

# A Case for Retaining the Current UU Principles and Sources

A commentary on the proposed changes to Article II of the UUA Bylaws

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Note to reader: This commentary has 12 pages of text. The additional pages starting on page 13 show the current version of Article II side-by-side with the proposed revision of Article II

## Introduction

A Commission appointed to review Article II of the UUA Bylaws, which includes the Principles and Sources, has proposed a rewrite that drops major portions of Article II and makes many dramatic changes.

- The 7 Principles, as such, would no longer exist. They are replaced with 6 Values that include mission-like statements.
- The 6 Sources would no longer exist. They are replaced with a paragraph titled "Inspirations" that does not list specific sources.
- The scope of Covenants would be significantly expanded.
- The scope of Freedom of Belief would be significantly reduced.
- The stated Purpose of the Association would be changed, laying a foundation for a reversal of the flow of power in UU.

The Commission obviously believes that adhering to a tradition of proposing incremental changes with amendments cannot accomplish their goals. This commentary makes the case for voting against such a radical overhaul of this core document, which has been the foundation of UU since 1961.

The UUA Bylaws mandate that Article II must be reviewed at least every 15 years. The review typically takes 2 years to complete. This is prudent, as it helps make sure Unitarian Universalism remains dynamic and responsive to the evolving wisdoms of its members.

In the last review cycle in 2009, the Commission proposed revisions that were voted down at General Assembly. Just because a review is mandated does not mean it has to propose any changes, nor do the changes need to be dramatic. The new review this year proposes the most transformative rewrite of Article II since 1961. A rewrite in 1985 changed a lot of the language and reformatted the text, but this rewrite is aiming for a more impactful transformation of UU.

As a reminder to the reader, the text of the current version of Article II, shown side-by-side with the proposed rewrite, starts on page 13.

Before proceeding to read this analysis of the rewrite, ask yourself...

- What attracted you to UU in the first place?
- What convinced you that UU was a good fit for you?
- What has inspired you to continue making UU part of your life?

It is likely that the Principles and Sources in Article II were a magnet that brought you to UU and are a vital glue that binds together your UU community. That open-minded and inclusive UU community is a big reason you continue to make UU part of your life.

The Principles serve as the core foundation that naturally begets an even wider (but not enumerated) set of values and ethics that are guiding lights for becoming a better person and making the world a better place. They attract and bind together people who have similar

goals for themselves and their society. The Principles as written make it clear that there is no boundary on our circle of concern and care.

The Commission has not put forward a compelling rationale that justifies the major changes they are proposing. In the proposed changes to the Sources, Purposes, and Freedom of Belief we see echoes of the changes voted down in 2009. The replacement of the Principles goes far beyond what was proposed in 2009. Change is not automatically better. UU members and congregations have a responsibility to thoughtfully consider whether this rewrite is wise.

This commentary makes a case for retaining the current UU Principles and Sources. The position this commentary takes is that this radical rewrite of Article II is counter-productive and would transform UU in ways that are unhealthy and unwise.

### Outline of the Case for Retaining the Current Article II

- 1) Clarity: A strength of the Principles is the clear, concise, and cohesive language. The Principles show what makes UU unique.
- 2) Freedom: The Principles protect the freedom and sovereignty of each person, whereas the rewrite emphasizes the collective.
- 3) Tolerance: The current Freedom of Belief explicitly protects freedom of belief. The rewrite removes that commitment.
- 4) Inspirations: The list of specific Sources is a potent visual reminder of UU's embrace of spiritual and intellectual diversity.
- 5) Polity: The current primary purpose of the Association is to serve its member congregations. The rewrite removes that role.

