

What do we believe in common?

How Unitarians,
Universalists, and Unitarian
Universalists have answered
that question.

April 14, 2021



UU Falmouth

Your
sponsor!

Denominational Affairs Committee

- Ellen Germann
- Andrew Mark-Welch
- Larry Ladd (chair)

UU Falmouth



We are seeking, on Conrad Wright's
phrase:

**“A statement descriptive of the
prevailing consensus without being
limiting.”**





- Continually evolving.
- Individual freedom vs. corporate affirmations.
- Any statement requiring a vote was controversial.
- Wrestling with Christianity's position.
- The Seven Principles were the result of women seeking inclusion and the proposed Eighth Principles seeks to include people of color.
- The evolution continues.



What are the “Seven Principles”?



- [Article II of the bylaws](#) of the Unitarian Universalist Association.
- Adopted in 1985.
- Includes Section on 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.”





Proposed Eighth Principle

“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”

<https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/>





- Initiated in 2020 as a comprehensive approach to proposals to add an [8th Principle](#), addressing racism, and an amended 1st Principle, addressing non-human life.
- It has an [extensive website](#) on uua.org.
- For the 2022 General Assembly.



Belief Statements before Merger (pre-1961)

Unitarians

- American Unitarian Association (1825)
- National Conference of Unitarian & Other Christian Churches (1865)
- James Freeman Clarke (1886)
- Western Unitarian Conference (1887)
- Blake's covenant (1894) with Griswold Williams improvement (1933)
- UUA Commission of Appraisal (1936)
- A. Powell Davies (1947?)

Universalists

- Rule of Faith, Philadelphia Convention of Universalists (1790)
- Winchester Profession, New England Convention of Universalists (1803)
- Boston Declaration, Universalist General Convention (1899)
- Universalist Bond of Fellowship (1935)

Actual Statements are
in the Appendix



Transient

- Christianity as central.
- White male as central.
- Progress is linear and inevitable.

Permanent

- Universal teachings (from every tradition)
- Individual freedom of belief
- Community for the common good
- Democratic process
- Social responsibility



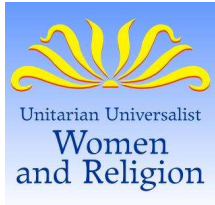
Unitarian Universalists (Bylaws 1961)

Emphasis
added

In accordance with these corporate purposes, the members of the UUA, dedicated to the principles of a free faith, unite in seeking:

- To strengthen one another in **a free and disciplined search for truth** as the foundation of our religious fellowship;
- To cherish and spread **the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized in the Judeo-Christian heritage as love to God and love to man;**
- To affirm, defend and promote **the supreme worth of every human personality, the dignity of man and the use of the democratic method** in human relationships;
- To implement our vision of one world by striving for a world community founded on the **ideals of brotherhood, justice and peace;**
- To serve the needs of member churches and fellowships, to organize new churches and fellowships, and to extend and strengthen liberal religion;
- To encourage cooperation with men of good will in every land.





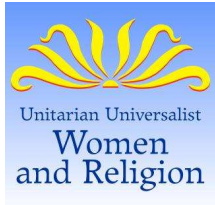
Women and Religion (1977)

Emphasis
added

- **WHEREAS, some models of human relationships arising from religious myths, historical materials, and other teachings still create and perpetuate attitudes that cause women everywhere to be overlooked and undervalued; and**
- **WHEREAS, children, youth and adults internalize and act on these cultural models, thereby tending to limit their sense of self-worth and dignity;**

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/thirty-years-feminist-transformation>





Women and Religion (1977)

Emphasis
added

- **“put traditional assumptions and language in perspective, and (b) avoid sexist assumptions and language in the future.”**
- **“examine sexism inherent in religious literature and institutions”**



Time for a rewrite! 1961 version was:



- Drafted by men, mostly ministers.
- Reflected patriarchal and hierarchal assumptions.
- Gave prominence to “Judeo-Christian heritage” without similar emphasis on other sources.
- Did not reference ecology or environmental connections.

