



## **General Assembly Business Meeting Minutes**

### **Fifty-Eighth General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association June 19-22, 2019**

The General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) was convened on Wednesday, June 19, 2019, at approximately 7:00 p.m., by Co-Moderators Elandria Williams and Mr. Barb Greve at the Spokane Convention Center, Spokane, WA.

On Friday, June 21, the Assembly adopted, by a vote of two-thirds or more, Rules of Procedure for the conduct of the meeting.

On the basis of an initial report by the Secretary of the Association, a quorum was declared present from the time the meeting was called to order.

---

### **Notable Business Session Events**

The Assembly received written and, in some cases verbal, reports from the President, the Co-Moderators, the Financial Advisor, the Secretary, the Board of Trustees, the General Assembly Planning Committee, the Treasurer, the UUA Staff, the Commission on Institutional Change, the Commission on Social Witness, the Commission on Appraisal, the Presidential Search Committee, the Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, and the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Cleveland, OH was recognized as a new member congregation of the UUA. The new congregation was formed after the previous First Unitarian Church of Cleveland and the Unitarian Universalist Society of Cleveland both dissolved and then merged to create a new congregation.

The 2019 Award for Distinguished Service to the Cause of Unitarian Universalism was presented to the Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed. The 2019 President's Annual Award for Volunteer Service to the UUA was presented to Denise Rimes. The 2019 Angus MacLean for Excellence in Religious Education was presented to CB Beal.

The Assembly celebrated the fulfillment of the UUA's \$5 million commitment to Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism, and the completion of the Promise and the Practice Campaign to support the BLUU commitment, raising over \$4.3 million with participation from over 600 congregations.

## **Consent Agenda**

Co-Moderators Greve and Williams proposed the following business items be combined to form a single consent agenda motion. The Assembly admitted the consent agenda motion by a majority vote, and adopted the consent agenda by a vote of two-thirds or more.

*Note - Underlining indicates insertion; [brackets] indicate deletion.*

### **I. Full Ministerial Fellowship**

#### **Section 5.11. Board of Review.**

- (a) Members. The Board of Review shall consist of eight members, as follows:
- (1) Three members who are ministers, each of whom at the time of election is in [final] full ministerial fellowship with the Association and has held such fellowship continuously for the preceding seven years; and
  - (2) One member who is a Credentialed Religious Educator – Master Level; and
  - (3) Four members who are not ministers or credentialed religious educators, each of whom at the time of election is a member of a certified member congregation and has been a member of one or more such congregations for not less than three years as an officer or a member of the governing bodies of one or more such congregations.

#### **Section 7.6. Ministerial Fellowship Committee.**

The Ministerial Fellowship Committee shall consist of no fewer than fourteen members as follows:

- (a) at least six members who are not ministers appointed by the Board; and
- (b) at least eight members who are ministers in [final] full fellowship with the Association, four appointed by the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association and the remainder by the Board.

#### **Section 11.5. Termination of Fellowship and Administrative Suspension.**

The fellowship of a minister may be terminated by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee for unbecoming conduct, incompetence or other specified cause. [Final] Full fellowship may be terminated only after notice by the Committee and opportunity for a Fellowship Review before the Committee. During an investigation or the pendency of a complaint, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee may suspend a minister until a final determination can be made on the minister's fellowship status.

#### **Section 11.7. Appeal.**

A minister in [final] full ministerial fellowship whose fellowship is terminated may appeal the determination of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee to the Board of Review. The Board of Review shall have exclusive jurisdiction to hear and decide such appeals. No other appeal shall be allowed from any decision of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee

### **II. Committee Membership**

**Section 5.2. Election and Appointment.**

- (a) Elected members. Elected members of all standing committees of the Association shall take office at the close of the General Assembly at which they are elected and shall serve until their successors are elected and qualified, except as otherwise provided herein.
- (b) Appointed members. The terms of any appointed members of standing committees of the Association shall begin at the close of the regular General Assembly [in odd-numbered years]. The Board of Trustees shall make each appointment no later than 120 days after the beginning of the term. Appointed members shall take office upon the effective date of their appointments and shall serve until their successors are appointed and qualified, except as otherwise provided herein.