- 6) Agency: The Principles let us decide *how* to express our values. Covenants in the rewrite will determine our priorities.
- 7) Accountability: Inserting accountability in this context is a terrible idea. Standards are unknown. Enforcement is not defined. UUs judging other UUs would be divisive and toxic.
- 8) Universality: The current language is easily understood. The rewrite adds ambiguous words and phrases that have special meanings. These can be misinterpreted all too easily.
- 9) Covenant: The proposed covenants through the Association would reverse the flow of power and authority in UU.
- 10) They Work: The Principles are fully capable of inspiring and guiding us. Replacing them is not necessary nor wise.

### Detailed Explanations of the Case for Retaining the Current Article II

- 1) Clarity: A strength of the current 7 Principles is that they are clear, concise, and cohesive. The Principles serve as a guiding light to our highest aspirations. They shine a spotlight on what makes Unitarian Universalism unique among all denominations. The proposed rewrite completely replaces the Principles with Values. The Values are not clear, are not concise, and obscure what makes UU unique. They resemble mission statements more than principles. Three times as many words just makes it three times harder to describe UU to potential members. Adding dozens of related values dilutes the overall impact, trivializing the core Principles. A new graphic showing 6 Values encircling the word 'Love' says too little, whereas the new words say too much. The words in the current Principles are just right.

- 2) Freedom: The current 7 Principles put a strong focus on the inherent worth and dignity of every person. They recognize that every person is entitled to the right of conscience and participation in the democratic process. They trust individuals to think for themselves. Every person's voice is valued. This makes UU unique. The rewrite, in contrast, is an overreaction to a perception of excessive individualism, over-correcting with its heavy emphasis on covenant and the collective over the individual. The rewrite makes sure we don't miss the point; each Value adds a statement that begins with "*We covenant to ...*".
- 3) Tolerance: The Freedom of Belief statement basically says that nobody can tell you what to believe or not believe. It explicitly says that nothing in the bylaws can infringe on individual freedom of belief. The protection is all-encompassing.

Inexplicably, the explicit protections of freedom of belief and the right of conscience have been removed in the proposed revision. This is a very important change. Many members will probably not detect the change in scope. They are likely to assume that the title of the section is an affirmation that there still will be a broad commitment to freedom of belief.

Nothing in the new statement in the Freedom of Belief section affirms a commitment to freedom of belief that is all-encompassing. It opens with a reference to a heritage of the individual's right of conscience but makes no commitment to perpetuating that right. The only explicit protection remaining in this section is an affirmation that congregations cannot

require individuals to believe something that can be construed to be a creed. Note that this protection does not explicitly apply to the UUA itself! There is no protection left against individuals being told what they may or may not believe. This is an open invitation to censorship and other forms of intolerance.

- 4) Inspirations: The second part of the Principles section is known as the Sources. The list of Sources is eliminated in the proposed rewrite. In the place of an enumeration of 6 Sources of spiritual and intellectual inspiration, the new proposal has added a paragraph in a new section titled "Inspirations." Being specific about the sources of inspiration has been a potent visual cue to potential members that UU embraces a remarkably diverse set of spiritual and intellectual sources. Don't diminish the impact of that emphasis. Don't remove that magnet.
- 5) Polity: The current Article II Bylaws that are in place now intentionally avoid conflicting with congregational polity, except where Article II safeguards individual freedoms and sovereignty. Congregations currently have no covenants with the UUA because the Association is an administrative body, serving the congregations, not the other way around.

The rewrite significantly changes the distribution of authority, making congregations subservient to the Association for the first time. Covenants would be established both between congregations and through the Association. These covenants appear intended to be enforced, with punitive consequences, reversing the flow of power in UU.

6) Agency: Many UUs embrace the notion that it is important to express our values by working to improve the lives of others and ensure a sustainable world. The Article II that is in place now leaves it up to each person and each congregation to discern how to express their values. By conspicuously attaching covenant to every Value, the proposal presumes to pass judgement on how you and your congregation prioritize your time and where you direct your resources. We should reject the usurpation of those prerogatives. We should do things because we feel called to do so, not because we are told we have to, and if we don't, we could be judged to be 'out of covenant'.

