

Draft Charge to Article II Study Commission

Preface: Article II of the UUA Bylaws, Principles and Purposes, is the foundation for all of the work of our UUA and its member congregations and covenanted communities. It is the covenant to which all of our congregations and covenanted communities pledge themselves when they become members of our UUA. Our current Principles and Purposes were last revised in 1987. At GA 2017, there was discussion of amending the Principles to add an 8th Principle, addressing racism, and an amended 1st Principle, addressing non-human life. The 5th Principle was the subject of a report in 2009, which dealt with the ways in which GA and other UU gatherings do and don't embody an inclusive democratic process. The 7th Principle has also been the subject of discussions about possible amendments. There have been many projects, resolutions, task forces and other strategies that have come from the Board, Commission on Appraisal and grassroots groups which encourage us to take a look at our principles, purposes, bylaws and rules. It is time for us to do a review and make changes so that we are living into the Unitarian Universalism of the future, a Unitarian Universalism that holds us in times of great need and ethical, moral and spiritual crises. We are in one of those times now.

In response to those discussions, the UUA Board committed to establishing an Article II Study Commission to consider possible amendments to this Article. In fulfillment of that commitment, the UUA Board hereby establishes the Article II Study Commission.

Charge: The Article II Study Commission is hereby charged to review Article II of the UUA Bylaws, and propose any revisions that will enable our UUA, our member congregations, and our covenanted communities to be a relevant and powerful force for spiritual and moral growth, healing, and justice. Proposed changes should articulate core UU theological values. The Board believes that one core theological value, shared widely among UUs, is love. The Commission on Appraisal, in its report, *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*, cites Robert Miller's study of Unitarian Universalism, stating "UUs ranked loving as an instrumental value and mature love as a terminal value more highly than did respondents from other groups, religious and nonreligious." Our commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism is love in action, and should be centered in any revision of Article II. Finally, the Principles and Purposes should lead us into the second quarter of the 21st Century, while honoring the historic roots of our liberal, progressive faith. **We therefore charge this commission to root its work in Love as a principal guide in its work; attending particularly to the ways that we (and our root traditions) have understood and articulated Love, and how we have acted out of Love.**

As it conducts its work, the Commission shall seek to engage the active participation of UUs across all demographics, identities, and theological/philosophical beliefs. The commission shall be open and transparent in its work, communicating progress frequently with UUs through as many channels and communication media as possible. Further, the Commission shall de-center habitual practices that reinforce white supremacy culture.

The commission is instructed to include in its considerations and deliberations the clear call at GA 2017 for the inclusion of another principle, explicitly calling us to be committed to active anti-racism (see attachments about the 8th Principle Project). We also note that there is a growing urging (heard even before the last review of the Principles, at Minneapolis, in 2010) for us to better articulate our recognition of rights of being for all beings. The commission should consider how this might be included. We specifically direct their attentions to the 2010 proposals, recognizing how very close those came to passing; there is good work there that should be salvaged for our time.

The Commission is charged with reviewing all sections of Article II, and is free to revise, replace, or restructure them as needed to meet the objectives stated above. There is nothing sacred about the number of principles or sources, nor their specific wordings, nor in the way that Article II is laid out. We encourage creativity. The Board would like to see an Article II that is inspirational, memorable and poetic. The language should be inclusive and welcoming, and explicitly anti-racist. Article II, it must be remembered, are broad statements of Principle and Purpose, not detailed programmatic or implementation plans.

The commission is urged to carefully consider the existing language for its implications, and for the errors or inadequacies of those implications. We recognize that one steady criticism over decades has been that the language of the principles is not poetic. We encourage the Commission to consider framings of our principles that allows them to be brief and poetic (perhaps by transferring explanatory clauses and expansions to a subsidiary document that expounds on what the Commission sees as included and intended in that shorter form).

We particularly urge the Commission to review the Sources; the revised listing from the 2010 proposal and its explicit inclusion of Unitarianism and Universalism as *our* Sources seems timely to us. And there are other recommended Sources in that proposal. In addition, there have been energetic discussions about how other faith traditions such as Buddhism and Islam (among others) might be included or put on footings more equal to those of Christianity and Judaism.

Proposed changes must be submitted to the UUA Board of Trustees in January 2022, so that they may be considered by the Board, and then be placed on the 2022 General Assembly Business Agenda for the first vote. (See Bylaws, Article XV Amendment).