**IV. Voting and Ballot Procedures**

**Section 9.10. Conduct of Elections at Large.**

- (a) Election by Ballot. Voting shall be by [written or electronic] ballot, except that if only one person has been validly nominated for [each] an elective position at large the persons so nominated shall be declared elected and no [ballots] voting shall be required. Delegates will have access to electronic voting onsite at General Assembly or remotely, as described in Section 9.10(d), or by mail ballot as described in Section 9.10(c).
- (b) [Persons Entitled to Vote] Eligible Voters. [Ballots] Votes shall be cast only by accredited delegates from certified member congregations and certified associate member organizations to the regular General Assembly at which the election is held and by trustees. No person shall cast more than one [ballot] vote.
- (c) [Absentee Voting] Mail Ballots. [Those entitled to cast ballots in an election] Accredited delegates may cast their ballots [electronically or] as paper ballots by mail, if they request to do so. Mail ballots can be requested through the Secretary, and [ Absentee ballots] shall be [mailed] requested at least forty-five days prior to the General Assembly at which the election is being held. [An absentee] A mail ballot that is [mailed] returned must be received by the Secretary [not less than seven calendar days] by the last business day before the close of voting at General Assembly in order to be counted. [An absentee ballot that is transmitted electronically must be received by the Secretary prior to the closing of voting at the GA location. The closing date and time shall be designated in the General Assembly meeting announcement.]
- (d) Electronic Voting. Accredited delegates may vote electronically either onsite at General Assembly or remotely. The Secretary shall designate the electronic voting period in the General Assembly meeting announcement and may add more time if justified. Electronic voting systems must be auditable, accessible, and secure.

**Section 9.11. Counting of Ballots.**

- (a) [For the position of President, Moderator, Financial Advisor, or Trustee. If there are no more than two duly nominated candidates for a position, the candidate receiving the greater number of votes is elected; provided, however, that (i) in construing the foregoing with respect to Trustee positions, each Trustee position number shall be considered a separate elective position; and (ii) in construing this section, a duly nominated candidate for the position of Moderator may consist of more than one person. If there are more than two duly nominated candidates for a position, the ballot shall be designed to permit the designation of first, second, third, etc., choice. If no candidate receives a majority of the first-choice votes cast, the candidate receiving the lowest first-

choice vote shall be eliminated and the ballots cast for such candidate shall be redistributed in accordance with the second choice indicated thereon. This process shall be repeated until one candidate receives a majority of all votes cast or until only two candidates remain, at which time the one receiving the greater number of votes is elected.] Singular Positions. If there is more than one duly nominated candidate for a single position, not including the candidates for the position of Moderator and President, the candidate receiving the greater number of votes is elected.

- (b) [For Other Elective Positions] Multiple Positions of the Same Kind. [If there is one elective position at large to be filled, the candidate receiving the greatest number of votes is elected.] If there is more than one such elective position of the same kind to be filled, the candidates respectively receiving the greatest number of votes are elected.
- (c) Moderator and President Voting. For the positions of Moderator and President, if there are two duly nominated candidates, the candidate receiving the greater number of votes will be elected. If there are more than two duly nominated candidates, a ranked vote will be held in which voters indicate their ranked choices for candidates. If no candidate receives a majority of the first-choice votes cast, the candidate receiving the lowest first-choice vote shall be eliminated and the ballots cast for such candidate shall be redistributed in accordance with the second choice indicated thereon. This process shall be repeated until one candidate receives a majority of all votes cast or until only two candidates remain, at which time the one receiving the greater number of votes is elected.

**Rule G-9.11.1. Tie Vote-Elected [Committee] Position.**

If a tie vote occurs in filling an elected [committee] position when only one person is to be elected and when ranked voting is not being used, or occurs in filling a slate when the slate cannot be completed without resolving the tie, then a candidate or candidates shall be eliminated by random draw to determine the winner [as soon as possible before the final adjournment of the General Assembly involved, additional ballots shall be cast by those present and entitled to vote, except that initially the Moderator shall not vote. The additional ballots shall contain only the names of the candidates who are tied. These ballots shall be counted along with a recounting of the ballots cast for the tied candidates by absentee ballots, and the result of the foregoing procedures shall determine the election, unless there is still a tie, in which case the Moderator shall then cast a ballot to resolve it].

