

## **STATEMENT ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Some of the arrests and/or convictions contained in a background check may be those the RECC considers to be acts of conscience based on social justice issues embraced by the denomination. Other convictions may be for ones that are not relevant because they occurred a long time ago or pose little or no threat. The RECC fully supports candidates engaged in social justice issues and will give careful consideration to both the type and relevance of the actions that led to any arrests or convictions that are the results of acts of conscience.

The RECC acknowledges that there is pervasive racism, homophobia, and transphobia in the United States' criminal justice system. People of color are disproportionately convicted of felonies, and homosexuality or claiming a transgender identity has itself been historically considered a sex offense in many states. To help deal with these facts, when the RECC receives information about a candidate that raises concerns, experts may be called in when necessary, including the UUA's employment attorney and social justice advocates with special knowledge, sensitivity and experience with similar issues. The focus of the RECC's consideration will be to determine whether the offense is job-related and to review the context and seriousness of the issue or conviction, the date of the offense, and the amount of time that has passed, mitigating circumstances, or evidence of rehabilitation.

The RECC also acknowledges that, while the background investigations may reduce liability to our congregations, the children, youth and vulnerable adults in our congregations and UUA employees are not necessarily safer because of the background investigations. Technology and state-to-state tracking of convictions are not totally reliable.