



UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION



**WIDENING
THE CIRCLE
OF CONCERN**

**UUA 2021
Implementation
Plan**

SUBMITTED BY
UUA STAFF

A Roadmap for Unitarian Universalism - *Widening the Circle of Concern*

“We still need to address the bias and oppression within our systems to build resilience in our living tradition for the times we are in and strengthen it for future generations. Making these changes will allow us to stay relevant. Addressing these issues will allow us to live into the theology we profess. Furthermore, if we are committed to this work as central to our faith, we will create the conditions in which all who are attracted to the theological premises of our faith can thrive.” - Widening the Circle of Concern, UUA Commission on Institutional Change, 2020

In June 2020, the Unitarian Universalist Association’s Commission on Institutional Change presented its final report *Widening the Circle of Concern*. During its three-year process, the Commission analyzed structural racism, the workings of power, and white supremacy culture within the UUA. It got feedback from thousands of UU’s, as well as professional advisors and community partners. Its sweeping final report touched every aspect of our faith community: from theology to governance and accountability, from learning and education to leadership and professional credentialing, from organizing and mobilizing to investing in reparations and innovative ministries. Grounded deeply in UU theology, the report declares that anti-racism and anti-oppression are at the heart of our faith. They provide an essential framework for how we live out our values as UUs within and beyond our congregations.

AN HISTORIC COMMITMENT TO ANTI-RACISM AND FULL INCLUSION

Our shared commitment to racial justice is the foundation for how Unitarian Universalism thrives in the years to come. As an association of covenantal faith communities, we have committed ourselves again and again to the work of dismantling racism and white supremacy culture within our institutions. Far from being a new set of initiatives being promoted by a single group of UUA leaders, Unitarian Universalism has repeatedly made this commitment through democratic votes of the General Assembly. This includes the 1964 resolution on the Commission on Religion and Race, the 1985 Establishment of the Black Concerns Working Group, the 1997 resolution Towards an Anti-Racist UUA, and six more times since 1997.¹ Unitarian Universalists have also made these commitments through the prophetic call of our historically marginalized communities, and through energy and momentum building across our faith for anti-racism and full inclusion.

¹ https://www.uua.org/files/2021-04/bot_araomc_memo_04232021.pdf

The Widening the Circle of Concern (WCC) report has recommendations for every UU organization and congregation, providing an historic chance to live out these commitments.

THE FOUNDATION FOR OUR FAITH TO THRIVE

Our Unitarian Universalist faith calls us to this anti-racist work because we believe that all people are fundamentally interdependent and interconnected. We continue to be in a watershed and historic time where there is a reckoning about systemic racism and injustice—both within the UUA and the wider world. We have a generational opportunity to build the kind of just and anti-oppressive world we imagine.

Dismantling white supremacy and hierarchies of privilege removes the barriers that have kept the prophetic message of our faith from reaching more people. It will take time to make these shifts to anchor our faith in a commitment to liberation. We recognize the need to build trust in ourselves, our leaders, and our communities to continue this work over the long haul. Making this change steadily and systematically is the best way to ensure it is lasting, preparing our faith community to thrive in the years to come rather than shrink from our potential.

Our anti-racism work is powerful, beautiful, and liberating. We are committed to centering the voices and needs of UUs who are Black, Indigenous and People of Color to broaden the range of people for whom our faith communities are life-giving. We recognize that culture change work is hard and joyful at the same time. Yet, it is the deepest expression of the values we claim as Unitarian Universalists.



UUA staff Commission on Institutional Change Implementation and Mission Alignment Team (CIMAT); from top left - Jessica York, Carey McDonald, Janice Marie Johnson, Ashley Horan, Susan Frederick-Gray, Carlton Elliott Smith, Suzanne Murray, Taquiena Boston, Anna Bethea, Marcus Fogliano.

How the UUA is implementing the WCC Report

For the UUA staff and volunteers, implementing the recommendations from *Widening the Circle of Concern* means embedding them in every aspect of the UUA's mission and operations. Starting last fall, the UUA created a cross-staff Commission on Institutional Change Implementation and Mission Alignment Team (CIMAT) to coordinate our transformational work across staff teams. The implementation team engaged the entire UUA staff in conversations about the report. Staff members dug into the recommendations in cross-department discussions. They identified the work the UUA is doing in each staff team to carry out the recommendations, as well as with UUA Boards and committees. Knowing what was already in process, the implementation team identified the gaps where there is more work to do and is developing plans for how to fill them.

