

Let's Save Unitarian Universalism

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In 2020, a commission of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) was tasked with reviewing and proposing revisions to the Article II bylaws, which contain our Principles and Purposes. What that commission proposed is problematic to many Unitarian Universalists (UUs) across the country because of its sweeping changes to our core identity a liberal faith.

In short, the 7 Principles and 6 Sources that so beautifully articulate our liberal faith tradition have been gutted. They would be replaced with Values statements and Covenants that hold us “accountable,” while threatening our individual freedom of belief and search for truth.

This proposal crossed its first hurdle by being passed at General Assembly (GA) 2023 with five amendments that the commission incorporated into a [Proposed Revision](#), released in October, 2023. Amendments to this revised version may be proposed and will require a 3/4 majority delegate vote at virtual GA in 2024. Adoption of that amended version then must be affirmed by a 2/3 majority delegate vote to become permanent.

The UUA did not include UU member congregations as stakeholders in this process, and there is very little understanding of its ramifications. UUA tried to justify the need for these changes in its January 18, 2023 [Commission Study Report](#), but opposing views have not been sufficiently presented.

The following statements articulate some of the concerns shared by a large group of UUs from around the country. These concerns provide a case for voting against such a radical overhaul of our faith:

- The Study Commission did not offer a compelling rationale to justify the major changes they proposed; the rewrite does not adequately address the “ethical, moral [and] spiritual crises” mentioned in the Report.
- The language in the current Principles is universally understandable, poetic and elegant, and incorporates the spirit of inclusion, anti-oppression and multiculturalism. The rewrite uses abstract words and phrases with implied connotations that cannot be consistently understood and interpreted.
- The current Freedom of Belief clause guarantees that individual freedom of belief may not be infringed upon. The rewrite removes that guarantee, and makes us “accountable” to others through overuse of covenants, which read like religious dogma.
- Covenants, as stated in the rewrite, could be used as instruments of control and enforcement, with UUs judging each other's behavior and intentions. They would stifle honest dialog and divide us against ourselves.
- The Sources would be replaced with a short section labeled “Inspirations,” which eliminates specificity. Instead, we are to be lifted up only by “sacred and secular understandings.” The current Sources statement articulates our rich religious heritage, affirming what is unique about our faith.
- Love, as the centerpiece of the proposed Values statements, does little to articulate or advance our distinctive faith. It states that our purpose is to “...actively engage in the transformation of the world through liberating Love.” That statement is ambiguous and overreaching, and therefore insufficient to be central to our Purpose.
- UUA would no longer exist to serve the needs of congregations; rather, congregations would be expected to endorse and act on the priorities of the UUA.

We should reject this proposed rewrite of Article II in the UUA Bylaws to safeguard individual rights of conscience and belief. We need to keep easily misinterpreted, ambiguous language out of UU's defining document and consider the far-reaching consequences of such a radical change.

Let's preserve what is beautiful and essential about Unitarian Universalism.