

## UUA General Assembly 2024 Business Resolution:

### ***Embracing Transgender, Nonbinary, Intersex and Gender Diverse People is a Fundamental Expression of UU Religious Values***

On behalf of the member congregations and communities of the UUA, we proclaim that our principles and values unequivocally commit our faith to honor and celebrate the full spectrum of gender identity and expression. Being transgender or identifying with any gender other than the one assigned at birth, is a beautiful and divine manifestation of humanity; as is being intersex, or having sex characteristics that vary from what is considered typical. As Unitarian Universalists, we affirm the inherent worthiness and dignity of each person as a core principle. The ability to live ever-more authentically as one's true self is central to a lifelong journey towards spiritual fulfillment.

As a people who put love at the center of our faith, that love calls us to fully embrace equity for transgender, nonbinary, intersex, and gender diverse people in our congregations and the wider world. For generations, Unitarian Universalism has advocated for equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) people,<sup>1, 2</sup> gender equity<sup>3, 4</sup> and reproductive justice.<sup>5</sup> As our scientific and sociological understandings of gender have evolved, our faith, too, has expanded our commitments to explicitly include the spectrum of gender expressions and identities as an integral aspect of our frameworks for freedom and flourishing.

The imperative to care for those most at risk, especially due to systems of injustice, is one of our defining religious commitments throughout our UU history. These systems imperil the basic human right to experience freedom from discrimination in all areas of life, including healthcare, education, housing, employment, free expression, and beyond. Denial of medical care and basic human rights causes profound damage and trauma, and is a violation of our core religious principles. Securing these rights for LGBTQI+ people and communities, whose rights are now at risk, is essential for their lifelong development and thriving.



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<sup>1</sup> 1970 Resolution on Discrimination Against Homosexuality and Bisexuality, which urged "all peoples immediately to bring an end to all discrimination against homosexuals, homosexuality, bisexuals, and bisexuality." <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/discrimination-against-homosexuals-and-bisexuals>

<sup>2</sup> 1989 Resolution on Proposals from the Common Vision Planning Committee, which stated "Unitarian Universalists have consistently committed ourselves through the General Assembly to the dignity and rights of gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons and to their full inclusion in our movement" <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/proposals-common-vision-planning-committee>

<sup>3</sup> 1977 Resolution on Women and Religion, which "Charge[d] UUs to "examine carefully their own religious beliefs and the extent to which these beliefs influence sex-role stereotypes within their own families." <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/women-and-religion>

<sup>4</sup> 1987 Resolution on Right to Choose, which stated ""Unitarian Universalists believe that the inherent worth and dignity of every person, the right of individual conscience, and respect for human life are inalienable rights due every person; and that the personal right to choose in regard to contraception and abortion is an important aspect of these rights...We reaffirm the right to choose contraception and abortion as a legitimate expression of our constitutional rights." <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/right-choose>

<sup>5</sup> 2015 Statement of Conscience on Reproductive Justice, which stated "As Unitarian Universalists, we embrace the reproductive justice framework, which espouses the human right to have children, not to have children, to parent the children one has in healthy environments and to safeguard bodily autonomy and to express one's sexuality freely... Unitarian Universalists support gender equity, positive sexuality, diverse sexual expression and the individual's right to make reproductive choices. <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/reproductive-justice>

Not only has our nation failed to enact federal legislation clarifying protections for queer communities, but hundreds of new oppressive laws and policies across dozens of states and countries are now targeting reproductive justice and transgender people across their lifespans. These policies are aimed to perpetuate the patriarchal status quo; to control and deny the bodily autonomy of transgender and nonbinary people, intersex people, and cisgender women which threatens that status quo; and to erase queer, transgender, and gender diverse people from existence. We recommit ourselves as a people of faith to resisting these despicable policies and to advocating for basic human rights where they are most endangered.

We acknowledge the risks to transgender youth, who have fewer rights and whose access to life-saving gender-affirming medical care is under legal and political attack. As the UUA stated in a federal court filing to defend gender-affirming care for youth, “In ceremonies of dedication, many Unitarian Universalist congregations acknowledge a child’s sacred life and commit to support the family in its key role of guarding the child’s life, freedom, and opportunities.”<sup>6</sup> Laws which restrict the ability to even discuss LGBTQI+ experiences cut youth off from history, mentorship, and freedom of self-expression, causing painful impacts to social, intellectual and emotional wellbeing. We charge one another, and especially our leaders, to protect and honor our transgender, nonbinary and gender expansive youth members and their families as they go through the stages of spiritual and personal identity development.



The General Assembly, as the ultimate authority in our Association,<sup>7</sup> now weaves these strands into a foundational profession of our faith’s values in support of transgender and intersex people. Through the democratic process of the General Assembly, Unitarian Universalists have confirmed that discrimination against transgender people is incompatible with UU values and principles; resistance to transphobia is core to UU commitments of justice and liberation. Most recently in 2021, the General Assembly voted to “affirm that living one’s identity, in terms of gender identity/expression, sex characteristics, and affectional/sexual orientation, is part of our free exercise of religion, and that religious exceptionalism that promotes discrimination abridges human rights and our free exercise of religion.”<sup>8</sup> The UUA’s Welcoming Congregations program for LGBTQI+ inclusion was authorized by the General Assembly, and over 80% of UUA congregations have now been recognized for their participation, whose members comprise 93% of our total membership.

As a covenantal faith, the heart of our religious beliefs and structure lies in the mutual commitments we make to one another on behalf of our values and principles, and in the practice of living out those commitments in religious community. This structure is rooted in the Cambridge Platform of 1648 of our religious forbearers, which established that 1) freely entering into a covenant with one another binds us in religious community, 2) true covenant must be practiced and not merely professed, and 3) congregations cooperate to ensure one another’s welfare and faithfulness.

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<sup>6</sup> Amicus curiae brief authored by the UUA in *Paul A. Eknes-Tucker v. State of Alabama*. USCA11 Case: 22-11707 Document: 137- 1. September 18, 2023.

<sup>7</sup> 2019 Statement of Conscience, “Our Democracy Uncorrupted.” <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/our-democracy-uncorrupted> <sup>8</sup> 2021 Action of Immediate Witness, “Defend and Advocate with Transgender, Nonbinary and Intersex Communities.” <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/defend-and-advocate-transgender-nonbinary-and-intersex-communities>

*Our religious tradition is a living one, and today we collectively declare that our covenant inescapably binds us to affirmation and protection of our transgender and intersex members and kindred, in faith and in practice.*

To enact this covenantal commitment to honor, defend and celebrate the spectrum of gender identity, we call on all UU congregations, leaders and members to affirm their commitment through parallel actions. Those actions can include:

- Condemning all anti-transgender legislation, demanding the repeal of anti-transgender laws, and working to block additional such bills;
- Partnering with local and state organizations led by transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people to advocate for their needs and interests;
- Supporting organizations that help people relocate or access health care including across state lines, such as the Pink Haven Coalition;
- Directly supporting member congregations and communities of the UUA engaged in this ministry in oppressive states and communities;
- Participating in UPLIFT Ministries programs
- Amplifying campaigns for bodily autonomy, such as Side With Love's UPLIFT Action campaign;
- Participating in the Welcoming Congregation renewal program;
- Affirming this commitment locally through votes and investment of the congregation.

We hereby pledge our collective faithful efforts to the full affirmation and celebration of transgender, nonbinary, intersex and gender diverse people within our congregations and the wider community, and uphold this commitment as a fundamental obligation revealed by our principles and values.