Five-stage implementation framework - Engaging the recommendations amid the uncertainty and urgency of a global COVID-19 pandemic, the UUA created a responsive and flexible framework for implementation. This five-stage cycle makes it easy to understand the different stages of different projects during the multi-year implementation plan. It also allows the UUA to revisit project plans and timelines as needed so that they are most impactful and relevant.



This implementation plan will be updated annually as projects grow and shift. Rather than setting a single plan for five years of work, an annually updated plan allows the UUA to be flexible and responsive. The plan is organized by UUA mission area, with additional sections on theology and governance. Each area describes 1) overall values and goals for the work, 2) descriptions of current projects and initiatives (those with an *asterisk span multiple areas), 3) a story about a featured project, and 4) gap areas where plans will be developed in coming years. The chart at the end of this plan maps each of the UUA's projects and initiatives onto the 36 recommendations from WCC. Pages 4-5 describe the ways local congregations can engage with the WCC

Engaging the WCC report – UU congregations and communities

The WCC recommendations include work at every level of Unitarian Universalism, from local congregations to UU organizations and theological schools, to the UUA and its five regions. A core part of the UUA's work to implement the WCC recommendations is to help its member congregations and UU communities engage with the report and help them discern their path forward.

STUDY/ACTION GUIDE FOR CONGREGATIONS

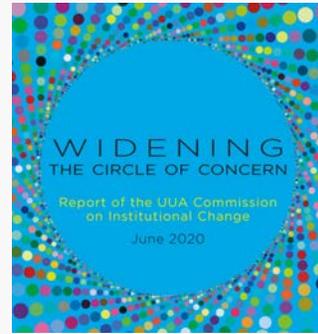
The UUA is reaching out to collaborate with congregations to imagine creative ways local faith communities can take up these important practices for culture change.

In October 2020, the UUA released a **Study/Action Guide** called *Widening the Circle* to accompany the report. Many UUs were already finding ways to bring the hard work and findings of the COIC into the life of their congregation. The guide offers 11 sessions for a group or taskforce to break down the various components and recommendations of the original report and explore what they can do in their own community. More than a discussion guide, this Study/Action Guide provides framing and helpful hints on how UU congregations and communities can actively participate in transformative liberation.

Visit uua.org/widening to download the **Study/Action Guide**. Leaders can also sign up for an email list for updates to get connected to upcoming opportunities and resources through Learning & Practices Communities. So far, the study action guide has been downloaded 863 times and 38 groups have added their work to the national map of UUs engaged with the report.

CREATING COMMUNITIES OF LEARNING AND PRACTICE

The UUA is also creating virtual Learning & Practice Communities focused on supporting congregations' long-term commitment and mutual support to engage the Study/Action Guide and carry out the recommendations from the COIC report. These communities will:



Get the report: The *Widening the Circle of Concern* report is available for all Unitarian Universalists to read. It is available for purchase as a [book](#), [e-book](#), or for [free on uua.org](#). Visit uua.org/coic-report to get your copy.

Add your congregation to the map of those engaging the Study/Action Guide at uua.org/widening.



- Build supportive peer relationships to sustain anti-racist cultural transformation
- Model multicultural spaces as transformative ways of being Beloved Community
- Resource, support, and connect those using the Study/Action Guide
- Create multiple on-ramps to engage based in role, identity, congregational need, etc.
- Provide skill building and educational opportunities to feed learning and practice over time.

In Spring 2021, the UUA surveyed congregations using the Study/Action Guide to understand what they need to support and sustain their engagement. These needs will shape the opportunities for Learning & Practice Communities programs that will be available Fall 2021. Visit uua.org/widening to get connected.

SPOTLIGHT - CENTRAL ILLINOIS UU CONGREGATIONS ENGAGE THE WCC REPORT

More and more congregations are reading WCC for their work towards anti-racism and full inclusion, and the UUA is helping connect and support them. This story describes how congregational leaders from the Central Illinois cluster engaged the report through the Study/Action Guide:



The Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington-Normal initiated a conversation about *Widening the Circle of Concern* with leaders in four of its neighboring congregations. Through a series of virtual meetings, they set out on an ambitious eleven-week Adult Religious Education program using the Study/Action Guide

provided by the UUA. The ministers and religious educators from each of the five cities teamed up to share the work of planning and facilitating the virtual classes. Over 80 congregants participated in the inter-congregational program.

