

Charge to Article II Study Commission

Preface: Article II of the UUA Bylaws, Principles and Purposes, is the foundation for all of the work of our UUA and its member congregations and covenanted communities. It is the covenant to which all of our congregations and covenanted communities pledge themselves when they become members of our UUA. Our current Principles and Purposes were last revised in 1987. At GA 2017, there was discussion of amending the Principles to add an 8th Principle, addressing racism, and an amended 1st Principle, addressing non-human life. The 5th Principle was the subject of a report in 2009, which dealt with the ways in which GA and other UU gatherings do and don't embody an inclusive democratic process. The 7th Principle has also been the subject of discussions about possible amendments. There have been many projects, resolutions, task forces and other strategies that have come from the Board, Commission on Appraisal and grassroots groups which encourage us to take a look at our principles, purposes, bylaws and rules. It is time for us to do a review and make changes so that we are living into the Unitarian Universalism of the future, a Unitarian Universalism that holds us in times of great need and ethical, moral and spiritual crises. We are in one of those times now.

In response to those discussions, the UUA Board committed to establishing an Article II Study Commission to consider possible amendments to this Article. In fulfillment of that commitment, the UUA Board hereby establishes the Article II Study Commission.

Charge: The Article II Study Commission is hereby charged to review Article II of the UUA Bylaws, and propose any revisions that will enable our UUA, our member congregations, and our covenanted communities to be a relevant and powerful force for spiritual and moral growth, healing, and justice. Proposed changes should articulate core UU theological values. The Board believes that one core theological value, shared widely among UUs, is love. The Commission on Appraisal, in its report, *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*, cites Robert Miller's study of Unitarian Universalism, stating "UUs ranked loving as an instrumental value and mature love as a terminal value more highly than did respondents from other groups, religious and nonreligious." Dr. Cornel West says that "justice is what love looks like in public." Our commitment to personal, institutional and cultural change rooted in anti-oppression, anti-racism, and multiculturalism values and practices is love in action, and should be centered in any revision of Article II. The new Principles and Purposes should guide us in the transformation of ourselves, our communities and our faith into active networks of collective care, restoration, and justice. The Principles and Purposes you will prepare should be a living document that challenges Unitarian Universalists to place the liberation, in all its dimensions, of all, at the center of our lives. They should be honest about our past, name what we are facing and our aspirations and where we hope to be not for just today but looking out at the horizons. They should ask us to choose Love in Action as the path forward. Our commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism is love in action, and should be centered in any revision of Article II. Finally, the Principles and Purposes should lead us into the second quarter of the 21st Century, while honoring the historic roots of our liberal, progressive faith.

We therefore charge this commission to root its work in Love as a principal guide in its work; attending particularly to the ways that we (and our root traditions) have understood and articulated Love, and how we have acted out of Love.

As it conducts its work, the Commission shall seek to engage the active participation of UUs across all demographics, identities, and theological/philosophical beliefs. The commission shall be open and transparent in its work, communicating progress frequently with UUs through as many channels and communication media as possible. Further, the Commission shall de-center habitual practices that reinforce white supremacy culture.

The commission is instructed to include in its considerations and deliberations the clear call at GA 2017 for the inclusion of another principle, explicitly calling us to be committed to active anti-racism (see attachments about the 8th Principle Project). We also note that there is a growing urging (heard even before the last review of the Principles, at [Salt Lake City, in 2009](#)) ~~Minneapolis, in 2010~~ for us to better articulate our recognition of rights of being for all beings. The commission should consider how this might be included. We specifically direct their attentions to the 2010 proposals, recognizing how very close those came to passing; there is good work there that should be salvaged for our time.

The Commission is charged with reviewing all sections of Article II, and is free to revise, replace, or restructure them as needed to meet the objectives stated above. There is nothing sacred about the number of principles or sources, nor their specific wordings, nor in the way that Article II is laid out. We encourage creativity. The Board would like to see an Article II that is inspirational, memorable and poetic. The language should be inclusive and welcoming, and explicitly anti-racist. Article II, it must be remembered, are broad statements of Principle and Purpose, not detailed programmatic or implementation plans.

The commission is urged to carefully consider the existing language for its implications, and for the errors or inadequacies of those implications. We recognize that one steady criticism over decades has been that the language of the principles is not poetic. We encourage the Commission to consider framings of our principles that allows them to be brief and poetic (perhaps by transferring explanatory clauses and expansions to a subsidiary document that expounds on what the Commission sees as included and intended in that shorter form).

We particularly urge the Commission to review the Sources; the revised listing from the 2010 proposal and its explicit inclusion of Unitarianism and Universalism as *our* Sources seems timely to us. And there are other recommended Sources in that proposal. In addition, there have been energetic discussions about how other faith traditions such as Buddhism and Islam (among others) might be included or put on footings more equal to those of Christianity and Judaism.

Proposed changes must be submitted to the UUA Board of Trustees in January 2022, so that they may be considered by the Board, and then be placed on the 2022 General Assembly Business Agenda for the first vote. (See Bylaws, Article XV Amendment).

The Commission is further charged with submitting regular reports to the Board of Trustees on its plans and progress to meeting its goals and deadlines. (See Board and Commission Responsibilities, p. z).

The Board of Trustees is grateful for the work of this Commission. Please call on us if we can support you in any way.

Mr. Barb Greve and Elandria Williams, Co-Moderators