

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BELOVED COMMUNITY AND 8TH PRINCIPLE RESOLUTIONS

QUESTIONS ABOUT BOTH RESOLUTIONS:

Can't the Board adopt these resolutions without a congregational vote?

The UUCW Board endorsed both resolutions with the stipulation of adoption by a congregational vote. This is in keeping with UUCW Board policy that requires a congregational vote for taking a public stand on any social action issue. This policy, consistent with UUA recommendations, ensures the action has broad support in the congregation. While more focused on internal than external issues, these two resolutions overlap with our racial justice work in the larger community and will have an impact on the congregation as a whole. As a result, the Social Action Council and Board both feel that it is important for the congregation to vote on these resolutions.

Why are there two separation resolutions? What is the relationship between them?

These two resolutions are complementary to each other in that they both authorize UUCW to continue the process of anti-racism, anti-oppression work. One asks us to continue working to transform UUCW; the other helps move the UUA's internal anti-racism, anti-oppression work forward. Both are important.

Why is working on Internal changes at the UUA and UUCW important? Won't working internally take us away from the important work of making changes in our larger society?

A Lao-tse quote says, "If there is to be peace in the world... there must be peace in the home... there must be peace in the heart." So, if there is to be Beloved Community and social justice in the world there must be Beloved Community and social justice in the church home and heart.

Religious organizations like the UUA and UUCW are no different than other social institutions like schools, businesses, criminal justice, and government that have structures, policies, practices, and norms reflecting the dominant white superiority culture embedded in the United States since its founding. Many people of color and others marginalized by this culture, simply do not feel welcomed or represented in any of these institutions. As we work at UUCW and in the UUA to develop a more inclusive culture we will not ignore our efforts in the larger community. We will be "practicing what we preach" and learn new tools and valuable insights that we can all apply to any other institutions we are involved with.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE 8TH PRINCIPLE RESOLUTION:

Why do we need another principle to focus attention on anti-racism? Don't the current 7 Principles already commit us to this work?

The 8th principle was initiated by people of color within Unitarian Universalism because the first seven principles (codified in the 1980s) do not explicitly address anti-racism. As one of the authors said: "after working with congregations on these issues for over 15 years, I realized that a person can believe they are being a "good UU" and following the 7 Principles without thinking about or dealing with racism and other oppressions at the systemic level." When we are trying to change culturally entrenched attitudes and generations of habit and history, making our commitments direct and explicit is enormously helpful. The 8th principle asks us to act, to go beyond beliefs to practice/action. It asks us to hold ourselves accountable and to fulfill the potential of our existing principles.

What is the process of changing or adding to the UUA principles; and has it been done before?

The UU Principles were designed to be a living document not a fixed creed. As such, the UUA Bylaws provide a process for reviewing the principles every 15 years and for adopting a new principle between those reviews. After the formation of the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1961, there were originally 6 principles. The 7th principle was adopted in 1985.

Can we change the wording?

No, we cannot. At this early stage of adopting an 8th principle, congregations need to support the proposed resolution as it is written. The UUA By-Laws then provide a multi-year process for review and acceptance by the General Assembly, which may result in amended language.

In addition, the current wording was written by African American leadership in the UUA and endorsed by Black Lives of UU (BLUU) and DRUMM (Diverse Revolutionary UU Ministries). While it is phrased differently from the more vision-focused language of the other 7 principles, it was specifically worded to express the need for accountable action because the implicit language of dignity, respect, equity and inclusion in the current seven principles has not resulted in sustained and significant change towards anti-racism in the UUA or its congregations. In fact, since the late 1960's, the UUA has made many commitments to change without following through.

Also, in our journey of understanding white supremacy culture (which includes an emphasis on the perfectibility of the written word) we recommend releasing our desire to tinker with the 8th Principle's wording, and simply accept what UUs of color have said is needed, and the way it is being said.

Have other congregations already supported this resolution?

At this time 30 congregations in 11 states have supported the resolution. This surpasses the minimum needed to move it forward to the GA. But, as with any proposal, the more support the more likely the adoption.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COMMITMENT TO BELOVED COMMUNITY BY DISMANTLING WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE WITHIN UUCW RESOLUTION

Didn't we already pass a resolution like this? Why do we need another?