One participant noted this setting gave her the ability to lean into her anxiety around promoting welcome and inclusion, knowing that it is not work that she has to do alone. Another shared that she had some resentment against seemingly inward focus of the UUA, but through having these conversations with UUs outside of her own church she discovered the importance of leading by example in justice making work. At the conclusion of the eleven-week program, the Central Illinois congregations planned to continue to meet to discuss the progress they made towards the goals they set during the last session. These goals ranged from adopting the 8th Principle, to setting an intentional General Assembly Delegate selection policy, and even setting a standard for board members and committee chairs to participate in the Beloved Conversations anti-racism program. These Central Illinois congregations are leaning into their sacred promise to support one another in living into their highest values.

Equip Congregations and Communities

The UUA equips congregations and communities for vital ministry to create an ever-widening sense of belonging where no one is outside the circle of love. This means congregations that are:

- **Grounded** in their theological commitments to anti-racism and in covenantal relationships for accountability;
- **Embodied**, practicing anti-racist ministry and leadership, in worship and faith development as well as in the workplace, committees and administration; and
- **Inclusive**, welcoming and meaningful for people of all races, genders and abilities, and through all stages of life, from childhood through older adulthood. This also means supporting communities across our congregations, such as regional and national youth communities, or identity-based groups like DRUUMM and EqUUal Access.

EQUIP CONGREGATIONS AND COMMUNITIES - AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION
Anti-Racism Resources and Framework – Creating a common framework of anti-racism work across UUA programs and trainings to make this transparent and accessible to all congregational leaders, building on the experience of the Mosaic Makers initiative
Ministerial Transitions and Beyond Categorical Thinking – Reviewing each part of the ministerial search and settlement process to deepen the focus on anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural (AR/AO/MC) commitments and support for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), trans/non-binary and disabled ministers
*National and Regional Youth Programs – Building towards a shared national umbrella for youth programs and communities
National Conflict Engagement Team (Hope for Us) – New team of regular and adjunct staff to help congregations normalize and work through deep conflicts, and to spread best practices
*Resources, workshops and trainings - Updating resources and learning opportunities with an AR/AO/MC sensibility, creating new resources to fill the gaps
Welcoming Congregations – Engaging congregations through the refreshed Welcoming Congregations program, with a focus on trans/non-binary welcoming
Young Adult Ministry programs – Deepening support for young adult ministry and communities, with a focus on recently bridged young adults
Identity Based Community support – Collaboration along with institutional financial and/or administrative support for UU identity-based groups, including EqUUal Access, Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM), Black Lives UU (BLUU) and Transgender UU Religious Professionals Together (TRUUsT)
Helping small congregations chart their future – Supporting vitality and rethinking mission for smaller congregations with an AR/AO/MC sensibility

Areas with an asterisk () span more than one mission area. Review the chart at the end of this report for more detail on the individual projects and initiatives under each area, the status of these projects, and the WCC recommendations to which each project is related.*



SPOTLIGHT - MOSAIC ANTI-RACISM FRAMEWORK

We are building on the experience of our Mosaic Makers program for intentionally multicultural congregations to create a common anti-racism framework for all UUA programs, trainings and learning communities. This will ensure UUA materials and resources are aligned and accessible. It will reinforce the importance of shared analysis and understanding across our faith communities and make it easier for congregational leaders to know what to expect when they engage in anti-racism work.

GAPS - AREAS TO PLAN FOR IN THE COMING YEARS

- Highlight best practices, consider award and recognition programs, in ways that support the ethos of commitment and accountability
- *Ongoing work to improve and expand the UUA's feedback and complaint systems for religious professionals and lay leaders

Support and Train Leaders

The UUA supports and trains leaders, both lay and professional, for ministry that is:

- **Relational** - affirming the wholeness of the people they serve, across cultures and experiences, including engaging in productive conflict;
- **Adaptive** - leading in inclusive and innovative ways, able to navigate challenges our communities face; and
- **Equitable and sustainable** - especially for leaders from the margins, with a pathway for the next generation.