The Commission is further charged with submitting regular reports to the Board of Trustees on its plans and progress to meeting its goals and deadlines. (See Board and Commission Responsibilities, p. z).

The Board of Trustees is grateful for the work of this Commission. Please call on us if we can support you in any way.

Mr. Barb Greve and Elandria Williams, Co-Moderators

Article II History

Article II is one of the “C” Bylaws, dating to the merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Association in 1961. Much of the “C” Bylaws reflects compromises that were made in order to achieve merger. Different pieces of the “C” Bylaws were important enough to one side or the other that these were made harder to amend than non-“C” Bylaws. The first major rewrite of the Principles and Purposes post-merger were adopted in 1984. Some slight changes were made after that, but the language is largely unchanged. (See <http://archive.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/3643.shtml> and <https://www.uua.org/leadership/learning-center/governance/polity/47006.shtml>).

The Principles guide our actions and priorities, encouraging us to “affirm and promote” core values, while our Sources provide the context and grounding for those Purpose and Principles. This Article states our purpose, our very reason for existing. Section 2.3 commits us to being inclusive, and to replacing barriers that have kept some people and groups from full participation in our faith. Article II ends by ensuring freedom of conscience, and prohibiting creedal tests.

For some religious institutions, the equivalent of Article II would be regarded as a permanent statement of belief. Ours, however, is a Living Tradition. We commit ourselves to regularly revisiting our Principles and Purposes to ensure that we are relevant, that as we grow in understanding, our Principles and Purposes grow, too. Since “new occasions teach new duties”, we must continuously examine our Principles and Purposes to see what is missing, what is no longer important, and whether the language communicates our core values to the current times.

Since then, General Assembly committed the UUA to working toward being an Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression, and Multicultural Association. Recent events have caused UUs to explore more deeply institutional and cultural oppressions that exist in our Association and its member congregations and covenanted communities.

We are now well into the second quarter of the 21st Century. Our Association has grown in its understanding of systemic oppressions, such as racism, ableism, and heteronormative beliefs. However, many people feel the language of Article II does not reflect these learnings. The Board believes we need an Article II which leads us into the future.

Love as a Common Theological Core

In calling for this commission to root itself in a shared, core theological value, we—the Board—are asking the question “what is it that lies *behind* all the statements of principles that we agree to as our common associational points of covenant?” What lies beneath the principles, on which a commission can re-envision and re-articulate the

ideas that are expressed currently in our existing principles *and* include, potentially, other ideas put forth to be considered for that restated covenant?

Asserting that there is such a commonality is bold; it potentially flies in the face of the Commission on Appraisal's 2005 Report, "Engaging Our Theological Diversity," which failed to identify such a core in its conclusion.

We hold that the Commission did not fail to identify that core, only to recognize it at the time, as our theological core.

In its report, it cites Robert Miller's study of Unitarian Universalism, stating "UUs ranked loving as an instrumental value and mature love as a terminal value more highly than did respondents from other groups, religious and nonreligious."

UUs were more likely, even before 2005, to assert the importance of love than any other group, religious or nonreligious. And this was *before* the Standing on the Side of Love campaign (now Side with Love) began. Since that time, we have seen and heard expressions of love, and displays of love-in-action, by UUs.

We assert that our deepest common theological grounding and value is this: Love.

We find it peeking through the words of the currently existing Principles. We see it in our insistence on the worth and dignity of every person (and the calls by some that this insistence needs to extend to all other beings, as well). We see it in the call for demanding and embodying justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. We hear it in our urging of acceptance of one another and our support for each person's spiritual growth. We discern an accountable love in our call for a responsible search for truth and meaning. Our affirmation of the right of conscience, and the right of every individual to participate in shaping those institutions that govern them, displays a deep respect and love for every person. We hold up the goal of a peaceful, free, and just world community as an expression of what love can and should bring into being. And we believe that our call to respect the interdependent web that we are a part of is an articulation of love for all that is and our own place and role in that web.

We see love called out as what demands that we be active in our justice work and justice-making.

We note that our hymnals are littered with assertions of what we aspire to, and what love can do, and be; "Let us build a home where love can dwell," "Love will guide us," and "we are answering the call of love" among them.

We respond to the call of love because it *is* our common theological core. It is what can and does motivate us and illuminates our deepest commitments to each other.

