

## **Article II Purposes and Covenant**

### **Section C-2.1. Purposes.**

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations has the following purposes:

- Serving its member congregations to provide vital ministry within their congregation and their local communities;
- Supporting and training leaders both lay and professional;
- Striving to heal historic inequities;
- Working with others to advance our Unitarian Universalist values in the nation, and in the wider world.

### **Section C-2.2. Principles and Covenant.**

We are commonly guided by two core principles:

- Respect for the inherent worth, dignity and moral equality of each and every person;
- Respect for our interdependence with all other human beings, both in our communities and around the world, and respect for our interdependence with the web of nature.

These two principles are arrived at through both love and reason. Our love and care for our fellow human beings leads us to recognize their individual moral worth, and to value aiding others to help all individuals flourish and fully develop all their capabilities. Our reason leads us to recognize that our human fates are bound together, and that we have much to learn from others' individuality and diverse identities. Our love for the natural world leads us to value sustaining its beauty and integrity. Our reason leads us to humbly recognize that we are utterly dependent on a healthy planet.

These two principles are equally important. We need both individual freedom and community with others. Yet we recognize that these principles can sometimes be in creative tension, which imperfect human beings can only imperfectly manage.

From these two principles can be derived six other important principles:

- Justice and equity in human relations, starting with our congregational communities -- the worth of all human beings requires recognizing our collective responsibility for greater justice and equity, including generously sharing of our time and resources.
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual and ethical growth in our congregations – if all are valuable and interdependent, we gain from a community that nurtures our individual spiritual and ethical development.
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning – each individual’s human dignity requires freedom of belief, thought and expression, but we must also always listen to others and recognize that our relations should be ones of mutual respect.
- The right of conscience and the use of a democratic process, within our congregations and in society at large, that fully includes the pluralistic views of diverse individuals and groups – for if all individuals are worthy, democratic processes that ensure debate and participation by all individuals and groups will result in better collective outcomes.
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all – for unless everyone counts, we have not fully recognized the moral equality and worth of all.
- Dismantling systems of racism and oppression within all institutions, including our own congregations, and listening to others as we seek to question how our own attitudes or actions may need to evolve to

help heal these many historic inequities – for although we are not responsible for the past, we must deal realistically with its consequences, and how our inherited systems, attitudes and actions may fall short in helping everyone flourish and achieve their full capabilities.

We covenant, congregation-to-congregation, through our association, and among individuals within congregations, to seek to achieve the goals implied by these Eight Principles. Fully achieving all these goals would mean achieving the Beloved Community where all people thrive, in our congregations, our communities, and the wider world. Such full achievement is perhaps an impossible goal, but is worth striving for, and achieving tangible progress.

We hold each other accountable for doing the work needed to fully realize the goals represented by these principles. That means that we listen to each other with humility and mutual respect, and recognize that no one person or group has all the answers. We recognize that we are united by these goals, but not necessarily by the best means to achieve these goals. Disagreement is to be expected, and welcomed if it is done with respect and with recognition of these mutual goals. We need not think alike to love alike. We need not agree on the means in order to share common goals.

### **Section C-2.3. Inspirations.**

As Unitarian Universalists, we draw upon, and are inspired by, the full depth and breadth of sacred understandings, as experienced by humanity. Grateful for the religious lineages we inherit and the pluralism 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 the goals represented by our principles. At the same time, we welcome diverse thinking on the best ways to achieve these goals. We commit to structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation.

#### **Section C-2.5. Freedom of belief.**

The Bylaws should never be interpreted in a way that infringes upon the individual freedom of belief which is inherent in the Unitarian Universalist 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. In expressing our beliefs, we strive to do so in a way that respects the worth and dignity of all individuals and groups.