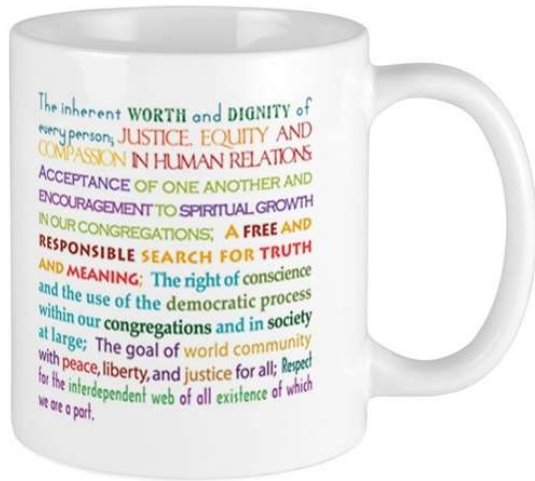


Chronology (1980 to 1985)

- Women and Religion Coalition (1980) puts proposed revision on 1981 General Assembly agenda. Generates significant discussion.
- 1981 GA establishes a seven person committee to propose revisions to Article 2. It was balanced by gender and by laity/ministers. One African American.
- Presented a “model amendment” to 1983 GA. To go to 1984 GA for preliminary approval and 1985 GA for final approval.
- In 1984 created separate “principles” and “sources.”
- Given final approval at 1985 GA.



Seven Principles (current)



- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The Seven Principles of Black Lives (2015)



- All Black lives matter.
- Love and self-love is practiced in every element of all we do.
- Spiritual growth is directly tied to our ability to embrace our whole selves.
- Experimentation and innovation must be built into our work.
- Most directly affected people are experts at their own lives.
- Thriving instead of Surviving
- 360 Degree Vision

Text explication here: <https://blacklivesuu.org/7-principles>

Video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ne6q18qkd4



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UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION

Article II Study Commission

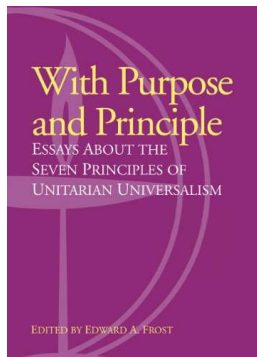


Additional Information

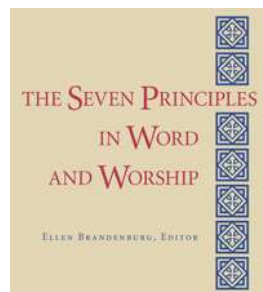
- Website of the Article II Study Commission:
<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission>
- Information about the proposed 8th Principle:
<https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/>
- UU “elevator speeches”:
<http://uuslo.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/To-the-Point-15-UU-Elevator-Speeches.pdf>



Books



- **With Purpose and Principle:** Essays About the Seven Principles of UUism (1998) – available on Amazon



- **The Seven Principles in Word and Worship** (2007) – available on Amazon or at InSpirit (UUA Bookstore)







Appendix: Past Statements



Unitarians

- American Unitarian Association (1825)
- National Conference of Unitarian & Other Christian Churches (1865)
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American Unitarian Association (1825)

- "to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity throughout our country."



National Conference of Unitarian Churches (1865)

Statement of Purpose

- Whereas, the great opportunities and demands for Christian labor and consecration at this time increase our sense of the obligations of all disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ to prove their faith by self-denial and by the devotion of their lives and possessions to the service of God and the building up of the Kingdom of his Son, therefore, the Christian churches of the Unitarian faith here assembled unite themselves in a common body to the end of reorganizing and stimulating the denomination with which they are connected to the largest exertions in the cause of Christian faith and work.



A Statement of Faith written by William Channing Gannett (1887)

Preamble

The Western Conference has neither the wish nor the right to bind a single member by declarations concerning fellowship or doctrine. Yet it thinks some practical good may be done by setting forth in simple words the things most commonly believed among us—the Statement being always open to re-statement and to be regarded only as the thought of the majority.