**Rule G-9.11.2. Tie Vote-Ranked Voting[Moderator].**

If the tie involves the election of a Moderator, the proceedings to resolve the tie shall be presided over by the Secretary of the Association who, in all matters involving the resolutions of the tie, shall have the rights and duties of the Moderator.] Should there be a tie for the fewest number of first preference votes, including absentee ballots, then among these, the candidate with the fewest number of second preference votes shall be eliminated. Should a tie persist, the procedure shall continue with third preference votes, et cetera. Should a tie still persist, the candidate with the fewest number of original first preference votes, shall be eliminated. Should a tie still persist, the procedures shall continue with original second preference votes, et cetera. Should a tie still persist, a candidate shall be eliminated by random draw.

**[Rule G-9.11.3. Tie Vote-President, Moderator, Financial Advisor, or Trustee.**

If, in the election of a President, Moderator, Financial Advisor, or Trustee, in any particular counting of the preferential ballots, including absentee ballots, there is a tie vote among candidates having the least number of votes, then each such tied candidate shall be eliminated,

and in the next counting, the ballots accumulated for said candidate shall be redistributed among the remaining candidates on the basis of the highest effective preferences marked on all the ballots that have been cast. However, if in this process, such elimination leaves only a single candidate who in that counting still does not have a majority of the counted votes, or if only two candidates remain in the contest and they are tied, then there shall be as many run-off election procedures, conducted under the provision of Rule G-9.11.1, as are necessary to result in the election of a President, Moderator, Financial Advisor, or Trustee by at least a majority of the votes cast.]

**Rule G-9.13.1. Election Preparation [and Mailing of Ballot].**

Unless no [ballot] voting is required according to Section 9.9(a), prior to each regular General Assembly at which an election is to be held, the Secretary shall prepare the voting system and ballots [upon] which shall [appear] include the names of all [persons] candidates who have been nominated for office in accordance with these Bylaws and whose nomination is contested by at least one other candidate. [One such ballot] Voting instructions shall be sent with each credential [card] issued by the Secretary.

**Rule G-9.13.2. Order of Candidate Names [on Ballot].**

[On all ballots used i] In elections held by the Association, the order of names shall be determined [by the drawing of lots done] by the Secretary [and witnessed by two other persons]; provided, however, that the order of names for elections to the Board of Trustees, other than Youth trustee, shall be by Board position number first, and then as determined above. For electronic voting, candidates shall be listed in random order for each separate ballot [The Secretary shall certify the results of the drawing of lots, the certificate shall be attested by the witnesses, and the certificate shall be filed in the Secretary's office. This Rule shall be printed on all official ballots or on the instructions accompanying them].

**Rule G-9.13.3. Write-ins Prohibited.**

In any election, the use of stickers or the writing in of the name of any person [on a ballot] shall not be permitted and no vote so attempted shall be counted.

**Rule G-9.13.4. [Absentee] Mail Ballots.**

A mailed [absentee] paper ballot shall be counted only if accompanied by [the signed and certified ballot stub of the] a valid credential [card] of the person casting the ballot. [An electronic absentee ballot shall be counted only if the delegate has complied with established secure voting protocols.]

**Rule G-9.13.5. [Balloting] Voting at General Assembly.**

A person shall be qualified to [cast a ballot] vote at General Assembly only if that person presents to the Secretary of the Association or those employed by them a valid credential [properly certified ballot stub] plus a badge issued to that person and containing the same name as the name on the credential [ballot stub. An electronic ballot shall be counted only if the delegate has complied with established secure voting protocols].

**Action on Bylaw Amendments.** The Assembly adopted by a vote of two-thirds or more the following proposed amendments to the bylaws so as to read as follows:

*Note - Underlining indicates insertion; [brackets] indicate deletion.*

## **I. Board Authority for Elections**

### **Section 9.9. Supervision of Elections.**

The Secretary shall supervise all elections for elective positions at large. The Secretary may appoint a committee of tellers to count ballots and perform other routine duties. The Secretary shall decide any question arising during such an election concerning:

- (a) the interpretation of any provision of these Bylaws or of Rules made hereunder relating to election procedures;
- (b) any procedural problem relating to the election which is not covered by these Bylaws or by the Rules; or
- (c) the interpretation of the intent of a voter in marking the ballot.

[The Secretary's decision shall be final.] The decision of the Secretary may be changed by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Trustees. The Secretary shall remain neutral in the election and shall not engage in electioneering, except for advocacy of their own candidacy for offices for which they are nominated.

