

# A skeptic looks at Article II

Continuing the Conversation

By Rebecca A Pace

[RPUU.Fire@gmail.com](mailto:RPUU.Fire@gmail.com)

February 17, 2024



# Today's Outline

- Report of the UUA Commission on Institutional Change
- Challenges faced by the UUA
- Purposes and Accountability
- Break
- Inclusion and Freedom of Belief
- Amendments to the Proposal
- What you can do

# WHAT IS ARTICLE II OF THE UUA BYLAWS?

## Principles and Purposes

- includes Sources of our faith

## Additional Commitments

- Inclusion Clause
- Freedom of Belief Clause

### 1 ARTICLE I Name

#### 2 Section C-1.1. Name.

3 The name of this Association shall be Unitarian Universalist  
4 Association. It is the successor to the American Unitarian  
5 Association, which was founded in 1825 and incorporated in 1847,  
6 and the Universalist Church of America, which was founded in 1793  
7 and incorporated in 1866.

### 8 ARTICLE II Principles and Purposes

#### 9 Section C-2.1. Principles.

10 We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist  
11 Association, covenant to affirm and promote

12 • The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

13 • Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

14 • Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth  
15 in our congregations;

16 • A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

17 • The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process  
18 within our congregations and in society at large;

19 • The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;

20 • Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we  
21 are a part.

22 The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

23 • Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder,  
24 affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit  
25 and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

26 • Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to  
27 confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion  
28 and the transforming power of love;

29 • Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical  
30 and spiritual life;

31 • Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's  
32 love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;

#### 50 Section C-2.3. Inclusion.

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

#### 58 Section C-2.4. Freedom of Belief.

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

### 64 ARTICLE III Membership

#### 65 Section C-3.1. Member Congregations.

66 The Unitarian Universalist Association is a voluntary association of  
67 autonomous, self-governing member congregations, which have  
68 freely chosen to pursue common goals together.

#### 69 Section C-3.2. Congregational Polity.

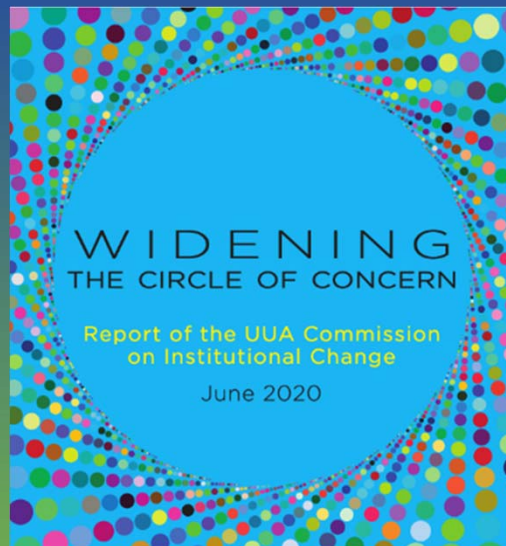
70 Nothing in these Bylaws shall be construed as infringing upon the  
71 congregational polity or internal self-government of member  
72 congregations, including the exclusive right of each such  
73 congregation to call and ordain its own minister or ministers, and to  
74 control its own property and funds. Any action by a member  
75 congregation called for by these Bylaws shall be deemed to have  
76 been taken if certified by an authorized officer of the congregation  
77 as having been duly and regularly taken in accordance with its own  
78 procedures and the laws which govern it.

#### 79 \*Section C-3.3. Admission to Membership.

80 A congregation becomes a member upon acceptance by the Board  
81 of Trustees of the Association of its written application for  
82 membership in which it subscribes to the principles of and pledges  
83 to support the Association. The Board of Trustees shall adopt rules  
84 to carry out the intent of this Section.

#### 85 Section 3.4. Church of the Larger Fellowship.

# REPORT OF THE UUA COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE



RCIC: VISIONS: Audit of the UUA pages 92-93. Pages 128, 145-147, 151-152, and many more

# FIVE YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. Support and Train Leaders
2. Advance UU Values in the World
3. Congregations and Communities (Identity Groups)
4. Governance
5. Theology

RCIC: pages 97, 171-187  
[https://www.uua.org/files/2023-08/2023\\_wcc\\_implementation\\_plan.pdf](https://www.uua.org/files/2023-08/2023_wcc_implementation_plan.pdf)

# DEFINITION OF A MINISTER

For the purposes of these Rules, the term “minister” applies to those persons: 1.) 2.) and 3.)