7) Accountability: Covenants imply accountability, and the proposal states "*We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love*". What does this even mean? The standards we would be judged by are unknown. The mechanism for enforcing accountability is not defined. Who are members and congregations agreeing to be accountable to? What will be the consequences for being judged 'out-of-covenant'? Values are subjective criteria to be judged on. Love is said to be the central value. How can anyone judge whether we are "doing the work of living a value of *love*"? Institutionalizing a practice of some UUs judging other UUs, especially on subjective criteria, will be divisive and toxic. Accountability in this context is a terrible idea.

In the 'Equity' and 'Generosity' values we will covenant to freely share our resources and use our money to build and sustain our communities. How much is an *accountable* amount of money?

In the context of the new 'Justice' value, accountability could lead to troubling dilemmas. Perhaps the Actions of Immediate Witness (AIWs) from the past 5 years are indicative of what "accountable actions" will be proposed in the future. Some members might not agree with every action item in the AIWs, like calls to *"deactivate security systems that mobilize police response when triggered"*, which appeared in an AIW in 2020.

Are you "not being accountable" if you vote against an action item that activists are passionate about? Are you 'out of covenant' if you decline to support or participate in missions you personally disagree with? Are you 'out of covenant' if you express your disagreement? Is this dilemma part of the reason that an explicit affirmation of a right of conscience and individual freedom of belief were both removed?

- 8) Universality: The language in the current Principles is universally understandable. There is no insider jargon and no phrases that have special meanings. The language in the proposed revision includes many words and phrases that cannot be consistently interpreted and, in some cases, will be incomprehensible to non-members. Will everyone have a common understanding of the following new phrases that are being added to Article II?

*heal historic injustices, the transformation of the world, liberating Love, accountable to one another, the spiritual discipline of Love, repair harm and damaged relationships, Beloved Communities, dismantle, racism, systemic oppression, inclusive democratic processes, collectively transform, religious ancestries, covenant.*



For instance, people will not understand that the word 'Love' with a capital 'L' has a special meaning. The new version uses a capital 'L' on 'Love' in 3 places. The instructions from the Board to the Commission defined love this way: "*Our commitment to personal, institutional, and cultural change rooted in anti-oppression, anti-racism, and multiculturalism values and practices is love in action*". We should expect that the UUA will interpret 'Love' as "Love is dismantling White Supremacy Culture" even though those exact words are not used.

Even words like 'equity' must be seen under a different light in the context of accountability. The *Widening the Circle of Concern* report interprets 'equity' as "*equal outcomes*", not just "*equal opportunities*." Equal outcomes are an impossible goal to be accountable for. The Widening report defines racism as "different outcomes for different racial groups", so being accountable for "*dismantling racism*" is also an unrealistic goal. 'White Supremacy Culture' is another example of a phrase that is often misunderstood because it has a special meaning. If UU members and congregations become accountable for "dismantling White Supremacy Culture", what will that mean?

- 9) Covenant: The interpretation of the word covenant will be 'hardened'. Instead of the promise of "*mutual trust and support*", which is a promise of 'best intentions', covenants will now be used like a contract, with consequences for those judged to be 'out of covenant'. There will be distinct expectations about what are acceptable ways to participate in the UU community.

In the new 'Values and Covenant' section is the phrase "*we covenant, congregation to congregation and through our Association*". The exact meaning of the inserted phrase '*through our Association*' is not clear. In the context of the whole rewrite, this additional phrase appears to mean '*with the Association*'. That expands the scope of covenants in UU. Congregations would be establishing a covenantal relationship with the UUA for the first time ever. In any case, the Association will likely be granted the responsibility and authority to enforce consequences if congregations are judged to be 'out of covenant', held accountable for not fulfilling UU's purpose. The UUA Board of Trustees is already creating their own agreements to make the Board and Administration accountable to identity-based groups. If congregations are accountable to the Board, and the Board is accountable to identity-based groups, the highest level of influence in UU (the identity-based groups) would be insulated from democratic processes. Groups judging other groups will be divisive and toxic.