## **II. Preliminary Fellowship**

### **Section 11.3. Admission to Fellowship.**

A minister may be admitted to fellowship by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee upon complying with the requirements of these Bylaws and the rules, policies, procedures and requests of the Committee. A minister who is admitted to fellowship shall be admitted to preliminary fellowship for a period [of at least three years, be evaluated in ministry, and may thereafter be admitted to final fellowship] that allows the Committee to evaluate ministry, and may thereafter be admitted to full fellowship. The term of preliminary fellowship shall be defined in the rules of the Committee.

## **III. Nomination by Petition**

### **Section 9.6. Nomination by Petition.**

For Moderator and President. A nomination for the office of Moderator or President, for a regular or special election, may be by petition signed by no fewer than [twenty-five] fifty certified member congregations, including at least one congregation from three of the regions of the Association. A certified member congregation may authorize the signing of a petition only by vote of its governing board or by vote at a duly called meeting of its members. Such a petition shall be filed with the Secretary of the Association, only in such form as the Secretary may prescribe, not later than February 1 of the year of the election and not earlier than the preceding March 1.

**Action on Business Resolution – Ballou-Channing District Merger.** The Assembly adopted by a vote of two-thirds or more the following Business Resolution:

RESOLVED: That, in accordance with the recommendation of the Board of Trustees, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Association do hereby authorize and approve the merger of the Ballou Channing District of the Unitarian Universalist Association, Incorporated (“BCD”) with and into the Unitarian Universalist Association ( the “UUA”), with the UUA as the surviving entity in such merger (the “Merger”), after which BCD will cease to exist as a separate entity,

and adopt the merger agreement relating to such Merger as previously approved and authorized by the Board of Trustees.

**Actions of Immediate Witness**

The Assembly affirmed by a vote of two-thirds or more the following three Actions of Immediate Witness:

**Build the Movement for a Green New Deal**

WHEREAS, the Green New Deal manifests key UU values — animating both “the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part” and “justice, equity, and compassion in human relations”;

WHEREAS, the vision of the Green New Deal will require in-depth organizing and generational dedication to overcome powerful interests that disregard the scientific consensus that massive disruption lies ahead if humanity does not take prompt action to mitigate the escalating climate emergency;

WHEREAS, our earth has already warmed approximately 1°C, and natural disasters such as flooding, droughts, wildfires, hurricanes, and species die-off, are occurring more frequently as carbon emissions from fossil fuels are now activating powerful feedback loops in the air, oceans, and on land;

WHEREAS, many natural resources, such as fisheries, forests, agricultural lands, fresh water, and minerals, are being degraded or wasted by continued global economic and population growth; and

WHEREAS, social and political stress from escalating economic and political failure is undermining popular support for democracy and human rights, especially where short-sighted economic pursuits have prevailed over equity and compassion and concern for our Earth;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Unitarian Universalist Association, its congregations, and their members are urged to:

Continue educating themselves on the accelerating threats to the ecosystems and natural resources that feed and sustain our global civilization, and promote a compassionate national conversation to head off worst-case scenarios;

Prepare our youth to confront the future through religious education and other programs grounded in science that inspire hope, courage and practical collective action;

Develop a new morality, rebuilding our political and economic structures to prioritize the well-being of future generations, grounded in sustainability, while supporting today’s overstressed communities with productive employment, affordable housing and health care, public transportation and education, and other universal benefits;

Ready themselves for the alarming economic challenges ahead as nature's limits-to-growth severely impact vulnerable populations and sectors such as heavy industry, aviation, and global transport, which are ill-suited for renewable energy;

Invest in regenerative agriculture and research and development in diverse technologies to economically extract carbon from air and water for productive purposes, while phasing out fossil fuels;

Network with UU state action networks, national groups like UUJEC, UUMFE, and UUSJ, or sign up at [www.createclimatejustice.net](http://www.createclimatejustice.net). Participate in the Sept. 15-17, 2019, conference in Washington, DC, on a Green New Deal ([www.uujec.com/gndconference](http://www.uujec.com/gndconference));

Form alliances with local groups working on aspects of a Green New Deal or national supporters like The Sunrise Movement, Extinction Rebellion, 350.org, The Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, We Are Still In, and Citizens Climate Lobby;

Obtain background information on the Green New Deal from groups like The Post Carbon Institute, Data for Progress, Inside Climate News, Peoples Policy Project, Oil Change International;

Organize congregational projects that align with the Green New Deal; and

Actively support the development of federal legislation to implement the Green New Deal as envisioned in H.Res. 109.