All names that divide "religion" are to us of little consequence compared with religion itself. Whoever loves Truth and lives the Good is, in a broad sense, of our religious fellowship; whoever loves the one or lives the other better than ourselves is our teacher, whatever church or age he may belong to.

The general faith is hinted well in words which several of our churches have adopted for their covenant: "In the freedom of the Truth and in the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man." It is hinted in such words as these: "Unitarianism is a religion of love to God and love to man." Because we have no "creed" which we impose as a condition of fellowship, specific statements of belief abound among us, always somewhat differing, always largely agreeing. One such we offer here:



A Statement of Faith written by William Channing Gannett (1887)

- We believe that to love the Good and to live the Good is the supreme thing in religion;
- We hold reason and conscience to be final authorities in matters of religious belief;
- We honor the Bible and all inspiring scripture, old and new;
- We revere Jesus, and all holy souls that have taught men truth and righteousness and love, as prophets of religion;
- We believe in the growing nobility of Man; We trust the unfolding Universe as beautiful, beneficent, unchanging Order; to know this order is truth; to obey it is right and liberty and stronger life;
- We believe that good and evil invariably carry their own recompense, no good thing being failure and no evil thing success; that heaven and hell are states of being; that no evil can befall the good man in either life or death; that all things work together for the victory of the Good;
- We believe that we ought to join hands and work to make the good things better and the worst good, counting nothing good for self that is not good for all;
- We believe that this self-forgetting, loyal life awakes in man the sense of union here and now with things eternal—the sense of deathlessness; and this sense is to us an earnest of the life to come;
- We worship One-in-All — that life whence suns and stars derive their orbits and the soul of man its Ought, — that Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, giving us power to become the sons of God, — that Love with which our souls commune.



James Freeman Clarke (1886)

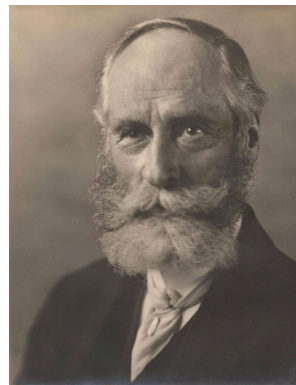
Five Points of Unitarian Faith

- "the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, the Leadership of Jesus, Salvation by Character, the continuity of human development in all worlds, or the progress of mankind onward and upward forever."



James Vila Blake (1894)

- Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law.
- United in the free quest of high values in religion and life,
- We covenant with one another:
- To dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another.



James Vila Blake



Arranged by L. Griswold Williams (1933)

- Love is the doctrine of this church,
- The quest of truth is its sacrament,
- And service is its prayer.
- To dwell together in peace,
- To seek knowledge in freedom,
- To serve human need,
- To the end that all souls shall grow into harmony with the Divine-
- Thus do we covenant with each other and with God.



AUA Commission of Appraisal (1936)

Unitarians Agree

- In affirming the primacy of the free exercise of intelligence in religion, believing that in the long run the safest guide to truth is human intelligence.
- In affirming the paramount importance for the individual of his own moral convictions and purpose.
- In affirming that the social implications of religion are indispensable to its vitality and validity, as expressed in terms of concern for social conditions and the struggle to create a just social order.
- In affirming the importance of the church as the organized expression of religion.
- In affirming the necessity for worship as a deliberate effort to strengthen the individual's grasp of the highest spiritual values of which he is aware.
- In affirming the rational nature of the universe.



AUA Commission of Appraisal (1936)

Unitarians Disagree

- As to the expediency of using the traditional vocabulary of religion, within a fellowship which includes many who have rejected the ideas commonly associated with such words as "God", "prayer", "communion", "salvation", "immortality".
- As to the wisdom of maintaining the definitely Christian tradition, and the traditional forms of Christian worship.
- As to the religious values of a purely naturalistic philosophy.
- As to the adequacy and competency of man to solve his own problems, both individual and social.
- As to the advisability of direct action by churches in the field of social and political problems.