Stakeholders

In conducting its work, the Commission should actively reach out to these groups of stakeholders (and any others the Commission deems relevant):

- Congregational leaders, lay* and professional*
- Professional Associations*
- Identity Groups* (e.g., DRUUMM, BLUU, TRUUsT, EqUUal, etc.)
- Philosophical and Theological Groups* (e.g., UU Humanists, UU Christians, etc.)
- 8th Principle and 1st Principle advocates*
- Past GA attendees* (these people are the ones most likely to be voting on the proposed Principles)
- Commission on Institutional Change*
- Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee*
- Former UUs who have left the faith* (i.e., those who left because they were harmed)
- Unchurched UUs who still identify as UUs, but don't belong to UU congregations* (i.e., those who just don't feel compelled to be members of a UU congregation)
- Members of 2010 Commission on Appraisal
- UUA staff
- UU seminaries
- UUSC
- UU Issues groups (e.g., UU Earth Justice Ministry, UUs for Justice in the Middle East, etc.)
- ...

*Denotes critical stakeholders (Do we want to label these as such)?

Timeline

This table contains important deadlines and responsibilities for the Commission and for the UUA Board.

Month	UUA Board	Article II Commission
2020		
January Prior to Board meeting	Approve draft charge Publicize charge Art II WG ask Appointments, Nom Com, COIC and others if they can think of good folks to be on the Article II commission	
January Board Meeting	Discuss potential commissioners and make some strategic recommendations (7-10 people just in case a couple say no)	
February	WG call potential commissioners	
March	WG call potential commissioners WG select potential commissioners	

Month	UUA Board	Article II Commission
	Board appoint commissioners	
April	Closing date for comments on draft charge	
May	Revise draft charge	Commissioners meet virtually to develop work plan, including communications plan
June	Introduce Article commissioners at GA, early in the week	Attend GA Commissioners will be able to listen in on conversations, help facilitate small groups or whatever can help support their work at General Assembly
July		
August		
September		
October	Receive report from Article II Commission	Report to Board on progress
November		
December		
2021		
January	Receive report from Article II Commission	Report to Board on progress
February		
March		
April	Receive report from Article II Commission	Report to Board on Progress
May		
June	Structure time for GA activities around Article II (depending on status)	Conduct listening/feedback sessions on work to date
July		
August		
September		
October	Receive report from Article II Commission	Report to Board on Progress
November		
December		
2022		
January	Review, amend, accept draft	Present draft Articles to board
February	Place draft on General Assembly Business Agenda for first vote. GA 2022 will have to revolve heavily around this. And we need to determine if and *how* to allow some level of amendments from the mini-assembly for June 2022	Publicize draft to be voted on in all ways possible
March		
April	Receive report from Article II Commission	Report to Board on feedback
May		
June	1 st Vote on Proposed Article II changes Debrief GA action (at post-GA Board meeting?)	Facilitate small groups Debrief GA action

Month	UUA Board	Article II Commission
July		
August	Debrief GA action, if not done in June	Debrief GA action, if not done in June
September		
October	Receive report from Article II Commission	Report to Board on Progress
November		
December		
2023		
January	Receive report from Article II Commission	Report to Board
February	Place proposed changes on GA Agenda for 2 nd vote	
March		
April	Receive report from Article II Commission	Final report to Board
May		Package and archive work products
June	2 nd Vote Celebrate success	Present Article II Revisions for final vote Celebrate success

Resources

The following documents should be reviewed by the Commission in the course of its work. Some of these discuss specific amendment language; others relate to ways in which the UUA can conduct business in a more truly inclusive and democratic manner.

- Commission on Appraisal, *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*, <https://www.uua.org/files/documents/coa/engagingourtheodiversity.pdf>
- 8th Principle <https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/>
- 2017 1st Principle Amendment Proposal <https://www.uua.org/ga/past/2017/business/iv>
- Proposed 2010 Bylaws Revisions <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/ga/covenant-for-bylaws>
- 1997 GA Resolution on Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, and Multi-Culturalism <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/toward-anti-racist-unitarian-universalist-association>
- Report of the Task Force on Reimagining Covenant https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/re-imag_cov_tf_04122017.pdf
- 5th Principle Task Force Report https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/boardtrustees/5thprinciple/0912_report.pdf