- whose work ... reflects commitments to anti-oppression, collective liberation, and ongoing learning.
- “collective liberation” – none are free until all are free

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/188Y4UzNLNTBdzkjYsDnYsRUpcMwOVeG6hs0cDsDNmZs/edit>

# Pulpit Supply

- Contact list of ministers available for one-time, as-needed service
- Must be a “Fellowshipped” or a member or UUMA, or
- We “would like to know more about your background and understanding of anti-racism, anti-oppression and multicultural work and current approaches to it.”
  - Please identify more work you’ve done in this area: trainings taken (like Jubilee 3, Beloved Conversations or Transgender Inclusion in Congregations) books read or other experiences such as the ones recommended by the UUA Mosaic system or the UUA LeaderLab Learning Center, connections or relationships built (such as with Allies for Racial Equity or Showing Up for Racial Justice if you identify as white, or Diverse Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries if you identify as a person of color) or work that you have undertaken on your own. You could also submit a ... piece of work that shows your perspective or angle.
- Our goal is to move ever closer to Beloved Community, and want to be sure that our recommended speakers are aware of and working on dismantling systems of oppression.”

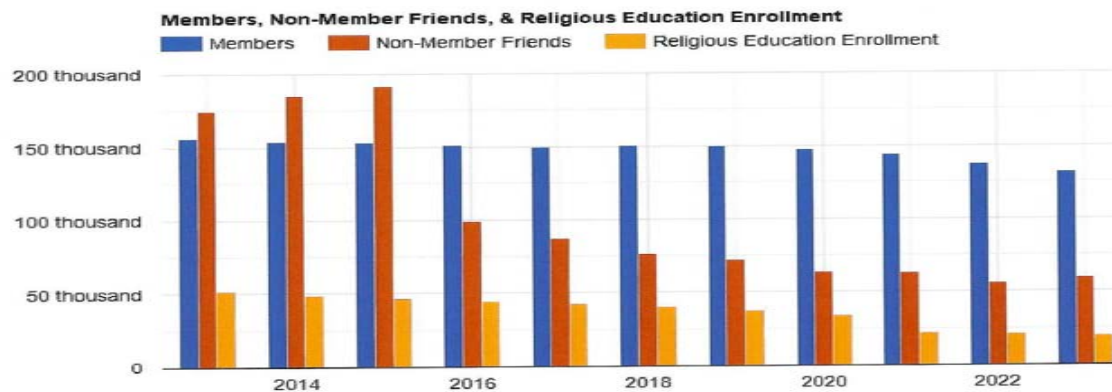
# PARTICIPATION

## Members, Non-Member Friends, & Religious Education Enrollment

Membership has been declining about 5% year for the past two years, which is up from the 1% we were seeing prior to the pandemic.

Non-member friends increased 6% over last year, but is still down 7% from 2020's pre pandemic numbers.

Religious Education Enrollment has been on the decline for the last decade with enrollment falling faster in the years after the pandemic.



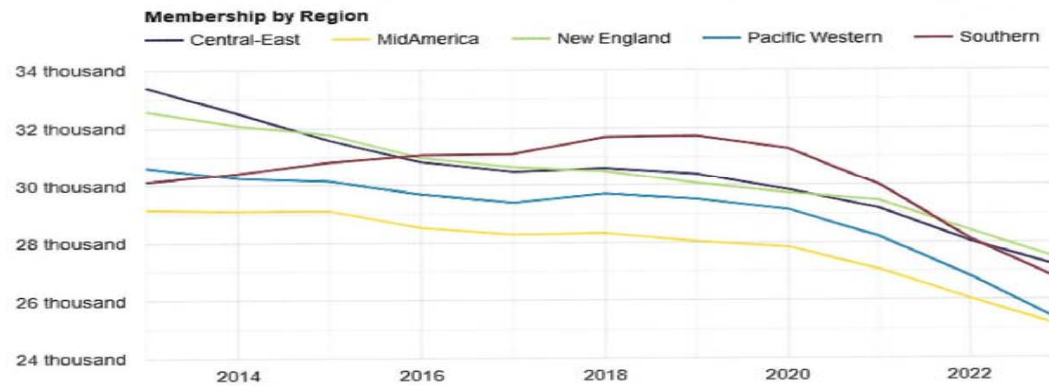


# MEMBERSHIP BY REGION

## Membership by Region

All 5 regions are seeing a decline in membership. Over the last year the national decline is 4% with the Southern Region seeing the largest decline of 5% followed by MidAmerica 4%, New England 4%, Pacific Western 6%, and Central East 3%.