**Protect the Rights of  
Immigrants and Asylum Seekers**

WHEREAS, the current administration of the United States government has systematically and officially prevented immigrants and asylum seekers from crossing the United States' southern border;

WHEREAS, U.S. Government agents have illegally incarcerated immigrants lawfully seeking asylum;

WHEREAS, long term alien residents have been incarcerated without legal proceedings;

WHEREAS, families of U.S. citizens have been broken up by these unjust actions;

WHEREAS, immigrant children have been forcibly taken from their parents and detained indefinitely; and

WHEREAS, parents have been deported without their children;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Unitarian Universalist Association condemns the policies of the U.S. Government regarding the treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers;

That the UUA supports its members and others in their actions to protect and assist immigrants and asylum seekers in their attempts to lawfully enter and/or remain in the United States; and

That the UUA encourages its members to communicate with their Congressional representatives and condemn the policies of the Administration.

**Support Our First Amendment Right to Boycott  
on behalf of Palestinian Rights**

WHEREAS, the movement for Palestinian human rights has grown stronger in recent years with student groups, faith groups, unions and academic associations all supporting Palestinian justice, and in many cases calling for boycotts of and divestment from corporations complicit in violation of Palestinian human rights;

WHEREAS, this growth in support for Palestinian rights has led to a backlash from those who are threatened by criticism of Israel, a backlash that has included legislation aimed at intimidating or even criminalizing participation in boycotts directed at changing Israeli behavior;

WHEREAS, divestment is a type of boycott the legislation seeks to bar;

WHEREAS, since 2014, over 100 measures targeting the use of boycotts in support of Palestinian rights have been introduced at local, state and federal levels;

WHEREAS, twenty-seven states have adopted laws prohibiting such boycotts, and members of Congress have proposed similar bills, the most extreme of which call for prison sentences of up to twenty years and fines of one million dollars (see <https://palestinelegal.org/righttoboycott>);

WHEREAS, this massive effort to pass anti-boycott legislation is disturbing given that the US Supreme Court held in 1982 that boycotts are a form of free speech protected by the First Amendment (*NAACP vs Claiborne Hardware*);

WHEREAS, federal courts in Kansas, Arizona and Texas have recently declared certain anti-boycott laws unconstitutional;

WHEREAS, the proponents of this anti-boycott legislation are not really concerned about the constitutionality of the laws because they know that cases on appeal often take years to reach the Supreme Court, and that in the meantime, their legislation will serve to frighten those wishing to support Palestinian human rights with the time-honored, non-violent and constitutional means of boycotts;

WHEREAS, while the anti-boycott efforts are directed today at supporters of Palestinians, tomorrow they could be directed at supporters of farm workers, Black Americans, indigenous people, immigrants, LGBTQIA people or prisoners; and

WHEREAS, broad opposition to these anti-boycott laws should be based on their unconstitutional, anti-democratic character and separate from one's views concerning how to support Palestinians;

THEREFORE, the General Assembly 2019 calls on the UUA and UU organizations to oppose anti-boycott laws by reaching out to their representatives at state and federal levels; and on Unitarian Universalists to sign UUJME's petition calling on Congress to oppose anti-boycott legislation (see <https://tinyurl.com/defendrighttoboycott>) or collect signatures via a paper version <https://tinyurl.com/defendrighttoboycott-paper> and mail them to the indicated address.

### **Statement of Conscience**

The Assembly adopted by a vote of two-thirds or more the following Statement of Conscience titled "Our Democracy Uncorrupted," arising from a congregational study/action issue:

#### **Our Democracy Uncorrupted**

*America begins in black plunder and white democracy,  
two features that are not contradictory but complementary.*

*-Ta-Nehisi Coates*

Democracy in the United States has always been compromised. At the Nation's very founding, participation in governance was almost entirely limited to white male landowners. Wealth was created from those excluded: land seized from indigenous peoples who were forcibly assimilated or removed and/or exterminated; and labor exploited from enslaved Africans, indentured servants, immigrants, prisoners, the working poor, and women and children. Compounding this corruption is the existential threat of a global climate crisis that our current federal government is failing to address. The impact of this crisis will fall most heavily on low-income communities of color. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., echoing Unitarian minister Rev. Theodore Parker, said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." We can no longer wait for that to happen. We must act to bend that arc now or face the unthinkable consequences of a destroyed environment and unlivable planet. If we are to rise to the moral challenge inherent in the climate crisis, we must embrace the struggle to achieve an uncorrupted democracy.

