

UU Principles/Values Change up for a Vote

by Michael Skelly

(This situation is very complex and technical. However, it is important. I personally refer to the UU Seven Principles and Six Sources every day. This affects our Community and each of us. You are invited and encouraged to read about it, give it some thought and share your views when it is appropriate. Due to the complex and technical nature of the issue, I will be simplifying things and even skipping some so we can get to the heart of the matter more quickly.)

The Unitarian Universalist Association of America does not have a creed; it DOES have "Principles and Purposes" written in Article II of its bylaws. This is a part of its legal existence in the US and status as a church. Dorothea Dix is a member of the church of the UUA and has entered an agreement/covenant with the UUA to adopt and promote its principles. Each congregation may make its own decision as to whether to affiliate and/or adopt the UUA Principles and Purposes.

The current Seven Principles and Six Sources that we are familiar with were adopted in 1985. You might remember seeing this near the beginning of our grey hymn books. They are -

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

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

Unitarian Universalism is a living faith that does not want to be rigid, stale, and fall deeply out of step with its times, like some religions have. So, it has a process where it re-examines and even changes its "Principles and Purposes" clause every ten to 15 years. According to the bylaws of the UUA, the principles are a part of Article II and are up for review and potentially up for change every 10 to 15 years. The UUA has been working on revised Purposes through study committees and national General Assemblies for years. UUA Bylaws and Rules require that the revisions go to the General Assembly for consideration and vote two years in a row.

You may remember that DDUUC has had several services led by Michael Skelly, John DeMasi, and Mary Waterson on our Principles and Purposes and proposals at the national UUA level to change them. Last Spring some of our members, including Denise McCormack and Michael Skelly, sent in their own comments directly to the UUA committee working on this.

The changes proposed by the Study Commission were approved at the 2023 General Assembly meeting. However, there were so many comments received that the UUA Board called upon the committee to revise them further and to address some concerns that were raised. The Final Revisions were drafted and released in October 2023. These are the changes that are up for a vote at this year's General Assembly.

If the changes to the "Principles" are approved a second time then they become the new "Purposes and Covenant" of the UUA. Then, each of the individual Congregations will get to decide on its continued affiliation and adoption of the then changed Principles and Purposes. Last summer, at the national UUA level, there was so much discussion and recommendations for revisions the Board called for a further draft to be written. That final draft was written and it was released in October 2023.

The next (and second vote) General Assembly meeting will be held on June 20 to 23 in 2024. Since we believe in the 5th Principle of "the use of democratic process in our congregations", Dorothea Dix members are all going to get to vote on their instructions to our two delegates to that meeting.

I suggest you take a look at the proposed Article Purposes and Covenant Changes. They are frequently referred to as the "Values" and not "Seven Principles" The Final proposed "Values and Covenant" cover about three pages and can be downloaded at https://www.uua.org/files/2023-10/a2_final_line_num_10312023.pdf Dorothea Dix Board of Directors met on Sunday, February 25, 2024 and agreed to arrange for the congregation to meet, learn about the Values and Covenant; discuss the proposed changes; and then vote on instructions to our 2 delegates to the next UUA General Assembly.

Stay tuned for more exciting developments. - Mike Skelly

Here is a portion of the Final Draft document -

"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:

Shared Unitarian Universalist Values

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 "

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