

Unitarian Universalist Professional and Credentialing Organizations hold Ethics Summit*

As Unitarian Universalist Religious Professional colleagues and UU lay leaders, we aspire to work collaboratively in dedication to the Holy through the beloved faith tradition we share. As a part of our effort toward dismantling white supremacy culture which puts up barriers to equity and liberation, we are exploring a model of collective accountability. Namely, we imagine the creation of a Common Ethics Board which would establish a shared code of ethics not just for ministers, or within professional organizations, but across and among all professional religious leaders. This body would also encompass a shared system for restoring right relationship when possible and for adjudicating and imposing discipline for ethical violations when necessary. In addition to fostering a culture of collective accountability, we expect a Common Ethics Board would result in greater transparency in the process for handling ethics violations as well as increased skills and care for all parties involved in a justice seeking process.

In order to begin imagining a new way, representatives from each of the listed organizations met for a two day Summit on May 22-23, 2019. It was an extraordinary gathering in many ways. First, as colleagues, we were able to speak and hear difficult truths about power and the harm we have done to one another -- in particular the harm that ministers have caused to other religious professionals. We recognize that a truth and reconciliation process will be a necessary part of any effort towards creating a shared ethic and we expect that such a process would guide us to a healthier sense of collegial connection. Having begun that process of truth telling and listening, we were able to move into a visioning and design process which began to build a shape for the work ahead. We expect that work to result in an improved accountability process that will address all types of ethical violations, including but not limited to those involving behavior between religious professionals, behavior impacting individual congregants, and behavior impacting congregations.

Many questions remain regarding sequencing, authorization, funding, and a mechanism for beta testing a new ethics process through a Common Ethics Board. Yet much was also accomplished in planting seeds, building collegial relationships and trust, and envisioning a future in which all UU religious leaders share a clear sense of ethics in service of a vital and radically inclusive Unitarian Universalism.

We have spoken with representatives of both the UUA Administration and the Board of Trustees including Susan Frederick-Gray, Carey McDonald, Elandria Williams and Mr. Barb Greve. We shared with them the initial outlines of our work and the exciting opportunities that lie ahead. We also indicated a need for ongoing UUA staff participation as well as an investment of financial resources. These along with financial resources from the professional organizations, proportional to our budgets, are just some of what is needed to advance this work. Next in our process is seeking affirmation from the UUA Board of Trustees for the work we've begun to outline. Later this Fall we anticipate an online gathering to discuss our path forward. We are building a new way and we know there will be challenges as well as successes but we remain committed to a vision of collegiality that finds, at its foundation, our shared commitment to our faith.

**Liberal Religious Educators Association , Association of UU Administrators, UU Membership Professionals, UU Society for Community Ministry, Association for UU Music Ministries, UU Ministers Association, Ministerial Fellowship Committee, Religious Educators Credentialing Committee, Music Leadership Certification Committee, and UUA staff from Congregational Life and Ministries and Faith Development.*