SUPPORT AND TRAIN LEADERS - AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION
A Wider Path to Ministry (Ministerial Fellowship Committee) – Exploring ways to make the path to fellowshipped ministry accessible to people with different experiences, led by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee
Community ministry supports – Institutional credentialing and support for community ministers
Data system for identity information on religious professionals - Tracking equity in outcomes over time for credentialing, compensation and employment for religious professionals
Direct support and start-ups for Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), Trans/non-binary (NB) and disabled UU religious professionals
Innovative Ministry – Systematic support and funding for leaders creating new spiritual communities to serve BIPOC, Trans/NB, disabled and other UUs who have been on the margins
Lay leadership development – Standardizing and unifying leadership development trainings and experiences for congregational leaders with anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural (AR/AO/MC) sensibility and a focus on BIPOC leaders
*National and Regional Youth Programs – Building towards a shared national umbrella for youth programs and communities
*Resources, workshops and trainings – Updating resources and learning opportunities with an AR/AO/MC sensibility, creating new resources to fill the gaps
Scholarship programs – Awarding existing, restricted UUA funds for scholarships with the priorities recommended by the COIC
Shared Ethics Panel – The UUA is collaborating with the UU professional organizations to develop a shared ethics commitment and a panel to help resolve conflicts among religious professionals
Updating credentialing materials – Ensuring the requirements and resources for professional credentialing are updated based on the COIC’s recommendations

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SPOTLIGHT - PATHWAYS TO PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALING

UU professional credentialing bodies are taking seriously the charge to remove barriers and expand opportunities for those at the margins. The Ministerial Fellowship Committee's *Wider Path Task Force* is engaging stakeholders in defining a new, more accessible process for ministerial candidacy. The Religious Education Credentialing Committee is updating required reading to center voices of color.

GAPS - AREAS TO PLAN FOR IN THE COMING YEARS

- Create a strategic, aligned and accessible approach to all UUA scholarships and grant funds, with sufficient investment in these funds
- *Ongoing work to improve and expand the UUA's feedback and complaint systems for religious professionals and lay leaders

Advance UU Values

The UUA advances UU values in the world in service of justice and liberation, where UUs are:

- **Rooted** in the spiritual and political grounding for our justice work, growing the skills needed for organizing and partnership;
- **Taking Action** – mobilizing in solidarity with and leadership by those impacted by injustice; and
- **Prophetic** – Amplifying the prophetic message and voices of our faith.

ADVANCE UU VALUES IN THE WORLD - AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION
Climate Justice – Engagement with climate justice as one of the UUA’s intersectional justice priorities, as called for by WCC
International engagement – Connecting the global Unitarian/Universalist faith community and deepening understanding of imperialism’s role in UU history and institutions
*Resources, workshops and trainings - Updating resources and learning opportunities with an anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural (AR/AO/MC) sensibility, creating new resources to fill the gaps
Side with Love and organizing strategy – Building on the success of UU the Vote, developing the long-term community organizing infrastructure and spiritual/political education to mobilize UUs
Skinner House Books Equity and Accountability Panel – Adding a stage of the review process for all new Skinner House titles, a diverse outside panel skilled in diversity, equity and inclusion work gives feedback and coaching early in a book’s development to best embody the UUA’s AR/AO/MC commitments
UU World editorial redesign – Refocusing UU World magazine to amplify the UUA commitments to mission and implementing the WCC recommendations
Undoing Systemic White Supremacy Statement of Conscience – Capping off the three-year congregational study action issue process, at the 2021 UUA General Assembly congregational delegates vote on the statement on dismantling white supremacy in UU communities and the wider world.

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SIDE WITH LOVE, TAKE ACTION

Building on the momentum of UU the Vote and the many ways UUs showed up to support liberatory movements in 2020, Side With Love will be launching Action Center - a new hub to ground, train, and mobilize UUs for long-haul organizing for justice. Rooted in an AR/AO/MC framework, Side With Love's Action Center will provide leadership development, skill-based trainings, political education, and spiritual sustenance to support UUs building collective power to show up both nationally and locally in solidarity with movements and frontline partners.

GAPS – AREAS TO PLAN FOR IN THE COMING YEARS

- Establish a strong internal communications strategy for the UUA to connect directly with congregational leaders

Governance

To manage our faithful institutions, we strive for a system of governance that is grounded in our commitment to democratic process, reflective of our faithful covenant, and effective at guiding the



UUA in its mission and impact. Our institutions must fully embody an anti-racist, anti-oppressive and multicultural approach to leadership to achieve these goals. Just as the UUA trains and supports congregational leaders, leadership at the Association level should also be:

- **Relational** – affirming the wholeness of the people they serve, across cultures and experiences, including engaging in productive conflict; accountable to directly impacted communities within and beyond the UUA
- **Adaptive** – leading in inclusive and innovative ways, able to navigate challenges our communities face; and
- **Equitable and Sustainable** – especially for leaders from the margins, with a pathway for the next generation.

