

Juxtaposing the Proposed Values and Covenant Statements with our Current Principles

“Seven single-word values (each with a short sentence of explication) are easier to remember and use as touchstones in our conversations, in congregational governance, and in educational settings.” --2021-2023 Article II Study Report

The [Charge to the Article II Study Commission](#) used the words “inspirational,” “memorable,” “brief” and “poetic” to articulate objectives for an Article II bylaws revision. In fact, the Values and Covenant statements are three times longer than the current Principles, (311 v. 102 words), and certainly no easier to remember.

More troubling than length is their creedal nature. Despite reassurances that UUs do not have a creed, the Study Commission created a document that reads like one. In addition to the seven statements that begin “We covenant to...” it is replete with other statements that imply commitment, such as “We acknowledge...” “We work to...” and “We support...” Statements such as these do not inspire, as they can be coercive and subject to “community conscience,” rather than individual conscience.

Most troubling of all is the statement: “We are accountable to one another...” Accountability implies enforcement and consequences. Covenants in UU have been aspirational, not obligations. How this revised interpretation could play out in Beloved Community should concern all UUs.

When the Values and Covenants are written out as sentences, without the flower petal and value words, they feel uncomfortably akin to creeds, such as the Nicene Creed (217 words), that are recited in Christian churches.

Let us not forget that individual Freedom of Belief, commitment to spiritual growth, and a peaceful world community are hallmarks of Unitarian Universalism’s unique identity as a liberal faith. The Article II proposal is taking all that away.

Current Article II

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.

Proposed Article II

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.
- * 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.
- * 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.
- * 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.
- * 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.
- * 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.
- * 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.

If you haven’t yet done so, please [sign up](#) to help stop this assault on our liberal religion. Consider [becoming a virtual delegate](#) at General Assembly 2024. It’s free and you can vote from the comfort of your own home.