In Jan. 2016 we did pass a resolution to Support the Black Lives Matter Movement and to take public actions that demonstrate that support. The assumption in that vote was that the public actions would focus on supporting systemic change in the larger community. Since 2016, much has happened in the country and in our denomination that reveals the extent to which "white supremacy culture" is embedded in all social institutions, including our churches. UUs of color and local leaders of color we work with began to challenge the UUA and its congregations to "walk our talk" and confront the systemic racism and inequity within our own structures. This resolution formally commits UUCW to this new awareness that supporting Black Lives Matter requires us to work against racism in our own institutions as well as the institutions of the larger society.

Why are we using the words "white supremacy culture"? What do those words mean?

We use the words "white supremacy culture" because we need to understand that moving towards Beloved Community will not be accomplished only by making changes in our personal attitudes and behaviors towards one another. "White supremacy culture" refers to the structures, laws, etiquette,

language, media, art, and norms of our society that are privileging white people and marginalizing others – despite the beliefs/actions of individual people who behave in equitable and inclusive ways.

For those of us who identify as white, it has been easy to ignore or deny this systemic level of racism because we are immersed in it, benefit from it, and accept the cultural belief that everyone else can too. We tend to be isolated from the harmful effects of “white supremacy culture” that are experienced daily by those whose race, gender, sexual identity, religion/spirituality, ethnicity, ability, age, or other marginalized identity do not fit the “norm” in this country. In the last few months the COVID-19 crisis and cases of police violence towards Black people have revealed to white people what people with marginalized identities have known for generations: the massive inequalities between whites and marginalized people embedded in our health care, education, employment, and justice systems. Calls for systemic change led by marginalized people are becoming louder and more supported by people of all races. Only by uncovering, acknowledging, and changing this dominant culture of white supremacy and its harmful impacts can we hope to build a congregation and society of equity and justice.

What are some examples of type of changes we will see at UUCW if we pass these resolutions?

There is no manual for “dismantling white supremacy culture”, but there is guidance from the UUA, other congregations and institutions further along on this process, and resource materials developed by organizational consultants of color. For UUCW, it will be an on-going process of listening to, learning from, and following the leadership of those who are more negatively impacted by it, drawing on resource materials, and working together as church leaders and members to uncover and change internal barriers to equity and inclusion. We acknowledge that making these changes will not be fast, easy, or comfortable, but we believe that the outcomes will be creative, enriching and reflective of our highest values. Making a congregational commitment to embrace this process in an organized and accountable way is the first step.

Fortunately, we are not new to this process. Over the last 4 years, we have already been making changes in this direction that many of us have enthusiastically embraced. For example:

- More diversity in our pulpit guests, readings, and the types of music in worship services
- Conscious consideration of accessibility, inclusion, and diversity in our remodeling and redecorating
- Change in our Split the Plate policies to allow non-501c3 organizations to receive funds because grassroots organizations that work closely with marginalized communities may not have 501c3 status
- Review of personnel policies for diversity in recruitment and hiring and equity in employment practices
- Classes, discussions, and workshops on topics of systemic racism and institutional change.

As we move forward, we might see changes such as:

- Creation of an anti-racism team to help guide our work and to hold us accountable for progress.
- A review of the impact of our current practices and structures to help us identify and prioritize which ones are most in need of change.
- Training for leaders, members, and staff to further understanding of how to develop attitudes, behaviors, structures, and policies that reflect an equitable and inclusive organization.
- Discussion of racism and oppression becomes normal in all of our UUCW committees, teams, groups and activities and is not seen as distraction from “the real work.”
- Our Board, committees, and staff begin using a “lens of equity” when making decisions to ensure policies, programs and practices are culturally sensitive and inclusive.

- Working with the other local congregations in the Black Lives Matter to WI UU collaboration and our “accountability partners” in the community (like MICAH, SOPHIA, Program the Parks and Black Leaders Organizing) to consider how our UU churches might use our financial and facility resources and member time and talents to “repair” the harm of systemic racism.

If passed, how will this impact our congregation – will we lose members?

We are all at different places on our personal journeys of learning about racism in our society. Our hope is that with respectful and honest discussion, without shame or blame of anyone, all members will continue to learn and grow and find a home at UUCW. But some members who disagree may choose to leave. However, UU congregations have historically gained members, rather than lost them, when we have taken strong stands on justice issues.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS? ATTEND A ZOOM INFORMATION SESSIONS:

SESSION ONE: THURSDAY, OCT. 8TH, 7PM

SESSION TWO: WEDNESDAY, OCT 14TH, 7PM

REQUEST THE ZOOM LINK FROM vickib@uucw.org