

PART 1: MONITORING INFORMATION

Prologue to Interpretation:

In the spirit of transparency and collaboration the information shared here is not just the "formal interpretation for assessment" but also background thinking that explains why the particular interpretations for our Ends policies were chosen.

There are many ways we could order or present this information, and what we have chosen to do here is meant to be a starting point that we hope will invite us all into an open and deep conversation about what we are trying to achieve together.

We have not included metrics in this version as it feels important to begin by getting on the same page for the interpretations, and then to choose a metrics method that gives you the information you need about effectiveness while weighing the relative value of the cost of gathering metric information.

The UUA Administration believes in the power of our liberal religious values to change lives and to change the world. We understand healthy Unitarian Universalist congregations and communities to be primary means and methods to create transformation, especially so when they understand themselves as part of a larger movement of purpose focused outward. We see the role of UUA staff to empower and inspire those gathering with this intention (which includes both congregations and any other formal or informal gathering) to join together to increase the expression of those values in daily life, spiritual life and the world.

It is the congregations and communities themselves that actually do the work and make the changes this evolving world calls for and so we understand the UUA staff to be accountable for ensuring the communities have and know about the tools and practices that can make them more healthy and impactful, as well as creating the infrastructure for new kinds of communities to emerge. The UUA is also accountable for raising the general public recognition of UU values relevance in today's world.

We realize that, in so doing, the UUA as an institution, as well as the structure of our communities, may evolve in directions beyond our current institutional forms, and we believe it is our role to be open to and encourage that evolution.

ENDS MONITORING

Global End Policy

A healthy Unitarian Universalist community that is alive with transforming power, moving our communities and the world toward more love, justice, and peace in a manner which assures institutional sustainability.

Interpretation:

Everything that needs to be further interpreted in this policy is fully defined in the lower level policies with the exception of “transforming power” and “institutional sustainability”.

We believe that "transforming power" is that which inspires people to understand their capacity for change and strengthens them in taking responsibility for that change. We also understand it to be that which, conversely, helps them recognize the ways in which they may not be in control or self-sufficient and therefore in need of others in community and to be open to moments of grace.

We interpret “institutional sustainability” to apply to the ongoing ability of the UUA to serve as an instrument, through the actions of our congregations and communities, of achieving the called for transformation which will be accomplished through the measurement of impact and the judicious use of resources. This will be shown when at least 80% of major strategic programs designed to accomplish our Ends interpretation are being assessed with a formal process for determining impact in order to make decisions about further efforts.

It does not mean that the UUA will above all focus on maintaining our present institutional forms, but that it will sustain its ability to make the community/communities healthier as measured by the lower level policies.

Thinking Behind Why THIS Interpretation of the Global End

This section describes how and why this specific Ends interpretation was chosen. This is not offered as a part of the formal monitoring report but is shared to help you understand the thinking behind our choices.

Assumptions and Reasoning

We believe the world needs the values of Unitarian Universalism. More than ever, there is a desire to live lives of meaning, purpose and justice. The values expressed by emerging generations are in alignment with the values of Unitarian Universalism.

An external assessment of changes in our broader culture and religious landscape demands that we recognize that we have to expand our efforts to actively engage people outside of traditional congregational constructs, and to help congregations focus their efforts externally as well as internally. In particular, the growth of the number of people, especially younger generations, who have no religious affiliation and no church-going practices requires that we provide a clear and differentiating signal of the difference we believe our Unitarian Universalist values can provide to individual lives and our collective culture. Simply maintaining and re-sourcing our existing institutions is not motivating to these emerging communities, nor is maintenance the end goal.

An internal assessment of our Association reveals that we already include individuals and communities with great capacity to fulfill our Ends. And we recognize that our current population is not increasing in numbers, is aging, mostly monocultural, class-bound, and increasingly less willing to provide financial support for institutional maintenance. In order to reverse this trend, we realize that we have to engage people in an ongoing enterprise of spiritual reflection and action that speaks to their everyday lives in an increasingly complex world. We believe our institution(s) will be sustainable when they fulfill these values.

End Policy 1.1

Policy 1.1: Congregations and communities are covenanted, accountable, healthy, and mission driven.

Interpretation: We believe congregations and communities, as stated above, are primary means and methods to fulfillment of our ends.

“Covenanted” We understand covenant to mean congregations and communities understand themselves as a part of a larger whole (both institutionally and spiritually) in which they both contribute and receive. We also understand covenant to include our promises to others outside of our faith.

“Accountable” We understand accountable to mean that congregations and communities understand that their purpose is not just to serve their members, but are also under obligation to serve their surrounding community and the wider world, with particular accountability to the vision of our ancestors, the emerging generations, and people historically marginalized in larger society.

“Healthy” We understand “healthy” to mean that a community exhibits radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking service and witness, and faithful generosity.¹

“Mission-driven” We understand “mission-driven” as related to our earlier statement that congregations and communities are the means of transformation, and therefore their understanding of transforming purpose must be clear, concise and explicable to anyone joining or observing from outside. Their mission must not just be expressed but their activities must demonstrate alignment with their expression.

¹ Adapted from *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Bishop Robert Schnase.

Thinking Behind Why THIS Interpretation of End Policy 1.1

Assumptions and Reasoning

As stated above, the values of Unitarian Universalism are those best expressed by our people from the inside out, from inside the persons, congregations and communities to outward action in the world.

We understand that "love, justice and peace" are ideal expressions of beloved community that are not achievable in this lifetime, but infinitely worthy of efforts in those directions. Healthy expressions of Unitarian Universalism, like healthy individual behaviors, are best encouraged through inspiration and example, rather than through prescription or dictates.

The paradigm of learning that we are employing has shifted from "program" to "ethos" in which we communicate and encourage core values of approach, but do not proscribe the exact practice. We are finding that Unitarian Universalists learn best from one another, and increasingly understand our role as being to create structures of connection among UU communities.

We also believe that such states of health are not achievable by Unitarian Universalists alone, but require partnership with others who may not share our beliefs, and ask us to cross boundaries of comfort, and recognition, as well as class, race and creed.