

UUA Commission on Social Witness (CSW)

The Proposer's Guide for Social Witness:

Congregational Study/Action Issues (CSAI)

Statements of Conscience (SoC)

Actions of Immediate Witness (AIW)

Fall 2025

This Guide is designed to help groups that wish to propose a Congregational Study/Action Issue or Action of Immediate Witness, comment on a Draft Statement of Conscience, and better understand the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Social Witness Process.

You will find here all of the requirements and some helpful tips and resources to help you prepare your proposal. You will also find information regarding the entire process from proposal to possible adoption. If you need further assistance, you can visit our website www.uua.org/csw or ask a member of the Commission on Social Witness by e-mailing socialwitness@uua.org

www.uua.org/csw

socialwitness@uua.org

Part 1: Congregational Study/Action Issues and Statements of Conscience—Proposer's Guide

Every three years, the Commission on Social Witness (CSW) receives proposals from congregations for Congregational Study/Action Issues (CSAIs), each hoping theirs will be selected and will eventually result in a UUA Statement of Conscience (SoC).

The Study/Action Process was created to uphold our principles and to engage Unitarian Universalists (UUs) in the articulation of our conscience on pressing social justice issues. The process is initiated by congregations and/or covenanted communities, and specified UUA sponsored organizations and culminates with the delegates at the General Assembly (GA). The CSW facilitates transitions from one phase to the next.

After two years of study and action on a CSAI, the General Assembly delegates may adopt a Statement of Conscience (SOC) on the subject. It is the product of thought, collaboration, and dedication. During the year following adoption of a SOC, congregations and UUA staff will work to implement the SOC and report their results to the following General Assembly.

Adopted Statements of Conscience focus the efforts of congregations and other UU groups on the topic of the SOC, shape the meaning of contemporary Unitarian Universalism.

Why propose a Congregational Study/Action Issue?

To put our Unitarian Universalist Principles into practice by:

- Alerting us to important social justice issues in alignment with our principles so that we may practice them in the world
- Educating us on those issues
- Creating and identifying opportunities for us to act on those issues
- Articulating a faith perspective on those issues
- Achieving a strong majority of congregations agreeing on that position
- Calling on congregations and Unitarian Universalist Association staff to implement our shared position articulated in a Statement of Conscience.
- As new developments occur in the world that require discernment, research, study, time to develop consensus and act, CSAIs can help facilitate such a process for UUs and UU congregations.

Who may propose a Congregational Study/Action Issue?

- A single congregation or covenanting community, or its board
- Multiple congregations or their boards

(Note: No group is permitted to propose more than one CSAI during the same year)

The following may not *propose* a CSAI, but can endorse a CSAI proposed by a congregation or covenanting community:

- An individual or a group of individuals unless that group is one of those specified above

- A Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) associate member or independent affiliate organization
- Any independent or associate group except through a congregation or covenanted community.

What kind of issue is appropriate for a CSAI?

A CSAI should be an issue complex enough to merit years of study and action by congregations before a position on the matter is adopted by the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). In addition, an ideal CSAI issue is:

- **Connected:** An issue which is connected to UUism such that our theology and practice resonates with the issue historically, ethically, or spiritually.
- **The Right Opportunity:** Circumstances make it likely that our member congregations would become respected participants in public dialogue on this issue.
- **A “Fit”:** Our member congregations have the resources and people to take meaningful action on this issue.
- **Studyable:** An issue that lends itself to study and action that would enable UUs to put our Values into practice
- **Actionable & Accountable:** An issue that lends itself practically to congregational action projects with actions taken in accountable relationship with those most impacted.

What kind of issue is not appropriate for a CSAI?

- An issue that the UUA has a well-established and consistent position and history of action with. (Issues we’ve debated and had inconsistent positions on *are* appropriate.)