- 10) They Work: The current Principles are eminently capable of inspiring and guiding us. The Principles elegantly build on each other, each one rippling out to a wider circle of engagement. They unfold as you read each line: You, your relationships, your community, society, nation, the world, all of existence. They are clear, concise, cohesive, and coherent. Many UU members identify very closely with the Principles. The 'best intentions' of the current covenant frees the Principles to be aspirational. Non-specificity in our aspirations is a plus;

leaving the specific application of some principles open-ended can unleash creativity and inspire us in unexpected ways.

The rewrite strives to define the concepts in the Principles, unintentionally limiting their power. The 'hardened' tone of the new covenants turns non-specificity into a problem. The concepts in the Principles now become tests you need to pass. This is another way that covenants could end up being unhealthy, draining the vitality out of Unitarian Universalism.

The Article II Study Commission has not provided a compelling rationale for making this transformational change in such a powerful and effective document. Breaking apart the cohesive language of the Principles and imbedding the remnants in a forest of verbose paragraphs, often surrounded by ambiguous language, diminishes their power; their power to attract new members, their power to inspire current members, and to serve as a glue to build and sustain UU communities.

### Concluding Thoughts

The revised Article II appears to be the 1st phase of a transformation of UU from a Liberal Religion into an organization with a laser focus on activism. That goal is the overarching theme of multitudes of speeches and writings by national leaders of UU. The purpose of UU is changing. UU will become a Social Justice Activism Organization. The rest of the Bylaws have begun their own review cycle. We can detect this goal in two of the instructions the Board gave that team:

- Reflect our theological commitment to liberation and inclusion.
- Provide accountability to our long-standing anti-racist and anti-oppressive commitments.

As noted near the beginning of this commentary, change is not automatically better. UU members and congregations have a responsibility to thoughtfully discern whether this rewrite is wise.

This commentary makes the case that the rewrite of Article II is counter-productive and would transform UU in ways that are unhealthy and unwise.

Let us retain the UU Principles and Sources.

Let us preserve the clarity of the current Principles that work so well as magnets and glue. Let us continue to center the worth, dignity, freedoms, and sovereignty of all persons. Let us continue to safeguard our right to decide for ourselves what to believe. Let us continue to explicitly name our Sources of inspiration.

Let us preserve congregational autonomy. Let us act in the world because we feel called to do so, not because we are told we have to. Let us not commit to being accountable for subjective criteria or unrealistic goals. Let us avoid the toxic divisiveness that groups judging other groups would bring. Let us not expand the use of covenants to use as a punitive enforcement tool. Let us keep easily misinterpreted ambiguous language with special meanings out of UU's legacy document. Let us not let ubiquitous covenants turn our Principles into tests we must pass.

Most important of all, let us preserve Unitarian Universalism as a truly Liberal Religion.

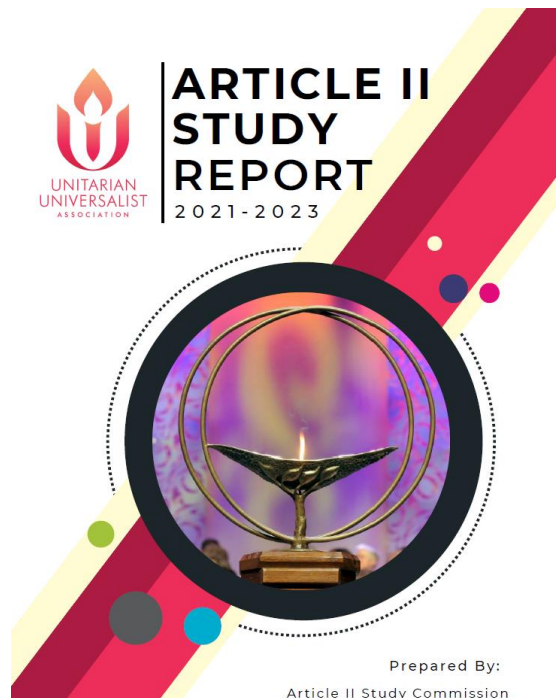
(Date of last update: 11/03/2023)