The Southern Region was previously the only region with small increases to membership each year from 2013 to 2019.

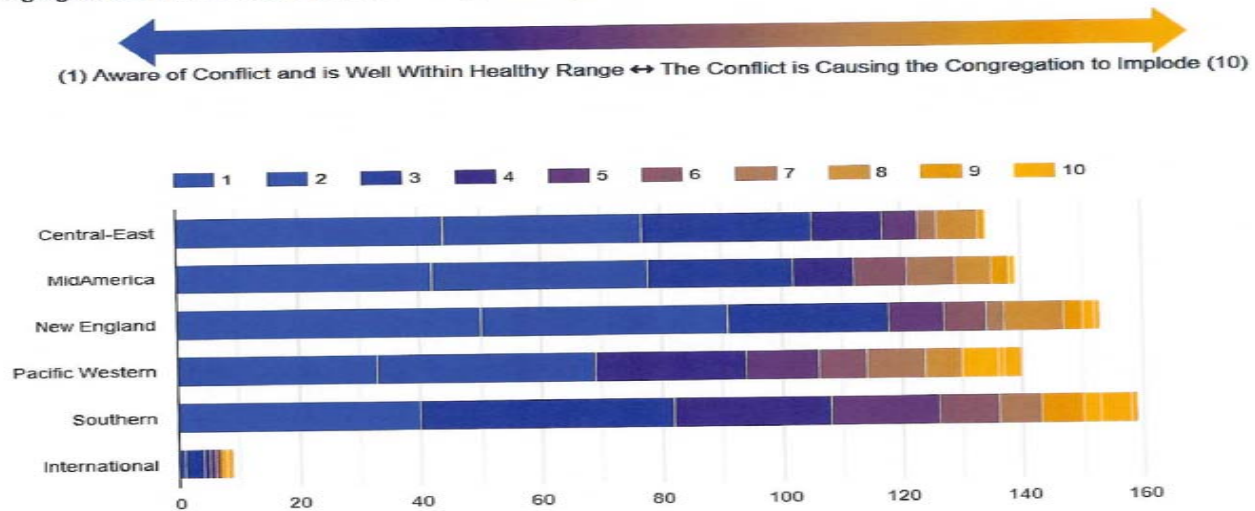


# CONFLICT

## Conflict in Congregations

2) On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the conflict in your congregation this past year?

734 congregations made one selection, and 15 skipped the question.



# ROUTINE BYLAWS REVIEW?

- Report by the Commission on Institutional Change
- Fifteen Year Review
  - Last review 2009
  - Principles – 1985
  - Roots – 1894

<https://savethe7principles.org/videos/genealogy-of-7-principles/>

## 1 ARTICLE I Name

### 2 Section C-1.1. Name.

3 The name of this Association shall be Unitarian Universalist  
4 Association. It is the successor to the American Unitarian  
5 Association, which was founded in 1825 and incorporated in 1847,  
6 and the Universalist Church of America, which was founded in 1793  
7 and incorporated in 1866.

## 8 ARTICLE II Principles and Purposes

### 9 Section C-2.1. Principles.

10 We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist  
11 Association, covenant to affirm and promote

12 • The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

13 • Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

14 • Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth  
15 in our congregations;

16 • A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

17 • The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process  
18 within our congregations and in society at large;

19 • The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;

20 • Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we  
21 are a part.

22 The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

23 • Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder,  
24 affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit  
25 and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

26 • Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to  
27 confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion  
28 and the transforming power of love;

29 • Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical  
30 and spiritual life;

31 • Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's  
32 love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;

### 50 Section C-2.3. Inclusion.

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

### 58 Section C-2.4. Freedom of Belief.

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

## 64 ARTICLE III Membership

### 65 Section C-3.1. Member Congregations.

66 The Unitarian Universalist Association is a voluntary association of  
67 autonomous, self-governing member congregations, which have  
68 freely chosen to pursue common goals together.