- An issue so urgent and specific that it is better addressed through an Action of Immediate Witness.
- A duplicate of a past CSAI issue that became a Statement of Conscience since 1999:
 - a. [Undoing Systemic White Supremacy: A Call to Prophetic Action: 2021](#)
 - b. [Our Democracy Uncorrupted: 2019](#)
 - c. [Escalating Economic Inequity: 2017](#)
 - d. [Reproductive Justice: 2015](#)
 - e. [Immigration as a Moral Issue: 2013](#)
 - f. [Ethical Eating: Food & Environmental Justice: 2011](#)
 - g. [Creating Peace: 2010](#)
 - h. [Moral Values for a Pluralistic Society: 2007](#)
 - i. [Threat of Global Warming/Climate Change: 2006](#)
 - j. [Criminal Justice and Prison Reform: 2005](#)
 - k. [Civil Liberties: 2004](#)
 - l. [Economic Globalization: 2003](#)
 - m. [Alternatives to the "War on Drugs": 2002](#)
 - n. [Responsible Consumption Is Our Moral Imperative: 2001](#)
 - o. [Economic Injustice, Poverty, and Racism: We Can Make a Difference!: 2000](#)
 - p. [Beyond Religious Tolerance: The Challenges of Interfaith Cooperation Begin with Us: 1999](#)

- One that reproduces other recent social witness statements such as *Actions of Immediate Witness* from the last 10 years (unless it is clear that this warrants deeper study, attention, or consistency in response).
- An issue focused on issues within the UUA or that directs the UUA's staff or funds.
- One that uses overt partisan political language, such as the names of politicians or political parties.

Please note the following:

- You are encouraged to contact socialwitness@uua.org for feedback and assistance on choosing, narrowing, and articulating your CSAI proposal.
- You are encouraged to review past social witness statements on issues related to yours.

What are the requirements for a CSAI proposal?

A CSAI must meet all of the following:

- Pertain to a current social witness issue that requires further study.
- Have a meaningful study process for UU Congregations to engage with.
- Present an opportunity for member congregations to build partnerships and/or act in solidarity with impacted groups beyond and within the Association.
- Be resonate with UU theology and practice.

- Be crafted in anti-oppressive and inclusive language that is conducive to justice.
- By UUA Bylaw requirement, a CSAI must have at least an initial proposal submitted by October 1st of any year.
- Show evidence of support from at least one certified congregation by vote of the membership or board.

How do I begin proposing a CSAI and what is the timeline?

2024-2025 year: Because of the delays in restarting the CSAI process since the pandemic, this year the CSW is extending the deadline for Final Proposals through an Initial Proposal process that meets the UUA bylaw requirement.

- **Initial proposals** should be submitted by document (Word, Google Doc or PDF) to socialwitness@uua.org by October 1st. Any CSAIs submitted will receive CSW feedback on if it meets the CSAI requirements (see below), and if it doesn't if it's possible to amend the topic.
- **Final Proposals** will be submitted by November 15th (or October 1st if waiving the Initial Proposal).
- These deadlines are firm and the CSAI will not move forward if submitted after these dates.

Writing Your CSAI

Initial Proposals should be submitted by document (Word, Google Doc or PDF) to socialwitness@uua.org. The information on this document will include:

- Contact person name, email, and phone number
- Congregational sponsor name & contact person who can confirm sponsorship (Congregational or board vote must be by November 1) – there can be more than one congregation supporting.
- Title of your CSAI
- A paragraph introducing the issue for study (<50 words)
- A paragraph (<50 words) on how your topic meets the CSAI requirements.

Note: It is permissible to submit a Final Proposal by the October 1 deadline. The Final Proposal includes all the information in the Initial Proposal, so if submitting a Final Proposal on October 1, it is not required to put the Initial Proposal information in a separate document. Either an Initial Proposal or a Final Proposal *must be submitted by October 1* to be considered.

Final Proposals should be submitted by document (Word, GoogleDoc or PDF) to socialwitness@uua.org.

Any CSAIs which have not had the final documentation submitted by November 15th (or October 1st if waiving the Initial Proposal) will not move forward.

The information on this document will include a request for a document of *less than two pages plus the Cover Sheet* (Google doc preferred, Word and PDF accepted) to be attached.

- A sample template can be found here: [CSAI Sample Template](#).
- A sample of a previously submitted CSAI can be found here: <https://www.uua.org/reproductive/choice/calling/209024.shtml>.

