

Current UUA Bylaws and Rules Article II Principles and Purposes

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.

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.

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. 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-2.3. 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. 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.

PROPOSED REVISION OF ARTICLE II

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, support and train leaders both lay and professional, to foster lifelong faith formation, to heal historic injustices, and to advance our Unitarian Universalist values in the world.

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

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:

Image Description: This image is of a chalice with and overlay of the word love over the flame, with six outstretched arms that create a circle around each of the core values and form a six-petal flower shape. Each arm is a different color and clockwise they are: Interdependence (Orange), Equity (Red), Transformation (Purple), Pluralism (Dark Blue), Generosity (Teal), and Justice (Yellow).



Interdependence. We honor the interdependent web of all existence. We covenant to cherish Earth and all beings by creating and nurturing relationships of care and respect. With humility and reverence, we acknowledge our place in the great web of life, and we 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.

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.

As Unitarian Universalists, we use, and are inspired by, sacred and secular understandings that help us to live into our values. We respect the histories, contexts and cultures in which they were created and are currently practiced. These sources ground us and sustain us in ordinary, difficult, and joyous times. Grateful for the religious ancestries we inherit and 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.

Comparison of UUA Bylaws and Rules Article II subtitles	
Current	Proposed Revision
Article II Principles and Purposes	Article II Purposes and Covenant
C-2.1 Principles [7 bulleted purpose statements and 6 bulleted sources]	C-2.1 Purposes
C-2.2 Purposes	C-2.2 Values and Covenant [7 values within the image of a flower]
	C-2.3 Inspirations [revised Sources]
C-2.3 Inclusion	C-2.4 Inclusion
C-2.4 Freedom of Belief	C-2.5 Freedom of Belief

ONLINE RESOURCES

1. Authority for Bylaw Change

Unitarian Universalist Association Bylaws and Rules as amended through October 31, 2022: https://www.uua.org/files/2022-10/uua_bylaws_10312022.pdf

See esp. Article Section C-15.1. Amendment of Bylaws, beginning at page 15 and paragraph (c)(6), on page 16, which requires the UUA Board of Trustees to appoint a study commission if no study process has occurred for a period of fifteen years, which study shall last no more than two years and include on the agenda of the UUA General Assembly any recommendations of the study commission.

2. History of UUA Principles and Values

“Values in Our History” – UUA website: <https://www.uua.org/beliefs/who-we-are/history/faith>

“The Six Principles (1961)” – (UUA World November/December 2000):

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/uuas-original-principles-1961>

“Time to review the Principles - UUA commission, trustees announce review of central covenant between congregations; mandated review is overdue.” (UU World 4/21/2006): <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/reexamination-uua-principles-announce>

“Shared Values – How the UUA’s Principles and Purposes were shaped and how they’ve shaped Unitarian Universalism” – (UUWorld 5/1/2006):

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/how-uu-principles-purposes-were-adopted>

General Assembly narrowly rejects new ‘Principles and Purposes’ – (UUWorld 7/6/2009): <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/ga-rejects-new-principles-purposes>

3. Current Article II Study, Report and Process

UUA Article II Study Commission – UUA website:

<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission>

[UUA Board of Trustees] Charge to the Article II Study Commission – UUA website: <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission/charge>

GA 2021 Responsive Resolution – UUA website link to Article II Study Report, at page 11 of Report: <https://www.uua.org/files/2023-02/article-II-study-report-2021-23.pdf>

Article II Study Report (2021 – 2023) – UUA website: <https://www.uua.org/files/2023-02/article-II-study-report-2021-23.pdf>

Proposal: Article II Amendment Process (January 2023) – UUA website: https://www.uua.org/files/2023-01/a2_amend_process.pdf

4. Further explanations of proposed change

From the UUA President: New Proposal for UU Principles and Purpose – UUA website: <https://www.uua.org/pressroom/press-releases/why-change-principles>

“Why Unitarian Universalists are Reexamining Article II” – (UUWorld 2/13/2023): <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/mcdonald-a2qa>

“The Difference Between Principles and Values” – by Keith Norris (medium.com March 13, 2017): <https://medium.com/the-mission/the-difference-between-principles-and-values-789b95452422>

5. Criticisms of the proposed change

Fifth Principle Project - Concerns About the Draft of Article II in UUA Bylaws – (website, November 11, 2022): <https://fifthprincipleproject.org/2022/11/11/concerns-about-the-draft-of-article-ii-in-uua-bylaws/>