### 69 Section C-3.2. Congregational Polity.

70 Nothing in these Bylaws shall be construed as infringing upon the  
71 congregational polity or internal self-government of member  
72 congregations, including the exclusive right of each such  
73 congregation to call and ordain its own minister or ministers, and to  
74 control its own property and funds. Any action by a member  
75 congregation called for by these Bylaws shall be deemed to have  
76 been taken if certified by an authorized officer of the congregation  
77 as having been duly and regularly taken in accordance with its own  
78 procedures and the laws which govern it.

### 79 \*Section C-3.3. Admission to Membership.

80 A congregation becomes a member upon acceptance by the Board  
81 of Trustees of the Association of its written application for  
82 membership in which it subscribes to the principles of and pledges  
83 to support the Association. The Board of Trustees shall adopt rules  
84 to carry out the intent of this Section.

### 85 Section 3.4. Church of the Larger Fellowship.

# INPUT TO THE PROCESS



<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission/charge>



August 2020



Proposed  
Changes  
Article II

2020

2021

2022

2023



15 amendments  
moved forward



UUA Leadership urged a YES  
vote to  
"continue the conversation"

However,  
a Yes vote effectively placed  
the proposed Article II  
change on the agenda for  
GA 2024



UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
VIRTUAL GA • JUNE 20 - 23, 2024

Vote on Proposed  
Changes to Article II

YES



Conversation  
Ends!

NO



We truly **Continue the Conversation** on the  
character of UUism and Liberal Religion

# ENLIGHTENMENT AGE

## Western Enlightenment Language

*Characterized by:*

Political democracy, freedom, universal human rights, legal equality for all adult citizens, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, respect for evidence and reason

Opposes authoritarian movements of all types

# Proposed Changes

C-2.1

## Purposes

Gone: The primary purpose of the Association is to serve

Proposed: Its primary purposes are: to assist

Gone: Organize new congregations

Proposed: to support and encourage...new Unitarian Universalist communities

And to heal historic injustices

The UUA will actively engage its members in the transformation of the world through liberating Love.

# Power and Priorities

- 2020 Action of Immediate Witness
  - Amen to Uprising: A Commitment and Call to Action
    - Deactivate security systems that mobilize police
    - Join in calls for defunding of police
- Congregations may not see a duty toward the Association as a whole, especially when the Association is acting as a change agent. Therefore, a change process driven from the Association to the congregations may be doomed to fail because of the emphasis on congregational autonomy. (RCIC page 48)





# TO WHOM ARE WE ACCOUNTABLE?

Preamble to the Values: “We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values....”

- Current:
- Our own conscience as individuals  
(or to whomever our conscience calls us)
  - Judgement and correction are in our hands.

- Proposed: “One another”
- Judgement /correction are in the hands of others.

# Accountability Launch Team

- Ongoing independent body to identify systemic changes and monitor accountability
- January 2024 Team Members Named
- February 2024 Focus determined
  - Values and Resources (Finances aligned with Values)
  - UUA Bylaws Renewal Team

RCIC: Page 131

<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/board/packets>

# Bylaws Renewal Team

- 2022 Business Resolution: “These new bylaws should create a governance system that supports the UUA in accountably achieving its mission and aspirations consistent with our core values.”
- RCIC: “We need a congregational polity that serves us rather than blocks progress.” (page 37)
- RCIC: “A change process driven from the Association to the congregations may be doomed to fail because of the emphasis on congregational autonomy.” (page 48)
- Bylaws Renewal Team report due in 2025, Vote in 2026?

# Out-of-Covenant

- Disfellowshipped
- Censured
- Expelled
  - RCIC: Pages 58,62,74,VISIONS Audit 92-93
- We covenant “collectively”
- ...make sure we are accountable to communities rather than to individuals (RCIC: pages xxiii, 10, 13, 28, 32, 46, 72, 131)

# Covenants

“Covenant without consequences is not actually covenant”

“We have to be willing to say ‘no’ in UU spaces.”

To say “you are so out of Covenant, you cannot be back in this community until you’re will to do the work of repair.”

“We do not wallow in harm until you are” [ready to do the work].

“You can always come home, but you got to come correct.”

Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt, UUA President

General Assembly 2022, Workshop #409

“Accountability, Justice, and Wholeness”

# Diversity Questionnaire

- Of your congregation's members and non-member friends, what percentage do you estimate identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, or queer (LGBTQ?)
- 2020/21: Congregations who do not want to provide this information may opt out by checking "We do not wish to provide this".
- 2023/24: Congregations who are unable to complete the diversity questionnaire or are opting out must provide a reason for doing so.