Your CSAI Final Document should include:

- A Cover Sheet that includes the Initial Proposal Information (repeated or adapted), the name and contact information of a person who will speak as an advocate for the proposed CSAI at the following General Assembly (may be up to two people, and may include the same person who is the contact person).
- How this issue is grounded in Unitarian Universalism, including in our Values, Principles, history, or theology. (<50 words)
- A list of subtopics for congregational study (<10 topics)
- A list of possible congregational actions (<10 actions)
- Related prior social witness statements, previous Statements of Conscience, actions and statements on related issues with dates (if applicable), and related UUA, Regional, or State Action initiatives. We recognize this may not be available if the CSAI is a truly new area within UUism for study.
- A resource list for further study (books, videos, etc.) (Please keep this under one standard-format page – quality and diversity is of more value than volume.)
- A list of organizations both within and outside the UU faith, that are working on the issue, if available, that UU congregations can partner with.
- A list of individuals and groups within UUism that are endorsing this proposal is not required but may be included.

What happens between submission and General Assembly?

- The Commission on Social Witness (CSW) meets in October and reviews all properly submitted proposals (both Initial and Final).
- The CSW meets again in late November to review all Final CSAI proposals. The CSW reviews proposals using the criteria listed in Issues.
- The CSW will reformat and edit proposals that meet the criteria into a final form. The CSW will not edit a proposal to make it meet the criteria. If two or more proposals overlap in their focus, the CSW may work with proposers to merge them into a single proposal. In doing so, the CSW takes into account previously adopted social witness statements.
- The CSW will place proposed CSAIs on its website and communicate these to congregations by early December.
- February 1st is the deadline for congregations to participate in a ballot vote on CSAIs. A quorum of 25% of certified congregations must participate for the poll to be valid and a majority of those must vote in favor of placing the CSAI on the Final Agenda. If the poll is not valid, this process shall be repeated the following year. If it is valid, the top five proposals are placed on the final agenda for the General Assembly.
- By late February, CSAIs which passed the vote will be announced and posted on the UUA CSW webpage.
- In early Spring the CSW will host informational sessions for the CSAI authors to introduce their issues in an online format.
- For more information about the CSAI/Statement of Conscience process, go to UUA Bylaws Sections 4.12 and 4.13.

What happens at the General Assembly?

- An advocate (or two) for each CSAI gives a two-minute presentation on it at a mini-assembly sponsored by the Commission on Social Witness (CSW), where the audience may ask questions or offer comments.
- At the designated General Session, the advocate(s) give their two-minute presentations to the entire delegate body. Afterward, time is set aside for other supporting advocates to speak in rotation among the proposed CSAIs. There is no debate about any issue (that is, no con statements), only pro statements for each proposed CSAI. The delegates then vote to select just one of the five proposed CSAIs as the CSAI for two years of study and action.

What happens after the first General Assembly?

- By November 1st the CSAI Proposers prepare a Study/Action Resource Guide. This resource guide shall be made available and congregations notified of its availability.
- At the first General Assembly (GA) following adoption, the Commission on Social Witness (CSW) conducts a workshop on the CSAI for congregations to share best practices, address challenges, and identify opportunities for collaboration among congregations and with outside groups. The CSW might also hold forums that feature outside speakers on the issue.
- In the third year, the CSW will draft and post on the UUA website a **Statement of Conscience (SOC)**. The draft SOC will have a Congregational Poll ballot to place the draft SOC on the Final Agenda of the next GA in the congregational certification system.

Congregations must submit their vote by the congregational certification deadline.

- Before or during the third GA the CSW will hold a process to accept amendments to the SOC and take these into consideration before finalizing the SOC, in accordance with the UUA Bylaws.
- At the General Session delegates will debate and vote on whether (1) to adopt the SOC as amended as a Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Statement of Conscience, (2) to hold it over for a further year of study, or (3) to reject it altogether.
- If the delegates adopt it as a UUA Statement of Conscience, then congregations, regions and UUA staff will follow up with at least one year of implementation. UU leaders and staff may use it as a basis for public statements on the matter. Individual Unitarian Universalists (UUs), congregations, and regions are urged to implement it however they can.

Part 2: Proposer's Guide—Actions of Immediate Witness

General Assembly offers delegates the opportunity to participate in the high-energy Action of Immediate Witness (AIW) process. People come impassioned on a wide range of issues, engage one another in conversation, discuss the issues, vote, and bring to life the values of Unitarian Universalism.

