

- Hello everyone. I think we are about ready to start. I'm glad to see everyone here. I just have a few introductory comments and then we can move along. So welcome everyone to the UUA nominating Committee Candidate forum. I am Bill Young and I serve as our association secretary and a member of the UUA board of trustees. Today's forum will focus on the election of four individuals to three year terms, which will end at GA 2026. There are five candidates for four positions, and the top four vote recipients will be elected. Each delegate may vote for up to four candidates. Voting for the election actually opens tomorrow, June 1st, and goes through 9:00 AM Eastern time on Saturday June 24th. Results will be announced during the GA general session on the afternoon of the 24th. The ballot, which you will see starting tomorrow, includes links to the candidate statements. A few words about the nominating committee, the nominating committee, and its duties are defined in the UUA bylaws. It is a committee of the association, not a committee of the board of trustees. It is responsible for nominations for positions elected by general assembly, except that it does not have responsibility for presidential or moderator nominations. There are separate processes for those. I'll now turn things over to Reverend KC Slack of the Election Campaign Practices Committee. And thank you everyone for being here today, and this is being recorded.

- Hello everybody. I'm so glad that you are here with us for this forum. I'm glad to have our candidates here. I'm glad for all of the questions that you have submitted ahead of time. And I just wanna give us a minute to kind of settle in, to be ready to hear and ask questions, to be ready to receive the answers and do all of that important processing and thinking work that we should all do before we vote for anyone for anything. So I'm gonna encourage you to take a deep breath if that feels good for you, feels good for me, and kind of shake a little bit of it out. Encourage you to make sure that you are comfortable. And I'd like to share with you a poem from Alexis Pauline Gumbs's website, which she says is from the participants in already been done, an ancestral listening workshop from Black Feminist Film School. "We have more than enough power. We have more than enough energy. We have more than enough light. We have more than enough wisdom. We have more than enough memory. We have more than enough protection. We have more than enough power to manifest what you want and repel what seeks to harm us. We have more than enough love. We have more than enough love to go around. We have more than enough connection. We have more than enough connection to love. We have more than enough mothering touch. We have more than enough time, we just have to make space. We have more than enough time. We have more than enough space. We have more than enough joy. We have more than enough stories and courage to heal our worlds. We have more than enough fire. We have more than enough peace. We have more than enough activation. We have more than enough meaning, we have more than enough sweetness, more than enough laughter. We have more than enough beauty. We have more than enough kitchen tables. We have more than enough reasons to

love ourselves as we are. We have more than enough clarity. We have more than enough gentleness. We have more than enough compassion for ourselves. We have more than enough intimacy. We have more than enough reverberation. We have more than enough music. We have more than enough audacity. We have more than enough through community. We have more than enough pathways. We have more than enough guidance. We have more. We have more than enough." Thank you. And I think Matthew will introduce us to the shape of things today.

- Indeed, I will. Thank you KC, I'm Matthew Johnson. I serve our congregation in Rockford, Illinois as the minister here. And I'm a member of the Election Campaign Practices Committee along with Reverend KC Slack and Olivia Cavelli who is at work on the Pacific time zone today and could not join us for this conversation. I'm grateful to the candidates to for the nominating panel for being with us. And for those of you who are joining us, whether you're watching this live or we'll watch it in the weeks to come before casting your vote. So the format that we're gonna follow is we're gonna ask a couple questions to the candidates to get started. Each candidate has 90 seconds to answer that question. They can certainly use less than that time if they'd like to. Reverend KC will keep track of the time, for these first couple questions that I will ask. And then Reverend KC will ask some of the questions that have been pre-submitted to us that you all emailed in. And then as time allows, I will ask the questions that you ask in the chat. So if you put a question in the Q and A, I will keep track of it and we'll ask the candidates that at the end, there may be duplicates, there may be things that have already been covered. So I invite you to listen to the questions that will be asked first before you add your additional questions later on in the forum. We will complete our time together at seven Eastern, sixth Central, and so on and so forth on the dot. So that is the time that we have together. So we'll begin with the first question, which is what do you see as the role of the nominating committee? What's the job of a member of the nominating committee? And I'm gonna start right below me on the screen and we'll sort of go around, we'll go in different orders as we answer each time. So that's Reverend Viola Abbitt, go ahead.

- Okay, well, Reverend Viola Abbott. All right, I see that the nominating committee is a really important committee and the role of the committee is essential to the success of the association. We're responsible for nominating individuals to fill positions on UUA bodies crucial to our lifeblood. We are all informed by our unique perspectives, and the gifts that we bring to this physician. And our primary work is to identify individuals who are committed to unitarian universalism and its future. And we have to do that with all deliberateness, understanding that not everyone always shares our personal views. And I think that says it pretty succinctly from my standpoint.

- Thank you. Carrie Stewart.

- Yes, could you repeat the question? What do you see?

- Sure, what do you see as the role of the nominating committee and the job of a member of the nominating committee?

- So the job of the nominating committee, as Reverend Viola mentioned, is to fill the elected positions on the volunteer committees for the UUA. And so in order to do that, we have to develop a process of soliciting applications for folks who wanna volunteer for national service and ensuring that they come from a wide variety of sources, geographies, age identities, experience locations, and so that we can find the person with the best experience and skills to fit the needs of those committees. And in the larger picture, when we talk to people who are interested in serving, finding out that they are aligned with the mission of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

- Thanks. Ben Gabel.

- Thank you. Yeah, I echo what my other folks, colleagues have said on this panel. One is to identify individuals who bring the skillsets and the lived experiences to live out our values as Unitarian Universalists. Certainly that's a component of it. And also as a member of the nominated committee, we also come from different social locations and professional religious professional experiences within our own congregations and different varying late leadership roles. And so I think it's important that we recognize there's a diversity of our members on the membership nominating committee to ensure that we continue having multiple voices serve in our elected positions. So we have a plurality of voices in our elected leadership positions.

- Thanks, I'm gonna keep going clockwise on my screen. So next up is Reverend Zackrie Vinczen, I hope I'm saying that right, Zackrie?

