

2023 Proposed Revision of Article II of the Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Context & Timeline

- The UUA Bylaws were adopted when the Universalist Church in America and the American Unitarian Association merged in 1961. Article II established vital characteristics of the new Unitarian Universalist Association and outlined the original 6 Principles that reflected its fundamental beliefs and aspirations. There were significant disagreements over content that nearly derailed the merger process. Article II must be reviewed at least every 15 years.
- In 1967, Section 4 was added to Article II, opposing discrimination and affirming inclusivity.
- Efforts to update the 6 Principles began in the 1970s, focusing initially on eliminating sexist language. The revised 7 Principles and original 5 Sources were adopted at General Assembly (GA) in 1985 with wide popular support.
- A 6th Source, Earth-centered spirituality, was added in 1995 at GA.
- An Article II Study Commission formed in 2006 but delegates rejected its revisions at GA in 2009.
- In 2013, at GA, the Article II section on “Non-Discrimination” became “Inclusion.”
- Separately in 2013, an 8th Principle was drafted centering anti-racism in the UUA. In 2017 a Responsive Resolution passed at GA calling for a Study Commission to consider adding the 8th Principle to Article II.
- The current Article II Study Commission started in 2019 and the Commission was launched in 2020, just as covid hit. Its work period was extended with the final report due in 2023, rather than in 2022.
- The proposed Article II revision will be considered at General Assembly in Pittsburgh in June, 2023 and voted on by delegated representing UU congregations from across the country.
- If the Article II revisions are approved by a majority of delegates voting on it in 2023, it will be stand for a final approval at General Assembly in 2024.
- If approved at the 2024 General Assembly by a majority of delegates, the proposed Article II revision would replace the current Article II in the UUA Bylaws.

Underlined language indicates change

Current Article II	Proposed Revision of Article II
<p>Section C-2.2. Purposes.</p> <p>The Unitarian Universalist Association shall devote its resources to and exercise its corporate powers for religious, educational and humanitarian purposes. The primary purpose of the Association is to serve the needs of its member congregations, organize new congregations, extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalist institutions and implement its principles.</p>	<p>Section C-2.1. Purposes.</p> <p>The Unitarian Universalist Association <u>will</u> devote its resources to and <u>use its organizational</u> powers for religious, educational, and humanitarian purposes. Its primary purposes are to <u>assist congregations in their vital ministries, support and train leaders both lay and professional, to foster lifelong faith formation, to heal historic injustices, and to advance our Unitarian Universalist values in the world.</u></p> <p><u>The purpose of the Unitarian Universalist Association is to actively engage its members in the transformation of the world through liberating Love.</u></p>

Current Article II	Proposed Revision of Article II
<p>Section C-2.1. Principles.</p> <p>We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote</p> <p>The inherent worth and dignity of every person;</p> <p>Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;</p> <p>Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;</p> <p>A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;</p> <p>The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;</p> <p>The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;</p> <p>Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.</p>	<p>Section C-2.2. Values and Covenant. <u>[ALL LANGUAGE NEW]</u></p> <p>As Unitarian Universalists, we covenant, congregation-to-congregation and through our association, to support and assist one another in our ministries. We draw from our heritages of freedom, reason, hope, and courage, building on the foundation of love.</p> <p>Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.</p> <p>Inseparable from one another, these shared values are:</p> <p>Interdependence. We honor the interdependent web of all existence. We covenant to cherish Earth and all beings by creating and nurturing relationships of care and respect. With humility and reverence, we acknowledge our place in the great web of life, and we work to repair harm and damaged relationships.</p> <p>Pluralism. We celebrate that we are all sacred beings diverse in culture, experience, and theology. We covenant to learn from one another in our free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We embrace our differences and commonalities with Love, curiosity, and respect.</p> <p>Justice. We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all thrive. We covenant to dismantle racism and all forms of systemic oppression. We support the use of inclusive democratic processes to make decisions.</p> <p>Transformation. We adapt to the changing world. We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically. Openness to change is fundamental to our Unitarian and Universalist heritages, never complete and never perfect.</p> <p>Generosity. We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope. We covenant to freely and compassionately share our faith, presence, and resources. Our generosity connects us to one another in relationships of interdependence and mutuality.</p> <p>Equity. We declare that every person has the right to flourish with inherent dignity and worthiness. We covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities.</p>

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

Section C-2.3. Inspirations
[ALL LANGUAGE NEW]

As Unitarian Universalists, we use, and are inspired by, sacred and secular understandings that help us to live into our values. We respect the histories, contexts and cultures in which they were created and are currently practiced.

Section C-2.3. Inclusion.

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We strive to be an association of congregations that truly welcome all persons and commit to structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation.

Section C-2.4. Inclusion.

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We strive to be an association of congregations that truly welcome all persons who share our values. We commit to being an association of congregations that empowers and enhances everyone's participation, especially those with historically marginalized identities.

Section C-2.5. Freedom of Belief.

Nothing herein shall be deemed to infringe upon the individual freedom of belief which is inherent in the Universalist and Unitarian heritages or to conflict with any statement of purpose, covenant, or bond of union used by any congregation unless such is used as a creedal test.

Section C-2.5. Freedom of belief.

Congregational freedom and the individual's right of conscience are central to our Unitarian Universalist heritage.

Congregations may establish statements of purpose, covenants, and bonds of union so long as they do not require that members adhere to a particular creed.