**Primary References:**

- A2 Commission Report: <https://www.uua.org/files/2023-02/article-II-study-report-2021-23.pdf>  
A2 Amendments (GA2023) Part 1: <https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/2023/business/ii>  
A2 Amendments (GA2023) Part 2: <https://www.uua.org/ga/off-site/2023/business/iii>  
A2 Commission Final Proposal: [https://www.uua.org/files/2023-10/a2\\_final\\_line\\_num\\_10312023.pdf](https://www.uua.org/files/2023-10/a2_final_line_num_10312023.pdf)  
UUA Bylaws: <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/bylaws>  
Principles and Sources: <https://www.uua.org/beliefs/what-we-believe/principles>  
GA2020 AIW "Amen to Uprising": [https://www.uua.org/files/pdf/a/aiw\\_b\\_version\\_2.pdf](https://www.uua.org/files/pdf/a/aiw_b_version_2.pdf)  
Board Accountability: [https://www.uua.org/files/2022-05/accountability\\_gr\\_05092022.pdf](https://www.uua.org/files/2022-05/accountability_gr_05092022.pdf)  
Full Bylaws Rewrite Charge: [https://www.uua.org/files/2022-08/reimag\\_bylaw\\_res\\_06262022.pdf](https://www.uua.org/files/2022-08/reimag_bylaw_res_06262022.pdf)

Sections of the current Article II juxtaposed side-by-side with related sections in the proposed revision of Article II are shown on the following pages.

Portions of each page use a dim gray font so that the sections that are being compared in black are more noticeable to the eye.



## Current Covenant

## Proposed Covenant

### Section C-2.1. Principles.

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote

- (List of 7 Principles)

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

- (List of 6 Sources)

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

### Section C-2.2. Values and Covenant.

As Unitarian Universalists, we covenant, congregation-to-congregation and through our Association, to support and assist one another in our ministries. We draw from our heritages of freedom, reason, hope, and courage, building on the foundation of love.

Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.

Inseparable from one another, these shared values are:

(Graphic of 6 primacy Values)

- (List of 6 Values)

## Current Principles

## Proposed Values (1 of 2)

### Section C-2.1. Principles.

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
  - Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
  - Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
  - A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
  - The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
  - The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
  - Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
- (List of 6 Sources)

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we ...

### Section C-2.2. Values and Covenant.

**Interdependence.** We honor the interdependent web of all existence. With reverence for the great web of life and with humility, we acknowledge our place in it. We covenant to protect Earth and all beings from exploitation. We will create and nurture sustainable relationships of care and respect, mutuality and justice. We will work to repair harm and damaged relationships.

**Pluralism.** We celebrate that we are all sacred beings diverse in culture, experience, and theology. We covenant to learn from one another in our free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We embrace our differences and commonalities with Love, curiosity, and respect.

**Justice.** We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all thrive.

We covenant to dismantle racism and all forms of systemic oppression. We support the use of inclusive democratic processes to make decisions within our congregations, our Association, and society at large.

### Section C-2.1. Principles.

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

- (List of 6 Sources)

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we ...

**Transformation.** We adapt to the changing world.

We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically. Openness to change is fundamental to our Unitarian and Universalist heritages, never complete and never perfect.

**Generosity.** We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope.

We covenant to freely and compassionately share our faith, presence, and resources. Our generosity connects us to one another in relationships of interdependence and mutuality.

**Equity.** We declare that every person has the right to flourish with inherent dignity and worthiness. We covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities.