- Yeah, Reverend Zackrie Vinczen here. He/him pronouns. I see the role of the nominating committee is a lot about matching, people within our association with opportunities to serve on a larger level. And so that has taken a lot of forms and some of the other folks have covered this. But I think too, the reality is that most of the applications that the nominated committee receives, generally are received through the general interest form. So that means someone has filled out a general interest form and they're maybe considering all the various committees. And so part of our work has been to work with these individuals who have applied and try to figure out, well where will their skills best fit in our structures? And so that has taken the work of having sort of one-on-one conversations. We've hosted a number of small gatherings to talk with people, just to see where they fit. And so I think it's about pairing people's skills and abilities with that opportunity to serve the larger association.

- Dick Burkhardt.

- Okay. Yeah, I'm quite familiar that you guys want qualified candidates, for example, for the board trustees, commissioner social witness, the nominating committee itself and other groups. But I have some different ideas. I know you select now just one person to be a nominee for a position. I'd like to see a nominated committee that selects at least three people for each position and has a real election. I'm a PhD mathematician, a really good way to do this will be to have voters ranked the top three candidates. And voting is actually my professional expertise right now. And I think this would... but to do this, I think we need to work on our leadership development process 'cause this has really suffered since the districts were disbanded. I used to be very active in one of the districts. I think we'll need more regional contracts, we'll need like multiple webinars to explain the responsibilities and opportunities to all might be who might be curious. We need candidates who will work well with others, respect differences, and who are committed to our seven principles. Collectively they should be well-balanced by geography, by theological or philosophical background, by class or cultural background by gender, age, ability, all those nice things. Thank you.

- Thanks everyone. The second question is this, what communities, organizations and networks and unitarian universalism are you connected to that will help you recruit for positions that you might be looking for? And if you could, when you answer that question, also tell us about your geography, where you are. So what communities, organizations and networks and unitarian universalism are you connected to that will help you recruit for the positions you're looking for. And let's start with Reverend Zackrie this time. Then we'll go around.

- Yeah, so I am outside of Seattle area. I think Dick, you and I are actually in the same geographical region here, and so Pacific Northwest and I bring with it myself, those connections as a minister here in our region. Beyond sort of my connections with my colleagues as a minister and in the region. I also, prior to serving this congregation was religious educator active and Loretta. And so still have many professional contacts with religious educators throughout our association and have drawn on those. And then also when as a gay identified man to also connect with the LGBTQIA community with our association as a way of sort of bringing in more perspectives, more geographic perspective, more LGBTQIA perspective. And so those are some of the various communities and viewpoints that I feel I bring into this work.

- Okay, Dick Burkhardt you wanna go next?

- Yeah, I live in southeast Seattle, which has been built as one of the most diverse zip codes in the United States. They're very deliberate, I love multicultural settings. And I was active in the Pacific Northwest District when it was here for many years. So I'm quite well connected in this area for a number, especially on the issues of justice 'cause I was on the board of our state legislative network for almost a decade I think. I've also been active at the national level. I've been on the board of UU for just economic community for about 20 years and very active there. For example, I led their successful vote for the congregational study action issue on escalating inequality in 2014 and did all the research on that too. And then 2019 I led the action of meet you witness on the Green New Deal. So very strong background, there and many contacts. And more recently I've been active with groups, who advocate for things like multiracial unity and our EU principles and their list serves actually have a very broad national reach. So when I applied for this position as a petition candidate, within one week I easily got 98 signatures from 38 different congregations. So that's quite a broad reach which you didn't used to be able to get just through list service. Yeah, and I also regularly attend UUA board meetings and Article Two meetings.

- Thank you Dick, that's your time.

- Okay, so I've made connections there also.

- Thank you Dick. Reverend Viola.

- I am currently in a ministry position in the southeast region here in Virginia. And within that I have especially good connections with individuals in our two cluster groups, the Joseph Jordan cluster of religious professionals and their Tidewater cluster, which has renewed activities, not just involving religious professionals but also members of the laity in the congregations comprising it. I've also lived and worked in the New England region and the central East region. In the central east region, I was a layperson for a number of years, actively involved in congregations there. Some people might remember the St. Lawrence district and I have developed and maintained numerous contacts in those areas as well. I'm also connected to the drum and blue communities, EU religious professionals of color. And I've also recently joined AUM 'cause music is a love of mine and I expect to develop more context there as well.

- Thank you, Carrie.

- Thanks. Well, I'm a lifelong UU. I have been a member or a child or a friend of 13 different congregations in what was five different districts in three different regions. So I maintained contacts all over the place. I'm an active member of one of the five largest congregations here in Dallas, Texas, where we have 74 congregations alone. I served on three committees at my congregation. I was

previously a member of the southwest UU board when we had one. I was for about 15 years, I was a congregational consultant for the southern region and I was also on staff of our leadership school for about a dozen years. So I've seen a lot of a class of about 80 people every year come through and made connections that way. I'm also a former steering committee member of Allies for Racial equity. I still help facilitate their programs every year. So I'm in touch with that. And finally, I'm the parent of two third generation Unitarian Universalists who were very involved youth. So it was great when I was connected to all those youth who are now young adults, but I still keep in touch with many of those as well.

- Thank you Carrie. Ben.

- I'm currently serving as the congregation administrator in the MidAmerica Region of just outside of Detroit, Michigan. And my other roles that I have in connections and networks I am a member of the Association for Unity and Universal Administrators, the professional organization for that. I also was a previous steering committee member for Drum and an active member in the religious professionals of color community. And another role that I have is I serve as the co-president of the UU Society for Community Ministries. Which is the religious professional organization for both of our ordained community ministries, community ministry, joined ministries beyond our walls of our congregations. So those are the active networks that I'm involved with or have been involved with and currently involved with. Largely my personal ministry's, been with community ministry, with folks doing justice making work. That's my bread and butter with the connection and with the Drum Community as well.

- Thank you very much. I'm gonna turn over to KC to ask the next questions and I will be keeping time.

- Great, so we did receive a number of questions in advance. We won't be able to get through all of the questions that were asked today because we only have so much time and we want to be able to answer some of the questions that you're asking right now. But we'll get into those and I will kind of continue Matthew's switching up of who answers when. So I'm gonna go ahead and just kind of start with a hard hitter, if you will. And that question is, do you believe that Unitarian Universalism is white supremacist? Why or why not? And I'm gonna start with Carrie.

