

Covenant and Freedom of Belief in the Final Proposed Revision of Article II

by Ken Christiansen and Karen Brown, November 5, 2023

I. COVENANTS

Types of Covenants used

Current: Aspirational — *We covenant to affirm and promote*

Proposed: Binding promises with accountability — *We are accountable to one another for doing the work*

To whom are we accountable?

Current: Our conscience as individuals (or to whomever our conscience calls us)

Proposed: One another, the community, other congregations, the UUA or an authority designated by any of these, but not our conscience. Judgment and enforcement are in the hands of others.

Article II Statements

Current:

- *We. . . covenant to affirm and promote. . . [the seven principles]*
- *As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.*

Proposed:

- *We covenant, congregation-to-congregation and through our Association, to support and assist one another in our ministries.*
- *We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.*
- *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.*
- *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.*
- *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.*
- *We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically. . . .*
- *We covenant to freely and compassionately share our faith, presence, and resources. . . .*
- *We covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities.*

II. FREEDOM OF BELIEF CLAUSE

Current: *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.*

Proposed: *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.*

Significance

Current: Full-throated commitment to individual freedom of belief.

Proposed: Eliminates commitment to individual freedom of belief, while ambiguously asserting that congregational autonomy and individual right of conscience are relics of the past.

Italicized words are quoted from the current and proposed Article II