A. Powell Davies (1947?)

- “Unitarian churches are founded upon individual freedom of belief, discipleship to advancing truth, the democratic process in human relations, universal brotherhood undivided by nation, race or creed, and allegiance to the cause of a united world community.”



Universalists



- Rule of Faith, Philadelphia Convention of Universalists (1790)
- Winchester Profession, New England Convention of Universalists (1803)
- Boston Declaration, Universalist General Convention (1899)
- Universalist Bond of Fellowship (1935)



Rule of Faith, Philadelphia Convention of Universalists (1790)

- Section 1. OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. We believe the scriptures of the old and new Testament to contain a revelation of the perfections and will of God, and the rule of faith and practice.
- Section 2. OF THE SUPREME BEING. We believe in one God, infinite in all his perfections; and that these perfections are all modifications of infinite, adorable, incomprehensible and unchangeable love.
- Section 3. OF THE MEDIATOR. We believe that there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; who by giving himself a ransom for all, hath redeemed them to God by his blood; and who, by the merit of his death and the efficacy of his spirit, will finally restore the whole human race to happiness.
- Section 4. OF THE HOLY GHOST. We believe in the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to make known to sinners the truth of this salvation, through the medium of the holy scriptures, and to reconcile the hearts of the children of men to God, and thereby dispose them to genuine holiness.
- Section 5. OF GOOD WORKS. We believe in the obligation of the moral law as to the rule of life; and we hold that the love of God manifested to man in a redeemer, is the best means of producing obedience to that law, and promoting a holy, active and useful life.



Winchester Profession, New England Convention of Universalists (1803)

- Article I. We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain a revelation of the character of God, and of the duty, interest and final destination of mankind.
- Article II. We believe that there is one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness.
- Article III. We believe that holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected, and that believers ought to be careful to maintain order and practise good works; for these things are good and profitable unto men.
- As we believe these to be truths which deeply concern the honor of the Divine character and the interests of man, we do hereby declare that we continue to consider ourselves, and our societies in fellowship, a Denomination of Christians, distinct and separate from those who do not approve the whole of this Profession of Belief, as expressed in the three above Articles.
- ...Yet while we, as an Association, adopt a general Profession of Belief and Plan of Church Government, we leave it to the several Churches and Societies, or to smaller associations of churches, if such should be formed, within the limits of our General Association, to continue or adopt within themselves, such more particular articles of faith, or modes of discipline, as may appear to them best under their particular circumstances, provided they do not disagree with our general Profession and Plan.
- And while we consider that every Church possesses within itself all the powers of self-government, we earnestly and affectionately recommend to every Church, Society, or particular Association, to exercise the spirit of Christian meekness and charity towards those who have different modes of faith or practice, that where the brethren cannot see alike, they may agree to differ; and let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.



Boston Declaration, Universalist General Convention (1899)

- The conditions of fellowship in this Convention shall be as follows:
The acceptance of the essential principles of the Universalist faith, to wit: The Universal Fatherhood of God; The Spiritual authority and leadership of His Son, Jesus Christ; The trustworthiness of the Bible as containing a revelation from God; The certainty of just retribution for sin; The final harmony of all souls with God.
- The Winchester Profession is commended as containing these principles, but neither this nor any other precise form of words is required as a condition of fellowship, provided always that the principles above stated be professed.



Universalist Bond of Fellowship (1935)

- The bond of fellowship in this Convention shall be a common purpose to do the will of God as Jesus revealed it and to co-operate in establishing the Kingdom for which he lived and died.
- To that end, we avow our faith in God as Eternal and All-Conquering Love, in the spiritual leadership in Jesus, in the supreme worth of every human personality, in the authority of truth known or to be known, and in the power of men of goodwill and sacrificial spirit to overcome evil and progressively establish the Kingdom of God.