Unlike a Statement of Conscience, an AIW does not carry the full authority of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA); rather, it expresses the conscience and carries the authority of the delegates at the GA at which it is passed. This distinction follows from the difference in procedure: Congregational Study/Action Issues are initiated by congregations and covenanted communities and move through a three-year period of study and action with opportunities for congregational comment. There are no such opportunities for AIWs, which are initiated by individual delegates or groups of delegates and move through the process during one GA. Nonetheless, AIWs are the product of considerable thought, collaboration, and commitment.

[Why propose an Action of Immediate Witness?](#)

The AIW process allows Unitarian Universalists to respond quickly to urgent developments. Adopted AIWs are used by congregations in local efforts and empower them to take action and recommend action through staff teams of the UUA and other Unitarian Universalist groups.

Who may propose an Action of Immediate Witness?

Any member of a Unitarian Universalist congregation may present an AIW, though only a delegate may present the AIW on the General Session floor. Many AIWs have a list of proposers, but one must be identified as the lead.

The Commission on Social Witness encourages AIWs to emerge from a documented group process, arising from a committee or board at the congregational level or from a UU-related issue group.

The following may not *propose* a AIW, but can endorse an AIW presented by a delegate:

- Congregations or covenanting communities
- A Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) associate member or independent affiliate organization
- Any independent or associate group.

What kind of issue is appropriate for an AIW?

An AIW needs to:

- Pertain to a current issue that requires immediate action.
- Call on UUA member congregations and groups to take specific meaningful action.
- Present an opportunity for member congregations to build partnerships and/or act in solidarity with marginalized groups beyond and within the Association.

- Be grounded in UU theology and practice.
- Have an anti-oppressive and inclusive lens.

What kind of issue is not appropriate for an AIW?

- An issue that has been addressed by past AIWs.
- An issue that is not urgent and specific.
- An issue that is complicated enough and where the UUA does not have a history of advocacy on, which makes it better suited to be a Study/Action issue.

How do I begin proposing an Action of Immediate Witness and what is the timeline?

An Action of Immediate Witness (AIW) is a statement about a significant action, event, or development in the world that necessitates immediate engagement and action among UU member congregations and groups.

The answers to these questions will guide you as you consider submission of an AIW:

1. Review your AIW and answer these questions:
 - a. Is this issue current and requiring immediate action?
 - b. Does the proposal require specific, meaningful action for congregations or groups to participate in?
 - c. Are there specific organizations or partnerships involved in the creation of the proposal? Who are they? (we strongly recommend that proposers be in communication and partnership with any established groups already addressing this

issue, perhaps on a larger scale i.e. coastal flooding would be in partnership with Side With Love: Climate Justice)

- d. Is this grounded in Unitarian Universalist theology and practice?
- e. Is the language and proposal written using inclusive language, and crafted in an anti-oppressive framework?

If the answer to ANY of these questions is 'No', rewrite the proposal to fit these guidelines.

If the answer to ALL of the questions in 1 is 'Yes', proceed to these questions:

2. Review your AIW and ask yourself if it meets these requirements:

- a. Does this duplicate any recent AIW that has been accepted or submitted in the past 5 years?
(<https://www.uua.org/action/statements/search>)
- b. Is this focused on issues within the Unitarian Universalist Association?
- c. Does this use overt partisan political language, such as the names of political parties or politicians?

If the answer is 'Yes' to any of these questions, it will not be considered by the CSW.

If the answer to all of the questions in 2 is 'No', you may submit your AIW to the CSW at: socialwitness@uua.org

Date for submission:

- **Early Spring:** Submission for draft AIWs opens. Any AIWs submitted within the first four weeks will receive CSW feedback. This allows submitters to get feedback about whether they meet criteria, and an opportunity to revise if needed.
- **Mid-Spring:** submissions are final submissions, meaning they only continue through the process if they meet all the criteria without revision.
- **Late Spring** – Deadline for proposed AIWs. These will then be posted and communicated to congregations.
- **Early June-** After the Proposal deadline there will be online presentations and discussion forums for each AIW. Presenters will then have a chance to rewrite their proposal in response to this feedback. The Final AIW, will then be distributed and submitted to the General Assembly 2 weeks prior to their meeting, to consider for voting onto the Final Agenda.
- **Mid-June:** *AIWs responding to last-minute emergent issues ONLY may be submitted until the Friday prior to the GA, but will not be guaranteed the advantage of CSW feedback.*

Writing your AIW

Submissions should include a Cover Page that includes the Title of the AIW along with the names and contact information of all those submitting the proposal (email and telephone). The Cover Page also needs the name(s) and contact information for the delegate who will present the AIW to the General Assembly (no more than two).

