***Defund Fear*: Next Moves for UUs**

A Unitarian Universalist religious mandate to “defund fear” can have a variety of effective expressions. The following suggestions offer entry points to action for individuals or UU groups.

**Re-imagine “safety”**

Bring an awakened sense of “safety” to your congregational practices. Read [**“Alternatives to Calling the Police”**](https://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/alternatives-calling-police) in the UUA Safe Congregations Handbook: “We know that much of what we’ve been taught about [safety](http://ellabakercenter.org/night-out-for-safety-and-liberation) is shaped by systems of oppression telling us who to be afraid of. And we know that real [community protection](https://uucsj.org/love-resists-discussion-and-reflection-guide/) does not criminalize us or our neighbors.”

[**Night Out for Safety and Liberation**](https://nosl.us/) is an annual event begun in 2013 by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in Oakland, CA. It takes place on the first Tuesday of August to “redefine and re-imagine what public safety means for our communities.” Check out [resources for any community](https://nosl.us/resources) to host their own event and watch for the hashtag #SafetyIs.

**UUs and the prison abolition movement**

For an introduction to the prison abolition movement and a portal to activism with the UU Side with Love campaign, do the [**six-session, abolition-focused program**](https://secure.everyaction.com/BpoetQl6hUeMeBvP997tow2) of study and action offered, as part of this Common Read, by the UUA’s [Side with Love](https://sidewithlove.org/) team.

On the website of the [**UU Prison Ministry of Illinois**](http://www.uupmi.org/), watch or read the transcript of a panel moderated by Rev. Jason Lydon, “Abolitionist Theologies: Religious Resistance to Policing and Prisons” from August, 2020. UUPMI partners across the state, working to transform institutions and support people harmed by the prison industrial complex.

Though not a UU-specific tool, the **"**[**If You're New to Abolition**](https://abolitionjournal.org/studyguide/)**"** study guide is a great resource for folks struggling with the move from "reform" to "abolish."

Explore the origins of today’s systemic racism in policing and mass incarceration and learn about Black-led movements resisting it:

* [**“Unfinished Business“**](https://sidewithlove.org/unfinished-business) is a four-part study program offered by Side with Love, based on the 2019 documentary, *Reconstruction: America After the Civil War*, narrated by Henry Louis Gates Jr. Each one hour and 45 minute session includes segments from the film and discussion led by Dr. Charlene Sinclair, the founding director of the Center for Race, Religion, and Economic Democracy.
* The award-winning documentary ***13th***, directed by by Ava DuVernay, tracks today’s wildly disproportionate mass incarceration of Black people back to the Constitutional amendment that undid slavery but allowed free use of incarcerated people for labor.

**Connect with people in prison**

Get involved with the [**Worthy Now Prison Ministry**](http://www.worthynow.org) of the UU Church of the Larger Fellowship: “Worthy Now invites people on both sides of prison walls into beloved community. We declare that all persons are worthy of love, respect, and support — not at some future time when we are better people — but as we are **right now**.” You can:

* Become a pen pal: make a one-on-one letter-writing connection with a Unitarian Universalist living in prison
* Engage your faith community in a prison ministry partnership for direct service to people who are incarcerated
* Bring a Worthy Now UU worship service to your congregation
* Take classes on topics such as the prison industrial complex, anti-racism/anti-oppression, and compassionate communication

**Black & Pink National** is a prison abolitionist organization dedicated to abolishing the criminal punishment system and liberating LGBTQIA2S+ people and people living with HIV/AIDS who are affected by that system through advocacy, support, and organizing. Since 2005, a [**national pen-pal program**](https://www.blackandpink.org/penpal-newsletter/) matches incarcerated members with free-world people to correspond, build relationships, and participate in harm reduction and affirmation.

**Help to build communities of care**

Seek opportunities to put communities of care into practice locally. Existing projects may welcome your involvement or support. What community-led organizations are working on youth mentorship or restorative justice programs? coordinating investment in Black- or BIPOC-owned businesses? collectively maintaining a garden, green space, or recreational area? Fund or work with programs that directly fight the deprivation, isolation, and other harm communities experience in Norris’s “framework of fear.”

[***YES!* magazine**](https://www.yesmagazine.org/) (online and in print) is a rich source of inspiration and guidance for community initiatives to combat systemic harm on a local level. For example, read [“Where a Free Meal for Food-Insecure Families Is Just a Text Away”](https://www.yesmagazine.org/economy/2022/02/22/free-meal-food-insecure-families-text) (Feb. 2022).

There are local and national organizations that support people who are incarcerated or recently released and their families. Find out how you can support their work. Many are also advocates for prison abolition. Most will accept donations and some offer learning and/or volunteer opportunities. Some are:

* [**Ella Baker Center for Human Rights**](https://ellabakercenter.org/) (Oakland, CA). “We are named after Ella Baker, a brilliant, Black hero of the civil rights movement. Following in her footsteps, we [organize with Black, Brown, and low-income people to shift resources](https://ellabakercenter.org/sign-up/) away from prisons and punishment, and towards opportunities that make our communities safe, healthy, and strong.”
* [**Families for Justice as Healing**](https://www.justiceashealing.org/) (Boston, MA). ““The approach we take to our work is ReImagining Communities. …Formerly incarcerated women have the solutions and expertise to address the root causes of incarceration. We are leading work to shift resources away from the criminal punishment system and into Black and Brown communities so we can have housing, healthcare, education, economic development, and community-led organizations.”
* [**Vera**](https://www.vera.org/initiatives/investing-in-communities) (national; multi-city). “Vera was founded in 1961 to advocate for alternatives to money bail in New York City. Today, we are a national organization with offices in Brooklyn, NY; Los Angeles, CA; New Orleans, LA; and Washington, DC. These offices are home to Vera’s place-based initiatives, which serve the unique purpose of harnessing our strengths and assets to invest locally in dismantling the systems that punish and harm and building the institutions that deliver safety and justice.”
* [**The Marshall Project**](https://www.themarshallproject.org/) (national) is a nonprofit news organization covering the U.S. criminal justice system. It provides in-depth, timely information about supports and lack thereof for people affected by incarceration. Subscribe to stay informed.