- Thanks KC. So my background is in intercultural communication and so I see, white supremacy culture as something that has attributes in our society. If anyone has spent any time or grown up in the US we were based on a system of a hierarchy, right? So we founded a nation based on some great things like life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and equality for all, along with stolen land and genocide of indigenous people and kidnapping and enslavement of African Americans

because we needed to create a hierarchy, right? So that's part of how white supremacy culture in my perspective in the US got started. The systems were built to benefit white people. We became a racialized society and those systems were built and still exist today. So yes, we are all swimming in white supremacy culture, we can't help it. We didn't decide to do this, it wasn't our choice. But culture is, if you've seen that iceberg picture, you know, 10% of culture is seen and can be visible. The rest of it is not visible and just passed down by norms and practices. And so we just breathe it in like the air. And so yes, unitarian universalism along with all of our institutions have white supremacy culture baked into them.

- That's time.

- [Carrie] Okay.

- Thank you Carrie.

- Thank you Carrie. We'll go to Ben next.

- unitarian universalism is not immune to the US foundation of white supremacy culture. And I would say furthermore that it's a dominance culture of power over culture that we're in. But our understanding of in the US context through racialized identity. As a US based faith organization, we are not immune to those larger cultures of white supremacy. And I think as unitarian universes that values the inherent worth of every person. We need to recognize that every person has not have had access with proximity to power and whiteness and recognize how do we have people who have been historically marginalized and targeted in this country to be able to thrive in our faith communities that so many of of white folks have the privilege to do. So yes, there is elements of white supremacy culture and unity and universal and I truly feel that we are called to examine that and to see how we can dismantle that and recognize-

- That's time Ben, thank you.

- [Ben] Thank you.

- Thank you Ben. Reverend Zackrie.

- Yeah, so do I think that Unitarian Universalist is white supremacist? Yes, and I think that we are a product of our larger cultural context. And when I look around in our society and I see, the discrepancies that people of color experience in our world versus white people like myself and I am someone who, I grew up in a lower income community. And I recognize that even in that context, my privilege was oftentimes still of a different status than the people of color in my community. So yes, I do believe that our association is permeated with white supremacy. I also as a further sort of testament

that to that for me, I believe the people of color who have talked about their experiences within our association of the harm that they've experienced over the years. And I think that that for me is just further compounds my stance there. So thank you.

- Thank you Reverend Zackrie. Dick, you're next.

- Yeah, here's where we have quite a difference because the common meaning of white supremacy is belief in white racial superiority. If you look in the larger society today, it's a very fringe movement. I read one survey, they couldn't even find out what the percentage was 'cause it was so low. And when you look in the UUA, for example, the CRC report, it talked about white supremacy culture, but there was zero evidence for actual white supremacy. So I'm concluding that UUA we simply don't have white supremacy or white supremacy culture, period. I think what you guys are talking about is something else. It's maybe ethnocentrism, it's some kind of, you know, cultural, economic kind of things. But it's not white supremacy as most people would understand it. And like you go back to indigenous peoples, a lot of those schools for indigenous peoples, they were based on Christian supremacy. So you have a big, and a lot of the missionary work, for example, was based on Christian supremacy. So I actually think... and that's real supremacy. So I think the actual white supremacy today is quite rare in larger society. Basically none existent within the UUA. And we should look at the culture not call it something that it is not.

- Thank you Dick. Reverend Viola?

- Yes. Okay, Hi. The question was is the UUA white supremacist and I prefer to use the term white supremacist culture because we can't escape the fact that we are in this country and that even though Unitarian Universalists feel they are so much more. We are subject to the same conditions of the rest of the world in which we exist in. As a black person who's been a part of this denomination for a while, I could tell you yes, it does exist. I have even walked away from this faith for a very brief period of time because of some of the issues that I encountered. And I would say that people are not necessarily intentionally succumbing to some of the behaviors that are evident in a white supremacist culture. But all of us don't realize the extent to which it has permeated everything that we do. And not just white people, but black people, brown people, gay people, straight people. It is part of the air that we breathe and the water in which we swim. The beautiful thing is because who we are as Unitarian Universalists, that means we can do the work to overcome it, but we just have to be open to its existence.

- That's time, thank you.

- Thank you all. So for our next question, we had a couple of



questions come in that were about the idea of ideological diversity among people elected and nominated to our UUA national level positions. The question was often phrased as what would you do to ensure that? But I'd like to make it a little bit broader so you can talk about the concept as a whole. And we'll start with Ben this time.

- I think it's real... I am struggling with that question, not so much of what it is but the intent behind that question, perhaps I'm struggling with that. As someone who's been on the nominating committee for the last three years, we have reached out to many different segments of stakeholders within the Unitarian Universalist faith movement. Both the religious professionals, lay folks, different identity groups, and we have had continuing having conversations as nominating committee members to have liaisons to each of those groups within our Unitarian Universalist faith. And so I think from my perspective, there is a diversity of ideas and imaginings of what Unitarian can become in our faith. What I will say clearly about is that, I personally think question folks, who continue doing hiring to folks with marginalized identities, bipolar folks, queer folks, trans, non-binary. And if I'm hearing those are harms existing, and some folks feel that that doesn't exist or that won't recognize the behaviors of some of those harms, then-

- That's time Ben, thank you.

- Great, thank you.

- Thank you Ben. Reverend Zackrie, you're next.

- Yeah, so I know this quote is often dubiously attributed to Francis David, but the idea of, "We need not think alike to love alike." And I always come back to that as a central part of, for me what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist, a minister, a member of the nominating committee. And I know that throughout our process and I am completing my first three year term now on the nominating committee. Throughout our process, I think that we have been really mindful as a group of saying that it's not about agreeing on everything and at the same time as an association, there are certain things that we're wrestling with right now, certain values we're coming to center. And I think that that point Ben made about the harm, that is being done and sort of taking on, yeah, we don't all have to think alike, but we do I believe have a harm reduction role to play.

- Thank you Reverend Zackrie. Dick, you're next.

- So this is asking how we ensure diversity, is that the question?

- It is that, but it is also open to commentary about the degree to which that's important to you.