As people of faith committed to "the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large," we must continuously strive toward uncorrupted democracy. As a means to an end, democracy organizes decision-making among diverse people and preserves stability while balancing competing interests. But democracy is not merely a means. It is an end in itself, an ethical ideal, a moral and spiritual way of relating to one another. Sadly, many of our democratic institutions have been corrupted into being merely a means for giving powerful interests the appearance of legitimacy.

The promise of democracy is for a life that fashions us as the people we want to be. Terry Tempest Williams calls us to be resolute and courageous in our trust: "Can we be equitable? Can we be generous? Can we listen with our whole beings, not just our minds, and offer our attention rather than our opinions? And do we have enough resolve in our hearts to act courageously, relentlessly, without giving up – ever – trusting our fellow citizens to join with us in our determined pursuit of a living democracy?"

Government by and for the people formally entails majority rule, with the majority's power limited by protection of the rights of those in the minority. Democratic government should include:

- universal voting rights that lead to and encourage higher voter participation rates;
- free, fair, competitive, and regular elections;
- beyond voting, accessible and meaningful channels of political participation open to all such as town meetings;
- access to accurate information and diverse media;
- policies and processes accountable to the voters, not to special interests;
- basic individual liberties that include freedom both of and from religion, freedom of press and speech, and the right to engage in humanitarian aid, boycotts and divestment;
- leaders who reflect the racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, and class diversity of the population and who truly represent the people;
- an independent judiciary and adherence to the rule of law;
- policies implemented by those duly authorized;
- freedom from influence of foreign or external powers; and
- freedom from the undue influence of corporations and money.

Democracy is not only a series of rules and systems, it is the culture and commitments of the people and of those entrusted with carrying out the will of the people. A truly democratic culture requires:

- transparency and radical inclusivity (intentional deep listening, attending to the concerns of the most vulnerable, and caring about inclusion and exclusion);
- cooperation, multi-partisanship, and decision-making through consensus-building;
- accountability and accessibility, being responsive to the public good versus special interests;
- public officials being held to a high standard of ethical and fiduciary responsibility; and
- respecting and defending the rights and needs of those in the minority.

The Nation's founding documents expressed inspiring ideals of democratic equality. Unequal valuation, however, has undermined our country's prospects for living the promise of true democracy: white people are valued more than people of color, men more than women, the rich more than the poor, cisgender and heterosexuals over LGBTQ+. These valuations, enshrined in law and custom, amplify the power of the advantaged and the advantages of the powerful, and continue to undercut our expressed ideals.

The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments of 1865-1870, the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment of 1913, the 19th Amendment of 1920, and civil rights legislation in the 1960s expanded voting rights. Yet, our laws and systems continue to protect privilege and maintain value gaps. White supremacist values and practices permeate the United States' 400-year history. They continue today through policies that disproportionately lower voter participation and reduce representation among peoples of color, people with low income, young adults, people with disabilities and other disadvantaged people. Such policies include denial of voting rights for people convicted of felonies, voter ID requirements, and restrictions on early voting opportunities. In addition, gerrymandering in certain states has limited the electoral power of people of color and of less powerful political parties. It can also move legislators further to the extremes, reducing their desire to cooperate or compromise.

The outsized influence of wealthy individuals and corporations on elections, always a corruption of democracy, has worsened in recent decades. The costs of campaigning in the United States have skyrocketed, increasing legislators' debt to large donors. This outsized impact of wealth among other factors has created a narrow two party system, excluding vibrant progressive,

socialist, and labor movements. Additionally, Supreme Court decisions struck down attempts to limit the influence of money in politics: *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) ruled that spending is a protected form of speech, and *Citizens United* (2010) ruled that because corporations are people, their campaign spending is protected free speech and may not be restricted. Fixing our democracy requires examining how structural racism, sexism, money, environmental exploitation, militarization, and other systemic forms of oppression contribute to accumulation of wealth and consolidation of political power.

