

Related Groups/Communities Recognition Proposal

DRAFT – 9/30/14

Introduction - TBD

Purpose of covenanted communities status

- Opportunity for formal relationship between the wider UU movement and groups that are not member congregations
- Ideal for smaller or emerging groups
- Can be flexible to include lots of different formats (small groups, campus ministries, conference centers, etc.)
- Encouraged to be in relationship with other UU groups and communities
- *Key Question: Where should this recognition process start? Should it be open to any group immediately, or should we start by only opening it up to groups currently registered as emerging congregations?*

Definition of a covenanted community

- Claims UU principles and sources, furthers UU values in the world
- Committed to being in covenant with the larger UU movement
- Not a member congregation, does not receive voting privileges
- Following the norms of our polity, groups/communities are self-governed and freely associate with the UUA
- Reflects covenanted communities referenced in Global Ends.
- UUA does not officially endorse the practices of related groups/communities (as we do not for congregations)
- *Key Question: Can we clearly define what it means to be a covenanted, spiritual community? How is this definition different from “related organizations,” or issue- or identity-based groups for UUs? Would it make sense to have categories within one covenanted communities definition (e.g. ministry group vs. issue organization)?*

Steps for covenanted community recognition

- Online form, reviewed and approved by UUA staff
- Basic info (name, location, primary contact, etc.)
- Brief description of group and goals/purpose
- Answer UU identity questions (adapted from Faithify):
 - How do you claim UU identity and principles?
 - How do you advance UU values in the world?
 - What relationships do you have with other UU congregations, etc.?
- Registration good for one year
- Annual registration fee of set amount (~\$100), waivers/discounts available

- *Key Question: What discretion do UUA staff members have in reviewing registrations? Are staff members empowered to say “no” to groups that do not meet our understanding of covenanted communities?*

Benefits for covenanted communities

- Online resources for spiritual exploration curated for these groups
- Email newsletter
- Recognition at General Assembly on General Session stage
- Access to many UUA supports available to congregations – attendance at trainings, consulting with HQ and field staff, opportunity to apply for programs/grants (possible relationship with UU Funding Program)
- Participation in UUA insurance plans (health, retirement, etc.) and UU Common Endowment
- Possibility of moving towards member congregation status
- *Key Question: What formal steps does the Board need to take to make it possible to automatically grant participation in the UUA insurance plans and common endowment for covenanted communities? Currently, exemptions are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and must wait until a Board meeting to get approved.*