- Okay, so I wanna say I've found that our seven principles are actually compatible with quite a diversity of thought, including socioeconomic thought, even political thought. I don't see that actually happening in our association right now. And when you have this kind of diversity that actually leads to better outcomes, think of the idea of wisdom of crowds. So I would look to nominees who know how to look for that kind of synergy like debate and dialogue across divides of various kinds, listening and finding common ground. And rather than attempting to de platform alternative viewpoints, I've seen too much of that. And this is a real problem now 'cause I've seen certain people resort to name calling or nasty allegations. To me, this is what's often referred to as cancel culture. And I view that as a big problem in the UUA in certain congregations. So I would say we need dialogue based on objective inquiry in evidence and not making assumptions on other people. And so I look for diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints that is broadly consistent with our membership, but I would recommend people based as they are, as individuals not as representatives of groups or categories.

- Thank you Dick. Next, Reverend Viola.

- Okay, well first of all, Unitarian Universalists aren't a monolith. So, I think one of the misconceptions and sort of what has sometimes fueled the argument that we are part of white supremacist culture is that we are all the same. And we are not. We don't like the same music, we don't have the same politics. It's all different, I think the only thing that really matters the most and serves to bring about the most diversity is to look for those people and acknowledge those people who want to work together and those who are committed to religious liberalism. And I think that's one of the things that we often get away from, that we are a faith community. So what does that mean? That that means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. But I think that's where we have to look to what are the things that make us common in our coming together. And that is a commitment to our values and who we are and that this is a place where those who want to engage and celebrate religious freedom can truly do that.

- Thank you Reverend Viola. And finally on this question, Carrie.

- Thanks. So first of all, unitarian universalism is a non-creedle faith, right? We don't have faith tests in unitarian universalism because we are a diverse committee, we have wide networks and we have liaisons to those diverse networks. And people have come to unitarian universalism in all different ways. And one of the highlights that I've experienced in my three years on nominating committee is when we are interviewing applicants, they invariably talk about their hopes and dreams for unitarian universalism in the future. And, you know, that's what inspires them and motivates them for service. And there was one other thing I wanted to say. I lost my note. The other thing

is that we are a growing faith, right? Revelation is not sealed in unitarian universalism. So we are always growing and developing and learning. So our faith is not a constant stagnant thing. That's it.

- Thank you Carrie, for our next question. We have a longer question with a little bit of background. So we'll start with, as a faith, we continue to respond not only to our personal theologies, but to the larger calling to seek justice, equity and liberation for all. Which means shifting our theologies and our processes both in our congregations and in our association away from a focus on individual freedom to the collective liberation of all from oppressions and violence. What steps would you take as a member of the nominating committee to ensure this focus is shared by those who seek election, by the general assembly? And as with our last question, you can comment on kind of the wider assumptions of that question. If you would like to, and we will start this time with Reverend Zackrie.

- There's a lot in there. May I just ask for a brief 'cause I was listening and I...

- Yes, so as a faith we are responding not only to our personal theologies, but larger calls to justice and liberation from all oppressions. What steps would you take to ensure that this focus is shared by those who seek election to national positions? That's a decent summary of that question.

- Yeah, so some of this kind has come up in the process that I've been involved with so far on the nominating committee over the past three years. And as a committee a while back, we committed ourselves to the best of our ability to engaging with some of these issues of changing theologies. And we did a read and really tried for a good several months to incorporate stuff from the circle of concern report into how we were going about interviewing and talking with candidates. And I know there's a lot of changing stuff happening right now with Article two and all of that, and we don't know where that will end up. I think for me though, personally, the thing that I look to as an inspiration would be to make sure that what we're doing has love at the center. That what we're doing is ultimately about sharing love, about being a community of love. I had a colleague in a retreat while a few days ago who said, if all we do is show up and love each other, I think that's enough. And I know that's not enough in terms of all the technical things we have to do, but in terms of selecting the folks or working to identify folks, I would work to identify folks who have love at the center.

- Thank you Reverend Zackrie. Dick, it is your turn next.

- Yeah, this question is really problematic for me. In fact, I'm very glad that the UUA has never endorsed replacing our several principals by a concept that has such a horrific history as collective liberation

based on moving away from individual freedom. 'Cause if you look in practice pursuing collective liberation, without individual freedom, it often ends up as collective oppression. I'm thinking of malice China or stalling this Russia for example. And so I would really want nominees who could incredibly commit if possible to both keeping the several principles, especially our freedoms and moving towards equity on the grand scale. You can do them both together, but you can't pretend to do one expense of the other. That's why I campaigned for Bernie Sanders last time, for example, because he called for a political revolution choosing his words very carefully, and that meant respected individual freedoms. So I would say my goal would be for recruiting new candidates would be our seven principles must come first. Second, we must have debate in practices that would critique the neoliberal economic and political systems in the larger society. The implied goal of all this would be that we'd at least get some softening of our escalating crises of climate, ecosystems, resources, governance, and inequity. But we must not turn the UUA into radical political party to do this. That would only mean more fracturing and political polarization.

– Thank you Dick, Reverend Viola.

– Yes, I wanna say that what Reverend Zackrie said, I think is really important. That love should be at the center of what we do. And if love is at the center of what we do, then we can only seek to achieve collective liberation. Individual freedom, I get it a lot of people feel that it's really important and it is important, but how free can an individual truly be if they're subject to oppression? So part of what the nominating committee would need to do is just to make sure that whoever the candidates are for national election, that they are people who understand the importance of what it means to be in relationship and to be with others. And that I mean it sounds trite, but none of us can be free unless all of us are free. So, and I think that's a really important thing to remember and to keep love at the center of it all. So that would be the litmus test. Thank you.

– Thank you Reverend Viola. After Reverend Viola, we have Carrie.

– Yes, so as I mentioned, we are non-creedle faith, I hope everybody knows. And so it does come down to what our values are and part of I think our pull as unitarian universalism is to practice those values out in the world. And so you can't just put values in a statement and be there and have everyone believe them, right? They have to be lived out in the world. So when we talk to candidates or applicants, potential candidates, we have conversations that help reveal what their desires are to bring our Unitarian Universalist values out into the world. And one of the ways we do that is through covenant, right? We don't have creeds, we have covenants and our relationships with one another. And when I was on staff at leadership school, we would have the participants break into small groups and they would have to write

a mission statement for their small group, right? And they would wordsmith and they'd throw a bunch of words up on the wall. And invariably, all of those words, all of those values that they worked really hard to express came down to love. Love is definitely at the center of everything we do. And so in getting to know the people we talk with, those kinds of practices are revealed.