GOVERNANCE – AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION
Audit & Risk Committee - Monitoring organizational and workplace justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) work, policies and metrics
Streamline and Rethink UUA Governance Systems – A UUA Board taskforce is rethinking the bylaws and reviewing the UUA’s complex governance structure
UUA Archives – The UUA’s official archives can help dig into the historical ways UUs have been complicit in racism and sexism, as well as the commitments to liberation that have been constant in our faith
UUA Workplace Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) – The UUA is committed to building a workplace where people of all backgrounds and identities can thrive
Reimagining General Assembly – With the success of Virtual GA, the UUA is considering alternating an in-person, multiplatform event one year with an all virtual event the next.
Wealth and Reparations – Considering the ways money and wealth exist and are used within the UUA (endowments, philanthropy) to ensure wealth is invested equitably and support systemic reparations
Regional Connections and Integration – Following through on the process of regionalization and building meaningful regional opportunities for congregational leaders to connect
Accountability Commission – A UUA Board Design Team is planning for an ongoing accountability commission with key UU identity groups and stakeholders
Commission on Institutional Change Implementation and Mission Alignment Team (CIMAT) – UUA implementation plan compiled by UUA staff, Study/Action Guide for congregational leaders

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GAPS - AREAS TO PLAN FOR IN THE COMING YEARS

- Institutionalize Association-level commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression and multiculturalism (AR/AO/MC) work, such as via Bylaws changes
- Set metrics for the impact of UUA AR/AO/MC leadership and programs (e.g. what is the impact at the congregational and Associational level?)
- Build shared commitments to anti-racism and full inclusion with UU related organizations and UU partner groups
- Fully explore conversations on role of the UUA President and Moderator to ensure the highest level leadership roles are relational, adaptive and sustainable
- Develop practices and frameworks for reparations within the UUA

Theology



As a covenantal religious community, we are a living faith tradition. Rooted in our religious history of reason, compassion and imagination, we know wisdom comes from many sources, including our own experiences. What unites us is our theologically rooted aspiration to create the “beloved community” inside and outside our congregations. We recognize the ways our UU faith communities have failed to live up to these aspirations in the past. We need spiritual and theological grounding to provide the foundation for culture change. We continue to nurture broad understandings and practices that are rooted in the liberatory theology of Unitarian Universalism. Through our covenant, we work together to respond to what our faith calls us to do in the moment in which we live, to advance the causes of justice, equity, compassion and liberation within and beyond our Association.

The UUA supports theology and theological development in many areas: Publishing books, resources, faith development curriculum and hymnals; Creating leadership development courses and trainings; Creating credentialing pathways for religious professionals; Investment in theological education and collaboration with UU seminaries; Convening theological conversations, Amplifying UU theological voices and scholarship; and Stewarding the UUA bylaws where the core principles and sources of our faith are articulated.

THEOLOGY – AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION
Article II Study Commission – Charged with reviewing the principles, purposes and sources of the UUA, including considering the proposed 8 th Principle, and recommending changes to the UUA bylaws
Resources, workshops and trainings – Updating resources and learning opportunities with an anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural (AR/AO/MC) sensibility, creating new resources to fill the gaps
Voices of marginalized UUs – Highlighting and empowering the voices of BIPOC, trans/NB and disabled UUs and others who have been on the margins of our faith, especially through the UUA’s publishing platforms
October 2021 Convergence – Gathering local UU leaders in October 2021 to ground one another in an everyday, liberatory theology for changing times; hosted by the Congregational Life staff of the five UUA regions
Resources, workshops and trainings - Updating resources and learning opportunities with an anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural (AR/AO/MC) sensibility, creating new resources to fill the gaps
Annual Program Fund Engagement – Focus on defining and practicing the covenant that binds congregations to one another through the UUA
Worship Music Digital Resource – Exploring a new digital library of music for congregations and communities, in lieu of planning for a new print hymnal

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GAPS - AREAS TO PLAN FOR IN THE COMING YEARS

- Clearly articulate a UU theological core that grounds UU commitments to anti-racism, anti-oppression, multiculturalism and full inclusion
- Offer regular opportunities for building embodied theological depth for lay leaders

