

DRAFT 5/27/24

WORLD ON FIRE: HUMANITARIAN WORK AND CLIMATE CHANGE
UUA General Assembly 2024 Proposed Action of Immediate Witness

Primary Proposer: Amelia Hanley of One Island Family in Key West, Florida

Additional Proposer: Rev. Robert Murphy of St. Petersburg, FL

o Immediate Concerns: The sea keeps rising and each summer is hotter than the previous summer. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reports that the year 2023 was the hottest year in recorded history for planet Earth. Major storms, wildfires, droughts, and other disasters were reported on every inhabited continent.

NOAA states that the summer of 2024 will probably be as hot or worse than last summer. NOAA anticipates (May 23) above-normal hurricane activity for this year.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled in April that the climate crisis is a human rights crisis. The crisis is here and now. As Unitarian Universalists move into a difficult season, how can congregations and clusters of congregations defend human rights and provide humanitarian services? How can we reduce suffering before, during, and after this year's disasters?

o Theological Grounding: The Bylaws and Rules of our Unitarian Universalist Association identify the purpose of our Association. "The Unitarian Universalist Association shall devote its resources and exercise its corporate powers for religious, educational, and humanitarian purposes. The primary purpose of the Association is to serve the needs of its members congregation, organize new congregations, and extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalist institutions and implements its principles." (Bylaws Section C-2.2)

The principles of our Association affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations and the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all. Unitarian Universalists respect the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. Unitarian Universalists pledge to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. (Bylaws Section C-2.3)

o Immediate Actions: The General Assembly calls on the President of the United States to use the National Emergencies Act to declare that the climate crisis is a national crisis.

The impact of climate change brings congregations into a new era for religious activities, education, and humanitarian work. The General Assembly calls for immediate and direct action during the next one hundred and twenty days. Congregations are asked to help each other and to act with marginalized groups to provide humanitarian services while working for justice.

Community advocates for racial justice, indigenous people, migrants, houseless people,

people living in prisons and in other institutions, the very young and the very old, and other marginalized groups, can identify community needs and opportunities for cooperation.

Cooling stations, emergency transportation, and emergency shelter will be needed in some places. Congregations may be asked to provide food and water, to provide financial assistance, to assist with health care and legal services, to assist with firefighting, and to assist with mass evacuations.

The General Assembly condemns the criminalization of the poor because of their poverty. The case of City of Grants Pass v. Johnson is now before the United States Supreme Court.

Unitarian Universalists are asked to stay in solidarity with migrants and other displaced people who need humanitarian services.

Individuals should not be abused or abandoned because of gender identity or sexual orientation. The General Assembly supports amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination against LGBTQI plus people. Federal money should be withheld from emergency services programs that permit unlawful discrimination.

Climate change has created new problems for working people outdoors. Workers should be honored for their service during a difficult season. All workers need adequate protection, compensation and representation. The General Assembly supports the organization of democratic labor unions. Congregations are asked to celebrate Labor Day events each year with appropriate events.

o Resources: National Unitarian Universalist organizations that are helpful for congregations involved in humanitarian work include the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, EqUUAI Access, the Unitarian Universalist Trauma Response Ministry, Unitarian Universalist Refugee and Immigrant Services and Education, the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth, and the Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community. Welcoming Congregations advocate for LGBTQI plus persons and others. BLUU, DRUMM, and Allies for Racial Equity uplift care, spiritual growth, and liberation, in a multiracial and multicultural faith.

In Florida, the organizations that have been helpful in developing this Action of Immediate Witness include the NAACP and the Urban League, Disability Florida, Interfaith Tampa, the Florida Public Health Association, the AARP and senior citizen centers, and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters. Unitarian Universalist congregations are active in Florida's Gay Pride events at the start of the 2024 hurricane season