- Thank you Carrie and Ben, you are last on this question.

- Yeah, what I see in unitarian universalism, and not just here but in lots of difference in my personal life, is this tension between the individualism and a collectivism. And while I understand the fear of when we talking about collective liberation, we're losing individuality. And I don't think those are mutually exclusive things. We can have both of those that when we are centering the community here a community, as collective liberation, then we as individuals can then thrive in those communities that we belong to. And so those are not mutually exclusive values for me. And ways I experience it individually is that as me as an individual, as a gay Asian American, that before marriage equality there was institutional discrimination against folks like myself to not be able to marry someone who I love. And so that is like my collective identity as a gay person that is not me as Ben. So there is systemic oppressions that I've experienced, that's not me as an individual, but they're a collective approaches in order to overcome some of those oppressions. And I think that we often talk about the tension between individual and collectivism and that both can behold that we can uphold individualism by taking care to working towards collective liberation.

- Thank you.

- Thank you so much Ben. Our next question, which I think might wind up being our last question for this section, relates to some of what we have been talking about and is gonna mush together a couple of questions, which are about Article Two and the eighth principle. So broadly speak to your thoughts and opinions about the proposed article two and the eighth principle, your support, your lack of support, what have you. And for this one, our first responder is Dick.

- Yeah, I've looked very carefully at the eighth principal. But I was quite frustrated with what the commission was doing. In fact, I got so frustrated one morning, I sat down and rewrote the entire Article Two myself and made people like that better. So I think it ninth the article two commission needs much higher quality people. People or distinguished ministers and professionals who, because this is a very demanding kind of task and I would rather see it actually restarted with much more qualified people and experienced people in there. And I think and one of the issues with the proposed eighth principle is that, a lot of us realize that the issues of race and things like that do have a place but not in the principles. 'Cause then you have all

kinds of other issues that might end up in the principles. And really our first principle inherent worth and dignity of every person covers the basics. So I'd rather see the eighth principle me word and not as a principle, but somewhere else. In addition, it does have some issues. For example, it assumes that racism is a huge problem in the UUA and I've never seen evidence for that. The CRC report, for example, had no valid statistical results. I'm a mathematician, I looked at it very carefully and basically assume-

- That's time Dick.

- Thank you Dick, Reverend Viola, you're next.

- Okay, first of all, I wanna say thank you to the folks who served on the Commission on Institutional Change and the Article two study commission, I think they've done some really incredible work. My congregation that I'm in, although they did it before I got here, I have to applaud them. They were one of the adopters of the eighth principal. The way that we look at it here is that it is a call to action that the other seven principles really allude to. And the fact that the word accountability is built in there, I think is really very, very, very important. As for the work of the Article Two study commission, I think their work is very important. I feel that for many of us, the seven principles have become creedle. And this brings us back their work, I think brings us back to the heart of who we are by looking at our values. Not to mention that it's also much easier to recall the values that the Article Two study commission has put forth than our seven and eight principles. And I think I'm in favor of it. I preach regularly on the values that have been put forth in that work. And I think that the work of the COIC was very important because it puts two words.

- That's time, thank you.

- Thank you Reverend Viola. Carrie, you're next.

- I'm a big supporter of the eighth principal. I think if we can undo the knot that is racism in our culture, I think that will undo a lot of things and talk about liberation. That's where we'll get it. As a white woman, I'm committed to making sure that that happens to the greatest extent I can possible. As for the Article Two commission, I think their work is beautiful and a wonderful expression of our values that encapsulate growing understandings and a widening of our faith. That's it. Thank you Carrie. Ben, you're next.

- Yes, I'm also in favor of the work of the commission and the Article Two commission, Article Two eighth principle. And I remember having these conversations, even back 10 years ago of having that seven principles was not enough to ensure that folks with Pega identities would be able to thrive in our congregations. And this was the ask

among our unity and Universalists who had the most at stake of in this faith. To see, to call to our faith leaders to say, "Hey, in order for me to be able to thrive in this faith, this is what I need." And eighth Principle in the Article Two was the result of many of that work and ask. And as Reverend Viola said about, is it easier to remember the six values that centered around love, the transformation, justice, equity, interdependence, pluralism and transformation. So that's... And I think we as Unitarian Universalist and just as human beings can value those six values around love. And we might have different definitions of that for ourselves individually, but I just strongly believe that we're filling a call of a unitarian universalist have asked that we go deeper spiritually back with action, sentient of values around love. And I'm committed to supporting that word.

- Thank you Ben. Reverend Zackrie, I believe that you're last on this question.

- Yeah, I think so. So like Reverend Viola said, the eighth principal, the thing that really spoke to me was it was a call to something, it was an ask to something. And that to me is powerful. I think too, looking at the work of the Article Two study commission, that's a similar feel I get from what is being put forth. One of the things about the Article two study commission, I think it's fabulous work, it's super interesting in my congregation I have said that I don't know how I feel if it passes or not. Like I love it. I think the interesting thing for me in the work is the deepening theological conversations that we're having. And I've been having at my congregation much more conversations about what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist in a way that doesn't just go to the stock language of our principles, which has been really cool. And I think it dovetails nicely into why the Circle of Concern Report asked us to do is a deepening theological reflection. And so that's sort of my thoughts on all of that. I think it's really interesting and I'm excited to see where we end up in there.

- Thank you Reverend Zackrie. I'll now return you to Matthew's capable hands and I will go back to timing your questions.

- Thank you Reverend KC and thank all of the candidates for answering those questions. We got a lot of questions in the Q and A that have been sent to us and I'm gonna focus on the questions that are most sort of on target, on point for the work of the nominating committee. We'll see how far we get down the list. So, and I think we'll begin this time with Carrie, so you'll be first and then we'll keep going around in the circle. But this question comes from Joyce Francis who asked, made this notation and then asked the question. That a few years ago, well she was serving on our congregation's nominating committee. We found we were uncomfortable with nominating our own replacements. We felt at risk developing a kind of group think so we changed our process. Does this practice as the national level concern

you as nominees and in your work? So Carrie, do you wanna begin with that?

