

Process and Timeline

The UUA Bylaws mandate a review of Article II, containing the UUA Principles and Purposes, every fifteen years. Section C-15.1(c)(4) reads:

If no review and study process of Article II has occurred for a period of fifteen years, the Board of Trustees shall appoint a commission to review and study Article II and to recommend appropriate revisions, if any, thereto to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall review the recommendations of the study commission and, in its discretion, may submit the recommendations of the study commission to the Planning Committee for inclusion on the agenda of the next regular General Assembly. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained herein, proposals to amend Article II which are promulgated by a study commission in accordance with this paragraph shall be subject to a two-step approval process. Such proposals must be approved preliminarily by a majority vote at a regular General Assembly. Following such preliminary approval, the proposal shall be placed on the agenda of the next regular General assembly for final adoption. Final adoption shall require a two-thirds vote.

In January 2006 at its regular meeting, the Commission realized that a review of Article II was overdue. At roughly the same time the Board of Trustees came to the same realization. As the Commission had just completed its report, *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*, it seemed logical to both the Board and the Commission that the Commission itself might be the best body to review Article II. This idea, however, raised a delicate issue. The Commission is made up of nine members elected by the General Assembly for six-year terms. It is an independent study group responsible to the *delegates*, not to the Board, the President or the Moderator. The Board would be the body to place any proposal regarding Article II on the Final Agenda for the General Assembly. Nevertheless, the Commission believed it was the most appropriate group to undertake the review. The Board agreed.

Following its January 2006 meeting, the Commission undertook a serious course of study about the origins of the current Article II. That study involved reviewing historical materials that had been accessed in the preparation of *Engaging Our Theological Diversity* as well as other relevant publications, including sermons and articles as well as books. We sought comments and reflections from the individuals who were involved in the drafting of the current Article II, and we received extensive comments from several of them.

The Commission undertook a series of hearings in St. Louis (General Assembly); Columbus, OH; San Diego CA; Washington, DC; Portland, OR (General Assembly); Minneapolis, MN; and Ft. Lauderdale, FL (General Assembly). At the St. Louis General Assembly, the Commission had a booth in the exhibit hall and invited people to voice additional comments about the Purposes and Principles on video, write them on cards, or type them on a computer provided for that purpose.

The Commission developed and made available online and in print four curricula for adults, youth, and children to enable intentional discussions of Article II and individual or group comments to us on a form included in the curricula. These materials were sent out in congregational packets, and provided twice to congregational presidents. The materials gave

congregations options ranging from a one-session workshop to a five-session course. We designed these curricula with the express intent to have participants in the review comment based on thoughtful reflection and discussion rather than give us “off-the-cuff” opinions. The response time for comments was initially one year but was extended to fifteen months.

During this time the Commission received comments from about 1000 people. These comments were received at hearings, from workshop responses, in interviews, and by e-mail and post. The Chair also interviewed a non-Unitarian Universalist theologian who had a significant role in the process that led to the publication of *Soulwork*. With permission granted by the participants, the Commission was given access to substantial portions of interchanges about Article II and the review by ministers on the UUMA list-serv.

The Commission reached out to lay and professional leadership, to identity groups and to youth and young adult constituencies. Commissioners made presentations at the annual meeting of DRUUMM and had a special gathering for youth and young adults at the Portland General Assembly. Two clergy Commissioners held a “Collegial Conversation” on Article II during Professional Days preceding General Assembly 2007. Commissioners offered workshops at congregations and at District Annual Meetings. The Commission also sought and received commentary from members of the UUA staff.

Meanwhile, the Commissioners ourselves engaged in extensive reflection on such questions as these: What is the importance of this review for the well-being of Unitarian Universalism? What impact will or should its outcome have on Unitarian Universalist missions and ministries? What values should guide decision-making about whether and how to revise the text of Article II? Commissioners wrote and shared reflection papers with each other. We studied new text proposed by others. We revised and revised and revised some more based on our answers to some 25 “macro” questions on conceptual and strategic matters. These addressed such issues as how much weight should be given to a variety of factors, the arguments for making no changes at all, and the arguments for making broad changes. We also addressed, one by one, some 175 “micro” questions about single words, phrases, and, yes, even punctuation.

In August 2008 the Commission met for four days of intense drafting work to prepare a preliminary revision of Article II on which to seek comment. It addressed the most commonly asserted opinions and concerns we had received. This preliminary revision was released through congregational packets, mass e-mail blasts to UUA list-servs and outreach to identity groups. It was also featured on the UUA homepage and available on the Commission’s webpage. Facebook access was also provided. Accompanying this revision was a survey accessible online and downloadable as well. The survey allowed respondents to rate each part of the draft revision and also to comment on each section.

The Commission received some 1700 responses online and by post as well as a great many comments via e-mail. 70.4% of the responses rated the draft revision as “Excellent” or “Good.” The comments received run to over 450 pages in condensed form. Age range for respondents was from 16 to 97 years with the modal (most common) age being 61 years. Length of time as a Unitarian (Universalist) ranged from 3 months to 91 years, with the mode 15 years. Of the 1,605 responders who included race/ethnicity, 67 identified themselves as Black,

Hispanic, Asian or Native American. Among the respondents, 1,113 identified themselves as White. Of the 1400 respondents who indicated whether they were religious professionals, 80.5% indicated they were not religious professionals and 19.5% indicated they were.

Following the survey, the Commission met to process all the data and to review the comments received. Based on those comments we have revised the text. The proposal offered above in Section 2 is the final version of our work on Article II.

Since that time, the UUA Board met and approved the proposed revision of Article II, with a minor change.