## Current (No Graphic)

## Proposed (Graphic)

### Section C-2.1. Principles.

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote

The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

- Justice, equity and compassion in all relations;

No comparable graphic is used in the current UUA Bylaws

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

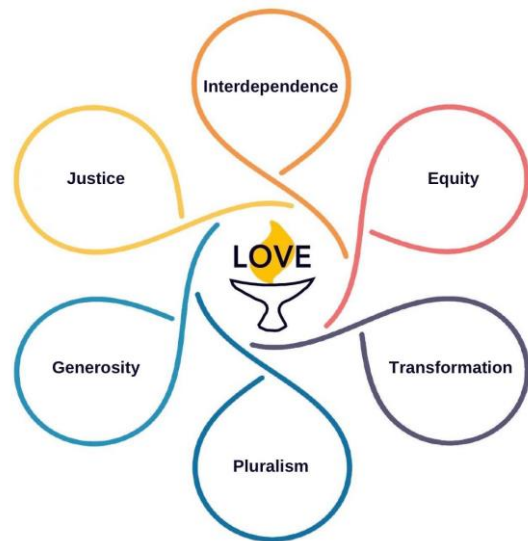
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

- (List of 6 Sources)

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we ...

Inseparable from one another, these shared values are:

### Shared Unitarian Universalist Values



## Current Sources

## Proposed Inspirations

### Section C-2.1. Principles.

**The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:**

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

### Section C-2.3. Inspirations.

Direct experiences of transcending mystery and wonder are primary sources of Unitarian Universalist inspiration. These experiences open our hearts, renew our spirits, and transform our lives. We draw upon, and are inspired by, sacred, secular, and scientific understandings that help us make meaning and live into our values. These sources ground us and sustain us in ordinary, difficult, and joyous times. We respect the histories, contexts, and cultures in which these sources were created and are currently practiced. Grateful for the experiences that move us, aware of the religious ancestries we inherit, and enlivened by the diversity which enriches our faith, we are called to ever deepen and expand our wisdom.

## Current Purposes

## Proposed Purposes

### Section C-2.2. Purposes.

The Unitarian Universalist Association shall devote its resources to and exercise its corporate powers for religious, educational and humanitarian purposes. The primary purpose of the Association is to serve the needs of its member congregations, organize new congregations, extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalist institutions and implement its principles.

### Section C-2.1. Purposes.

The Unitarian Universalist Association will devote its resources to and use its organizational powers for religious, educational, and humanitarian purposes. Its primary purposes are:

- to assist congregations in their vital ministries,
- to support and train leaders both lay and professional,
- to foster lifelong faith formation and spiritual development,
- to heal historic injustices,
- to support and encourage the creation of new Unitarian Universalist communities, and
- to advance our Unitarian Universalist values in the world.

The Unitarian Universalist Association will actively engage its members in the transformation of the world through liberating Love.

## Current Inclusion

## Proposed Inclusion

### Section C-2.3. Inclusion.

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We strive to be an association of congregations that truly welcome all persons and commit to structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation.

### Section C-2.4. Inclusion.

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We strive to be an Association of congregations that truly welcome all persons who share our values. We commit to being an Association of congregations that empowers and enhances everyone's participation, especially those with historically marginalized identities.

## Current Freedom of Belief

## Proposed Freedom of Belief

### **Section C-2.4. Freedom of Belief.**

Nothing herein shall be deemed to infringe upon the individual freedom of belief which is inherent in the Universalist and Unitarian heritages or to conflict with any statement of purpose, covenant, or bond of union used by any congregation unless such is used as a creedal test.

### **Section C-2.5. Freedom of belief.**

Congregational freedom and the individual's right of conscience are central to our Unitarian Universalist heritage.

Congregations may establish statements of purpose, covenants, and bonds of union so long as they do not require that members adhere to a particular creed.