- So the bylaws of the UUA state that one of the committees that the nominating committee will provide candidates for, is the nominating committee. So that is what we are stuck with. We have very hard. There were only, when Zackrie Ben and I joined the nominating committee, there were only two remaining committee members out of nine. So we have worked really hard at rebuilding, not just the nominating committee, but also the processes that we work on. And as we've mentioned before, we are a very diverse committee with all kinds of measures, from all kinds of places and backgrounds and experience. And we reach into those networks and we're very conscious about the balance on our committee, you know, how many lay people we have versus ministers versus religious educators versus committee folks. And so we're very conscious that we want to keep a good balance on our committee, just like all the others.

- Thank you, Ben?

- Yeah, does... Previously being on the nominate committee, I was also, I served on the journey toward Wholeness Transformation Committee and one of the reports when I was on it, but the previous journey toward Wholeness Transformation Committee report was talking about the nominating appointments process. And one of the recommendations was from those reports was to have a diversity of social location and identities on the nominating and the appointing committee. And the nominee community has continued with that commitment of reaching out to the depth and breadth of Unitarian Universalist faith. To ensure that there is a diversity of voices on the nominating committee so that there's no replication of a certain demographic on the nominee community. And in addition to that, we also supportive of late leadership development in a such as with Drum and Blue, because many of those folks who come through Drum and Blue, also in a leadership schools, many of our lay folks, that's where and our relationship professionals come from those organizations to develop the leadership skills, to move beyond the congregation, but into the national leadership. So we are also cognizant of not just nominee qualified folks, but also in conversations of leadership development with our pipelines. Thank you Ben.

- Thanks, Reverend Zackrie.

- So, yeah I've always saw, and I've looked at other nominating committees, the practice of nominating your replacements is interesting and that's how the bylaws for the UUA spell out our process. The good news is that it's actually the general assembly who gets to decide who's on the nominating committee. And so it's up to the general assembly to actually say yes or no to a candidate. So in terms of a system of checks and balances, I do that part of it does



make it seem a little bit better. But as many folks have said, we try to be really intentional about not creating a chamber of groupthink. I know we've gotten together in person and we meet regularly online and we don't agree on everything and we try to reach consensus and know that sometimes it means we rock the boat with each other a little bit. But yeah, I guess that's my thoughts on that.

- Thank you, Dick your turn.

- Yeah, I think this is a real issue. It's sort of like this time when we had the presidential election and there were only two candidates and that was supposed to be on one candidate it was supposed to be two, and it looks bad. And so it's a nominate committee. Even if you try to avoid groupthink, what's the chance that someone like me would be chosen? Pretty slim because I don't go along with some of the UUA terminology and things. And so it is that doesn't come across as groupthink and I think what we need to do is to look at what other organizations are doing. There must be a variety of ways to handle this better out there. So you do actually get more variety than you think you're getting. 'Cause if you're just looking at like ethnic diversity that doesn't cut it. There's a lot more many kinds of diversity.

- Thank you, Reverend Viola.

- Yes, I would have to say that what Carrie said is we're kind of stuck with what we have, but I think that what that really requires is that we be really intentional and deliberate and try to stay connected to our values in coming up with nominees for some of the different elected positions. The truth is, even if it were structured a different way, there's always a possibility of abusive process. So we need to hold each other accountable and we have the general assembly to hold us accountable, and if there's a ground swell to change it, that's always a bylaw change. So until then, I think we just have to make sure that we do the best that we can to be discerning and welcoming and encourage diversity on the nominating committee to get the best individuals nominated for positions as possible, including other members of the nominating committee.

- Thank you. We'll start with Ben for this round and go around again. I would love for you to speak of your sense of what in the conversation about leadership development, which some of you have mentioned, what would be your hopes in sort of this post lockdown but still sort of covid world, for how Unitarian Universalist and the Unitarian Universal Association would do national leadership development and what the nominating committee's role in that kind of conversation might be? And Ben, we'll start with you.

- Yeah. One is, I think we need to equip our Unitarian Universalist folks of opportunities to make connections with other Unitarian

Universalist and other congregations as one area with leadership development happens. They're not just only in their own congregation, but they'll also be able to connect with other congregations. And continuing investing in Drum in Blue, youth and young adults So those are all ways of where we as a Unitarian Universalist association could do some of work. But specifically with nominating committees to continue having the connections and linkages with our various professional religious organizations, stakeholder groups, build relationships with trust equal access. And to ensure that we are also keeping on the forefront. What can we help to support as a person in this faith to thrive in this faith and to serve it. Thank you Ben.

- Reverend Zackrie.

- So yeah, this has come up several times since I've been on the nominating committee and we've been talking and I know we've been in conversation as a committee with members of the UUA staff. On how we can sort of identify and develop leaders to get 'em into the pipeline. I think the reality is and I know this has come up a few times, oftentimes when we have a open position we're nominating for, we may only receive one single application. And so it's challenging to have this robust pool of leaders. In our conversations a cool resource that we were informed of was that, members of national committees have access to some of the on-demand classes that the UU Institute offers. And many of those resources are great for congregational contexts. I think though what might be helpful looking forward, is to develop more resources that were aimed at the national service components of our faith. And that I think that there's some things there that we as a nominating committee could help generate. But to connect people to resources that help them understand what is it that is even happen to go these committees, how do I serve all of those things. And I think to rely on some of the digital resources that have really come out of the last few years especially.

- Thanks, Dick your next.

- Could you restate that question again?

- Sure, so what do you see as the nominating committee's role and how would you approach the question of leadership development in the kinda post covid world we're living in.

- I think I just that a little bit earlier along the lines with Zackrie said. I think you need to have a much broader leadership development like in multiple like webinars, for anyone who might have any curiosity about any of these positions, just so they understand what these positions are about and to sort of maybe build some potential relationships there. 'Cause we don't have the districts anymore and there's, a huge gap in getting people from congregations to the national level. So we need webinars, maybe even institutes, to

sort of bring people up so they see, I can make a contribution right there. So that's what I say, just a lot more needs to be done to get many more people to replace the districts and bring and get educated people.

- Thank you, Reverend Viola.

- Leadership development is an issue I think for everybody, even at the congregational level. And that's really where it begins, right? So, and I know things have been different since we no longer have districts to help in leadership development. Maybe what it might require is some collaborative effort on the part of the nominations committee and perhaps the regions to come up with some ways to figure out how to increase the pool of individuals. But as I said before, it starts with the congregations. So if congregations can't even get enough people, which is increasingly an issue to get enough people to volunteer to fill many of the roles that need to be filled in our congregations, it's gonna be hard to do that on a national level. So that's not to say that effort wouldn't be a good thing to do, but it's gonna be a challenge no matter what. I think it requires some creative thinking to overcome that.