Next, on a separate page, include a description of the AIW. This is what delegates will see when considering and voting on the AIWs at the UUA General Assembly.

Guidelines:

1. No longer than 750 words.
2. Written in clear, easy to understand language.
3. May be written in any format including either Resolution Style or Social Action Style (see below).
4. Include names and contact information of relevant organizations or groups that the proposers are in partnership with.
5. Include a brief description of the process used to write this, such as who was part of the group writing and reviewing the proposal. May include meeting minutes, group photo or supporting documentation.

Resolution Style: (Example: Stop Cop City
<https://www.uua.org/action/statements/uua-calls-stop-atlantas-cop-city-violence-training-facility>)

Because... (Explains the issue's grounding in our Unitarian Universalist faith);

Because... (Explains the issue's grounding in our Unitarian Universalist faith);

Whereas... (Explains the details of the issue);

Whereas... (Explains the details of the issue);

Therefore, be it resolved.... (Proposes specific action for congregations or participants of the General Assembly to take);

And be it resolved... (Proposes specific action for congregations or participants of the General Assembly to take);

And finally be it resolved... (Proposes specific action for congregations or participants of the General Assembly to take)

Social Action Style: (Example: We Will Not Consent <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/we-do-not-consent-taking-action-ensure-access-abortion>)

1. How the issue is grounded in our UU faith.
2. Explain the details of the issue
3. Description of the specific actions that a congregation or participants can take, including but not limited to:
 - a. Personal action
 - b. Advocacy: through media or legislative action
 - c. Organizing: bringing together congregants or community groups for action
 - d. Witness: how do demonstrate support or public awareness
 - e. Network building: partnering with organizations impacted or engaged in this issue, either within or outside the UU tradition
 - f. Educate: ways to inform and educate congregations about the issue
 - g. Fundraise: how to support organizations impacted or engaged in the issue.

Final Proposals should be submitted by document (Word, GoogleDoc or PDF) to socialwitness@uua.org.

Any AIWs which have not had the final documentation submitted by the late Spring deadline will not move forward.

What happens after the Action of Immediate Witness (AIW) filing deadline?

The Commission on Social Witness (CSW) will review all proposed AIWs and select which AIWs are eligible. The CSW may suggest combining proposed AIWs if they are similar.

Final AIWs that meet the CSW requirements will be posted on discuss.uua.org for online discussion.

The CSW will announce times for online sessions or mini-assemblies which will be held in the month before the General Assembly, where authors or their designees may present their AIW, and where delegates will be able to ask questions and make comments about the AIW.

If more than 3 AIWs were proposed and selected by the CSW, there will be a poll to narrow down the vote to three. This may occur during the General Assembly or in the weeks preceding it. At the assigned plenary, an advocate (or two) for each of the three selected proposed AIWs will speak for a prescribed amount of time (according to the Rules of Procedure) on its behalf. After all AIW proposers have made their presentations, delegates will vote for up to three AIWs to be admitted to the final agenda.

A two-thirds vote of the delegates is required to admit a proposed AIW to the Final Agenda.

Proposed AIWs that are admitted to the final agenda are not in competition with one another. Each of the proposed AIWs admitted to the Final Agenda may be adopted or rejected by the delegates.

What happens to an AIW after the General Assembly?

If GA delegates adopt an AIW, then the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), other UUA leaders, congregations, regions, and Unitarian Universalists organizations may use it as a basis for public statements on the matter and are urged to act on it.

For More Information About the Social Witness Process:

For additional help when writing an AIW, please contact the Commission on Social Witness at socialwitness@uua.org.

Through our social witness process, we work together so that the moral arc of the universe bends ever more closely toward justice.