other board members to discuss the board's roles and responsibilities, upcoming church priorities, and to gauge fit. After that, the entire board will weigh in, and the decision will be made by the entire board.

How can you contact the board?

If you'd like to contact the Board for any reason, please email board@rivernyc.org.

More about us:

Peter Eavis has been part of the board for over a decade and has led the church in many areas such as prayer team, preaching, and small groups.

Anthony Mariani joined the River in 2010 and the board in 2022. He has been a vital part of multiple relocation efforts, saving the church an enormous amount of money. He has also led small groups.

Molly McGregor has been part of the board for over a decade and has led the church in many areas. Molly played a critical role in helping to design and construct our current space. She has also led small groups.

Alison Noll has been a part of the church for over a decade and serves as a board member and Co-Lead Pastor.

Emily Noto joined the River in 2010 and the board in 2022 and has led the church in setting processes for church-wide communications and decision-making. She has also led small groups.

Charles Park was one of the founders of the church in 2004 and serves as a board member and Co-Lead Pastor. He is currently on medical leave.

Neysa Yoon-Cho joined the board in 2022 and has been a member of the River for over a decade. Having spent many years in nonprofit management and fundraising, she brings her expertise in fundraising and budgeting to the church. She has also served in RiverKids.