- Thank you. And Carrie, I think you're last on this question.

- Okay. Yes, because of the extremely low number of applicants that we receive for all of the positions that we are obligated to fill. Even though it's not in the bylaws that leadership development is the nominating committee's role, obviously we're very concerned with it. And so in our conversations with the UUA, because we talked about leadership development, we as a committee have wanted to take this on, and as a result of our conversations with UUA staff resulted in the allowing all of current committee members to be able to access all of the UU leadership institute materials. We hope we're able to broaden that for perspective leaders as part of leadership development like Dick mentioned. I'm hopeful also that the UUA will expend additional resources in leadership development and even have staff focus on this because it's true. We do have a gap since regionalization that really hasn't been filled and there is a big leap from congregational involvement to national service. So it's definitely something that we are very concerned about.

- Thank you, Carrie. Before we turn to the next question, a couple people asked in the Q and A, some process questions, they may have missed, Bill's explanation in the beginning of the forums, just to remind people that there are four, three year slots on the nominating committee. There are up for election, there are four nominated candidates and one candidate by petition and delegates will vote for four. Did I get that right Bill? Did I say that correctly, I'm hoping.

- You did Matthew. And in addition to that, there will be instructions

on the ballot.

- Great. So the next question, I'd love to have folks answer, and I think we'll jump around here a little bit. I think, Dick, we'll start with you this time. Earlier in the conversation, people were talking about love, and one of the people asked, how do you define love? And I would love you to take a swing at that Dick. You wanna go first?

- Well, I guess you define love in multiple different ways. That's the problem, it depends on the context. You know, if you're an automatic relationship, it's one thing. If you're in the UUA, what is it really? And to me, in the UUA context, it would actually mean something very similar to like a very positive respect for someone else. You can't really love someone in some kind of passionate, maybe even abstract way as much. You can really respect other people and in whole variety of ways, not just verbally, but it's how you interact with people and how you do things together. And so to me, that's the kind of love we need to be talking about here. How we get along with each other, especially people who are different. How do we bridge those differences and respect each other?

- Thank you, Reverend Viola

- How I would define love in this context, of course, not a romantic one. Compassion, caring, respect, a desire to help. Wishing to be in community and solidarity with that person. I think in this context, those are the big ones. Compassion, caring, empathy, respect. Yeah.

- Thank you, Carrie

- Yeah, I think love in a faith context is showing care for someone, for being concerned that everyone has all that they need to thrive, to engaging in relationship to make sure that that happens and to find out how that happens. And I love Cornell West's definition of love. "Justice is what love looks like in public."

- Ben.

- I agree, it's a much of a compassion and yearning to being in a regular relationship with the other person that I can do what I can to be respectful and caring. Empathy, someone else mentioned that. And I just find it interesting that this is UU thing. Trying to define love was, I just want to feel and do than trying to define it verbally. And so for me it's more of a feeling of safety, emotional safety too, with the other person. So it's more of a feeling for me than trying to articulate it.

- Thank you Ben. Reverend Zackrie.

- Yeah, I think love is one of the hardest things that we are called

to do as people. And for me, love is continuing to have a deep abiding affection for others, even when you don't always agree, even when you may not even like them, even when it's really hard, it's still, you know, we talk about the inherent worth and dignity. And I think actually why I like putting love at the center rather than inherent worth and dignity personally, is that love is a choice I make. Love is, and when something's inherent, it is built in. But love puts the agency on me to choose to be in relationship in a certain way. And I think that's one of the most challenging things as a human we do and it challenges me every day.

- Thanks Zackrie. I think we can squeeze in one more question before we give the candidates a chance to offer a closing statement. So one of the questions here is about how you feel about having multiple candidates for each position. And just to remind everybody what Bill said at the beginning, the nominating committee doesn't do the moderator or the president, but they do the rest of them. And how you feel about whether the nominate committee should be nominating more than one candidate for those positions. And what your thought about that is, and we'll start with Reverend Viola.

- I think on one level, I can understand why some people might like to do that, or I think that's a good idea, and perhaps it is, but I'd like to think that the nominating committee, I know they really kind of grilled me on stuff. Thoroughly vets people to make sure that the people who are going to be put forward with the general assembly are the best possible candidates. The other thing is in a universe where increasingly people don't want to volunteer or put themselves out there, if there are multiple... First of all it's hard to find people, right? So if the goal is to have multiple candidates for multiple positions in the denomination on a national level, we will eventually burn our way through people who we don't necessarily burn our way through quite yet. So I think it's a practical thing. And the general assembly has the ability to vote for or against. And I think when we have a time when maybe our denomination is bigger and more people wanna step forward and do some of this work, then maybe it might be something to think about. But I think-

- Thank you.

- [Viola] Okay.

- Carrie?

- Yeah, so there's the theoretical in the practical. The theoretical. I'm not convinced that a contested election would bring any better results. As we've talked about, it's really hard to find candidates. This is the first year that we have a full slate that we've been able to nominate folks to fill every elected position in several years. We worked really hard at that. There just aren't enough folks who have

the experience and skills and are ready to step up to leadership. And so I think that that makes it really hard. I like to think that in nominating folks that we do find the best people for the positions. So that's kind of where we are with that.

- Ben.

- I think one of the underlying issues of, in Unitarian Universalist in the national level and both in national level and the congregations, we have a very complex governance structure. Where we like for lots of volunteers for different positions. And I think that's embedded in not having trust in lay leaders and a religious professionals to make decisions. So one is that we need to trust folks, that we've re elected to share that they're gonna make decisions on the best interest of the community. So does that one component of it. And practically, yes, it would be very difficult to find multiple candidates as a practical technical answer. And thirdly, I think there's ways of expressing the democratic process other than having multiple candidates, you know, just Article Two, that's a democratic process in that of how many faith traditions will we have a democratic process to discuss our a theological core values as a faith movement. And that's where the center of democracy, putting a democratic process into place, faith in action there. And that we can express that our values in the democratic process in other ways than just having multiple candidates.

- Reverend Zackrie?