## **Current:**

### **Seventh Principle**

We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

## **Proposed Revision:**

### **Interdependence**

We honor the interdependent web of all existence. With reverence for the great web of life and with humility, we acknowledge our place in it.

We covenant to protect Earth and all beings from exploitation. We will create and nurture sustainable relationships of care and respect, mutuality and justice. We will work to repair harm and damaged relationships.



# Broken Trust

**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.

## Amendment 52 to Article II - Proposed by John Millspaugh

**Interdependence.** We honor the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

With humility and reverence, we covenant to ~~cherish~~ protect Earth and all beings ~~from exploitation, by~~ creating and nurturing sustainable relationships of ~~care, repair, mutuality, and respect~~ justice. ~~We acknowledge our place in the great web of life, and we work to repair harm and damaged relationships.~~

## **Proposed Revision:**

Interdependence.

We honor the interdependent web of all existence. With reverence for the great web of life and with humility, we acknowledge our place in it.

We covenant to protect Earth and all beings from exploitation. We will create and nurture sustainable relationships of care and respect, mutuality and justice. We will work to repair harm and damaged relationships.

Amendment #52 as passed : 78.4%

Interdependence.

We honor the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

With humility and reverence we covenant to protect Earth and all beings from exploitation creating and nurturing sustainable relationships of repair, mutuality, and justice. \_\_\_\_\_



August 2020



Proposed  
Changes  
Article II

2020

2021

2022

2023



15 amendments  
moved forward



UUA Leadership urged a YES  
vote to  
"continue the conversation"

However,  
a Yes vote effectively placed  
the proposed Article II  
change on the agenda for  
GA 2024



Vote on Proposed  
Changes to Article II

YES



Conversation  
Ends!

NO



We truly **Continue the Conversation** on the  
character of UUism and Liberal Religion

# SOURCES/INSPIRATIONS

Current: An incomplete list

Proposed: “Religious Ancestries”

# INCLUSION CLAUSE

Current: we strive to “truly welcome all persons”

Proposed: we strive to “truly welcome all persons  
who share our values”

# FREEDOM OF BELIEF CLAUSE

## Current:

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.

## Proposed:

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.

# Freedom of Belief



# Broken Trust

- Accountability Launch
- Single Candidate for President
- Amendment 52
- Misled with Vote Yes to continue the conversation
- Bylaws Renewal
- 2022 Delegates required at least 2 candidates
- Delegates vote ignored, again
- Vote No to continue the conversation





# Amendments to the Proposal

- Equity: Every person is inherently worthy
- Equity calls us to listen, understand respect, respond
- Peace as a UU Value
- Reason and the Responsible Search for Truth and Meaning

[uutheconversation.org/townhalls](http://uutheconversation.org/townhalls)  
And <https://discuss.uua.org>

# Multiracial Unity

Focus on Guilt-based approach to Anti-racism

Other concerns thru the lens of racism  
Climate change, Poverty, Healthcare

UUMUAC advises Vote No  
This will harm, rather than further, the cause

From aspiration to mandate  
From agape love to shaming and blaming  
Divides, does not unite



Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity  
Action Council ([uumuac.org](http://uumuac.org))



August 2020



Proposed  
Changes  
Article II

2020

2021

2022

2023



15 amendments  
moved forward



UUA Leadership urged a YES  
vote to  
"continue the conversation"

However,  
a Yes vote effectively placed  
the proposed Article II  
change on the agenda for  
GA 2024



UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
VIRTUAL GA • JUNE 20 - 23, 2024

Vote on Proposed  
Changes to Article II

YES



Conversation  
Ends!

NO



We truly **Continue the Conversation** on the  
character of UUism and Liberal Religion

# What you can do

- Get informed
  - UUtheconversation.org
  - Savethe7Principles.org
- Ask to be a delegate
  - Business only – no cost
  - On-line only – no travel
- Spread the word
  - Can stop with 33.34%
  - New informed delegates
- VOTE NO
  - Continue the Conversation
    - Robust, Open, and Honest
  - Undefined accountability
  - What does it mean to assist, not serve
  - Is UU a Spiritual home, or activist org
  - Only single method anti-racism?
  - Delegate vote ignored-twice!
  - Divisive, not unifying
  - Individual Freedom of Belief
  - Truly Inclusive