# Current UUA Bylaws Articles I/II/III

## 1 **ARTICLE I Name**

### 2 **Section C-1.1. Name.**

3 The name of this Association shall be Unitarian Universalist  
4 Association. It is the successor to the American Unitarian  
5 Association, which was founded in 1825 and incorporated in 1847,  
6 and the Universalist Church of America, which was founded in 1793  
7 and incorporated in 1866.

## 8 **ARTICLE II Principles and Purposes**

### 9 **Section C-2.1. Principles.**

10 We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist  
11 Association, covenant to affirm and promote

- 12 • The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- 13 • Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- 14 • Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth  
15 in our congregations;
- 16 • A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- 17 • The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process  
18 within our congregations and in society at large;
- 19 • The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- 20 • Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we  
21 are a part.

22 The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

- 23 • Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder,  
24 affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit  
25 and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
  - 26 • Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to  
27 confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion  
28 and the transforming power of love;
  - 29 • Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical  
30 and spiritual life;
  - 31 • Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's  
32 love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
  - 33 • Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of  
34 reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries  
35 of the mind and spirit;
  - 36 • Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate  
37 the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the  
38 rhythms of nature.
- 39 Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our  
40 faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our  
41 vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant,  
42 promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

### 43 **Section C-2.2. Purposes.**

44 The Unitarian Universalist Association shall devote its resources to  
45 and exercise its corporate powers for religious, educational and  
46 humanitarian purposes. The primary purpose of the Association is  
47 to serve the needs of its member congregations, organize new  
48 congregations, extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalist  
49 institutions and implement its principles.

### 50 **Section C-2.3. Inclusion.**

51 Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally  
52 created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities,  
53 ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to replace such barriers  
54 with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We  
55 strive to be an association of congregations that truly welcome all  
56 persons and commit to structuring congregational and associational  
57 life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation.

### 58 **Section C-2.4. Freedom of Belief.**

59 Nothing herein shall be deemed to infringe upon the individual  
60 freedom of belief which is inherent in the Universalist and Unitarian  
61 heritages or to conflict with any statement of purpose, covenant, or  
62 bond of union used by any congregation unless such is used as a  
63 creedal test.

## 64 **ARTICLE III Membership**

### 65 **Section C-3.1. Member Congregations.**

66 The Unitarian Universalist Association is a voluntary association of  
67 autonomous, self-governing member congregations, which have  
68 freely chosen to pursue common goals together.

### 69 **Section C-3.2. Congregational Polity.**

70 Nothing in these Bylaws shall be construed as infringing upon the  
71 congregational polity or internal self-government of member  
72 congregations, including the exclusive right of each such  
73 congregation to call and ordain its own minister or ministers, and to  
74 control its own property and funds. Any action by a member  
75 congregation called for by these Bylaws shall be deemed to have  
76 been taken if certified by an authorized officer of the congregation  
77 as having been duly and regularly taken in accordance with its own  
78 procedures and the laws which govern it.

### 79 **\*Section C-3.3. Admission to Membership.**

80 A congregation becomes a member upon acceptance by the Board  
81 of Trustees of the Association of its written application for  
82 membership in which it subscribes to the principles of and pledges  
83 to support the Association. The Board of Trustees shall adopt rules  
84 to carry out the intent of this Section.

### 85 **Section 3.4. Church of the Larger Fellowship.**

86 The Church of the Larger Fellowship, Unitarian Universalist, shall  
87 be a member congregation which is not considered to be located in  
88 any particular district or region.

### 89 **\*Section C-3.5. Certification of Membership.**

90 A member congregation shall be recognized as certified during the  
91 fiscal year of the Association in which it becomes a member and  
92 during each subsequent fiscal year in which it established that  
93 during the immediately preceding fiscal year it:

- 94 (a) conducted regular religious services;
- 95 (b) held at least one business meeting of its members, elected its  
96 own officers and maintained adequate records of  
97 membership; and
- 98 (c) made a financial contribution to the Association.

99 Member congregations must furnish the Association with a report of  
100 their activities showing compliance with subsections (a) and (b)  
101 above.