- Yeah, I echoed some of the sentiment about the sort of the pool of volunteers and there's sort of that fear of are we going to burn people out moving through multiple candidates? I will say that I think it could be interesting to have multiple candidates run. I wish we had enough people applying for positions that we could say we have multiple candidates running for multiple positions. My thing in the end is I trust the delegates to elect the folks who are going to represent their interests and that it ultimately is up to the general assembly to decide who fills these roles and who represents them. And so whether multiple candidates are one in the end, I trust the will of the general assembly.

- Dick.

- Yeah, I proposed at least three candidates for every position earlier. I think with two candidates, you feel like there's a winner and loser with three candidates especially if you're just ranking them. You could view the second and third candidates who don't win so to speak as sort of in training. And so I think that kind of multiple candidate system with at least three candidates would be a way to develop leadership. You can say, "Well here, run now you probably won't get elected, but you'll learn the process. But as they all said,

it won't work right today you have to build a whole new infrastructure of leadership recruitment. As I said, maybe webinars, maybe institutes, maybe even grant certificates of leadership development or you know, you need some kind of real, leadership development infrastructure to do all this. To again, to partially replace the districts and even go way beyond the regions.

- Thank you. So this is what I get for trying to squeeze one extra question in. We're almost out of time, but I did promise folks a chance to say last word. So we may stretch just a couple minutes here, but if you have something you'd like to add as a closing statement, as a candidate, now would be the time. And we'll start with Carrie, I think... Yeah, we'll start with Carrie and go around.

- Sure. Just as I mentioned, when I joined the committee in 2020 was elected with Ben and Zackrie. There were only two committee members remaining, and the committee was frankly struggling. Also, if you recall, that was during the covid lockdown. So it wasn't possible to continue the previous process of meeting in person over a weekend, figuring out who was gonna apply and be vetted and fill the slate. So there weren't any procedures or any kind of covenant formulated that we could practice. So I actually led the effort at establishing procedures and co-creating a covenant for our committee's work and was subsequently as a result, drafted as co-chair and then this last year chair of the committee. And even though as we've talked about, there's a huge leadership development gap, we've reestablished a successful foundation for working together. And with these changes in place, I'm proud to say that this year, as I mentioned, this committee presented the first full slate of diverse candidates for election at General Assembly in several years. This achievement means that we've matched leadership opportunities for national service for 27 Unitarian Universalists with a wide variety of experiences, background skills, resulting in the full capacity for our elected committees to do the work of the UUA. So building on that foundation that we've had over the past three years in finding skilled and diverse candidates for UUA committees and developing future leaders, that's my main but not my only motivation for continuing to serve on the-

- Thank you, Carrie.

- [Carrie] Oh.

- Ben.

- I remember when I was first asked to serve the nominating committee, and my answer was that to ensure a commitment that we have a diversity of folks in a leadership at the national level, that we bring people with different skill sets, different identities, different roles in our congregations so that we can ensure that there would be more voices at the table in the national leadership. And that's a

commitment that I continue to have as a member of the nominee nominating committee and to serve our faith in at the national level.

- Thank you Ben. Reverend Zackrie?

- Yeah, so I am nearing the end of my term on the nominating committee as some of my other members mentioned. I started in 2020 and it has been a rollercoaster and I have learned to find this work to be deeply meaningful. As I mentioned sort of at the beginning, I see the role of being on the nominee meeting committee is trying to match people with opportunities to serve. And I have very much appreciated getting to know more people, getting to connect people. And I think that going forward I look forward to continuing to not only connect people, but to broadening the perspectives of leadership, of working with the other committee members to identify a more diverse spectrum of people to invite into this work.

- Thank you, Dick.

- Yeah, one thing we haven't really gotten into too much is that there's a lot of conflict and fracturing in many congregations around the country. And I think we need leadership that's well trained in conflict resolution. And some of our leadership and staff members too have not done a very good job. Sometimes they've actually made things worse from what I've heard. And so in conflict resolution, that's where really respecting differences comes into play. And when people have different backgrounds, maybe even different terminology, they need to be listened to. We can't really say one point of view is acceptable and another point of view is not, 'cause that's polarizing our society, is tearing our world apart. So I think we need leadership that will say that, no one should be deplatformed just because they have a different ideological point of view. And I'm very progressive like a democrat socialist, but I appreciate listening to current conservatives who are principled. But sometimes I'll learn something from them even if I don't agree. I think we need to find ways to bridge those partisan divide within the UUA so we don't have these congregations falling apart or fracturing or losing membership, there's several in my area in the Seattle area I know. And so that's a big concern a lot.

- Reverend Viola.

- Yes, unitarian universalism is really important to me and I think it could be important to a lot of other people. And that means it's important to look towards the future and try to ensure the future. And I'd like to put my skills and my experience and my dedication to this faith to work, to help the nominating committee find people who will sustain unitarian universalism. And that's it for me.

- Very good. Well, I wanna thank all of you for your time and your



answers. I want to thank all of those who watched and submitted their questions in advance or live. This recording will be available soon. Welcome the elections page at the UUA where you can find it and you can share it with other delegates in your congregation so they can watch and make informed decisions about this. I wanna thank my colleague, Reverend KC Slack, member of this committee, the election campaign practice committee as well as Olivia Cavelli who couldn't be with us today. And Bill Young, who's our UUA secretary and an ex-official member of this committee. I do wanna say, and I've been thinking about whether or not to say anything about this, and I think I will. Which is that as a member of the Unitarian Universalists' Minister's Association, as well as partly responsible put on this committee, the ECPC by the nominating committee or by the appointments committee. I guess it's not elected by the appointments committee, in part to hold a certain kind of portfolio to indicate my appreciation for my highly distinguished and respected colleague, Reverend Cheryl M. Walker, a member of the Article two commission, who I would say is quite distinguished. And I just need to say that out loud here in this forum. Bill, I'm gonna turn it over to you to some announcements and send an invitation.

- Thank you, Matthew. Just a couple things to add. First, again, thank you to all the candidates for being here and being part of this, and bringing yourselves here and to Matthew and KC for all that you do in the election process. And also want to do a special thank you to Stephanie Carey Maron, who you can't see on your screen who made this venue possible for all of us. So thank you Stephanie. So be well, I hope to see you all soon if your delegates or registrants for GA on site in Pittsburgh or online. So thank you to everybody for being here today.