At the Association level, Unitarian Universalists also fall short of democratic ideals. The cost and time required to participate in our annual General Assembly exclude many from association-level decision-making. Our business procedures sometimes limit important conversations. The formal procedures often feel cumbersome; they are rooted in parliamentary rules that reflect a competitive orientation. Informal procedures have not addressed the problem. Excluding people of color from the creation of processes has distanced them from engagement. Informal systems rely on organizational cultures that not everyone has knowledge of or is able to access. Congregations vary in governance and decision-making processes. Our organizational styles vary from leader-oriented with defined hierarchies to more collaborative leadership with changing roles. At both the Associational and congregational levels, realizing true democracy requires expanding to include more diverse voices.

### **Theological/Religious Grounding**

*“We the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association covenant to affirm and promote . . . the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.”*

Two phrases here warrant attention: *Within our congregations*. The 1648 Cambridge Platform laid the foundation for Unitarian Universalist polity, establishing the autonomy of congregations. Congregational polity puts democratic practice at the center of governance. Our shared religious life depends on honoring every member’s voice and vote.

*Society at large*. Our religious commitments extend beyond our congregations’ walls. Excluding our neighbors’ voices impoverishes our souls; hearing all voices expands our spirits. Our faith calls us to live into the requirements of real democracy.

Our theology locates healing and wholeness in relationship, in contrast to a theology of sin that sees human nature as fundamentally corrupt. Our tradition locates hope for addressing social problems not in the suppression of basic sinfulness but in being open to diverse perspectives and building connections. Another source of our religious movement is the Protestant Reformation’s response to the corruption of a church that sold the promise of heaven for a price. Today we face the parallel corruption in which power, rather than heaven, is sold to those who meet the price.

### **Actions We Could Take**

Achieving the ideals of our faith related to democracy requires new approaches for mobilizing power and influence. This means engaging in radical truth-telling, intersectional organizing, and naming the forces that resist democratic reforms. A truly inclusive democracy challenges the exploitation of peoples and natural resources by corporate and political power. Our collective future calls us to participate in what Unitarian theologian Rev. James Luther Adams named “the prophethood of all believers.”

Individuals can take actions such as the following:

**General Assembly 2019 – Spokane, WA**  
DRAFT Business Meeting Minutes

- Conduct a personal democracy audit. Review relationships with systems that perpetuate consolidation of wealth and power, i.e. investment choices.
- Seek out varied and reliable sources of information.
- Work with community leaders to do participatory budgeting in all levels of local and state government.
- Work with community leaders or organizations or assemblies to craft electoral platforms and run supportive candidates.
- Support electoral justice campaigns led by community organizers of color with voter registration, particularly among underrepresented populations.
- Contribute time, talent, and money to democracy-building efforts and to non-profit civic organizations that represent economically oppressed or marginalized people.
- Direct action toward democratic reforms and integrity through rallies, community organized events, advocacy and contacts with elected officials. Specific goals include:
  - public financing of campaigns including independent and third-party candidates, elimination of corporate donation, and establishment of a small donor matching system;
  - expanding ballot access, i.e. early voting, access to polling places, same day voter registration, permanent mail ballot list, and automatic voter registration;
  - eliminating the electoral college;
  - ensuring voting integrity with paper ballot backups;
  - eliminating gerrymandering, partisan redistricting, and other forms of voter suppression;
  - allowing people with felony convictions to vote;
  - implementing ranked choice and/or proportional voting;
  - reinstating the 1965 Voting Rights Act provisions, and strengthening the Federal Elections Commission; and
  - amending the Constitution to overturn corporate constitutional rights and money as speech.

Congregations/covenanted communities can take actions such as the following:

- Conduct a congregational democracy audit that includes any practices that continue to sustain white privilege and income inequality. Take action to address findings.
- Organize action groups based on the needs of democratic reform and investigate how structural racism, sexism, classism, environmental degradation, and militarization have driven the accumulation of wealth and political power.
- Partner with other UU congregations and with other faith communities, non-profits, and unions to work on democratic reforms.
- Support the Declaration for American Democracy campaign for comprehensive federal and state democracy reform.
- Organize advocacy initiatives such as postcards, social media campaigns, rallies, sit-ins, petition drives, and other forms of direct action in support of democratic reforms.
- Sponsor educational forums about factors contributing to the corruption of democracy.
- As part of the offering or special collections, ask for funds to support democracy-strengthening efforts.
- Adopt resolutions supporting democratic reforms including overturning constitutional rights and money as speech.
- Collaborate with ongoing UU-related partnerships such as UUSJ's "Write Here! Write Now!" campaign for democracy reform.
- Include children and youth of the congregation in conversations and invite them to join

actions.

Clusters, districts, or state legislative ministries can take actions such as the following:

- Advocate for state level democracy reform legislation, voter rights, access, and participation as advocacy priorities.
- Create and publish report cards on state or local legislators' records on campaign financing and issues impacting voter rights, access, and participation.
- Host non-partisan forums that alert congregations and the public to issues related to democratic processes, and information about issues and candidates.
- Connect congregations that are advocating for democratic reform at the state, local or national level.
- Use a variety of advocacy tools including media communications, social media, and meetings with legislators to advocate for issues such as voting rights for people with felony convictions, campaign finance reform, and election security.
- Study gerrymandering issues within the state and advise advocates about recommended actions to ensure fair representation.
- Monitor and work to prevent privatization efforts and insist on accountability from existing contractors that provide services, such as, private prisons, schools, and “welfare to work” programs.
- Support efforts to end the Electoral College and in the interim urge states to allocate their electoral votes to the Presidential candidate who won the popular vote.

The UUA can take actions such as the following:

- Conduct periodic association-wide democracy audits that include any practices that continue to sustain any structures of oppression and disenfranchisement including white supremacy, ableism, sexism, and classism. Take action to address the findings.
- Provide for member congregations resources that promote effective democratic engagement.
- Actively explore opportunities for virtually engaging more Unitarian Universalists in the Association's governance.
- Continue refining the Association's collective democratic decision-making processes with tools such as ranked and proportional voting.
- Encourage leaders of the UUA and other faiths to join the Interfaith Caucus of Move to Amend <https://movetoamend.org/interfaith-caucus>.
- Invest in state legislative ministries and advocacy at the national level.
- Participate in the democracy-supporting movements such as WeDemandDemocracy.org.
- Participate in interfaith and multiracial coalitions and other social justice groups that work toward achieving democratic reforms.
- Follow the lead of communities of color advocacy and political action groups including the cultivation of candidates for elected office.
- Advocate for democratic reforms, including the limiting of money in politics and amending the constitution to eliminate corporate constitutional rights and money as speech.
- Advocate for the elimination of the Electoral College.
- Advocate for the protection of constitutional rights including the right to engage in humanitarian aid, to boycott and to divest.

Rev. Barbara Pescan expressed both our debt and our ongoing responsibility to preceding generations: “Because of those who came before, we are; in spite of their failings, we believe; because of, and in spite of the horizons of their vision, we, too, dream.” The Nation's founders pointed in the direction of a horizon they themselves could not see. It falls now to us to make

real the dream of democracy uncorrupted, a government truly of the people, by the people, and for the people.

### **Election Results**

The following individuals were elected in uncontested elections:

Board of Trustees: Suzanne Fast, Sherman Logan, Leslie MacFayden, Tom Schade

Commission on Appraisal: Victor Ashear, Madelyn Campbell, Rodney Lemery

Commission on Social Witness: Jessica Star Rockers, Pippin Whitaker

General Assembly Planning Committee: Thomas Earthman, India Harris, Maria McCabe, Nancy Reid-McKee

Nominating Committee: Randy Burnham, Amanda Weatherspoon, Xolani Kacela

---

### **Credentials Report**

The final credentials report of the Secretary of the Association, as corrected, was as follows: accredited and attending the 58th General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association were 917 on-site member delegates, 260 ministerial delegates, 39 religious educator delegates, three associate member delegates, ten delegates representing the Church of the Larger Fellowship (included in member delegate count), and 199 off-site delegates, for a total of 1418 delegates representing 507 congregations, fifty states, the District of Columbia, and Mexico.

Total on-site registration for the Assembly was 2582 including 107 youth. Total offsite attendance was 233 individuals from 36 states, D.C., and one Canadian province, including 159 member delegates, 31 minister delegates, and nine religious educator delegates. Forty-eight congregations registered only off-site delegates.

### **Closing**

The Assembly was adjourned *sine die* by Co-Moderators Williams and Greve at approximately 8:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 22, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Carey McDonald,  
Executive Vice President