

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Peninsula

13136 Warwick Blvd, Newport News, VA 23602

Grow in Wonder – Connect In Love – Engage in Service – Inspire Generosity

FAQs — The Proposed 8th Principle: What a ‘yes’ vote does and does not mean, & How Principles are adopted within the UUA

Rebecca (“Bek”) Wheeler, President, UUFP

Dear friends,

I have learned that some of our members remain confused about what a ‘yes’ vote on the proposed 8th principle does and does not mean. Thus, I am answering some FAQs. I’m explaining what this vote means, does not mean, and how Principles are adopted within our UU Association. I hope this will bring you clarity about this important vote within our congregation.

If you have any lingering questions about this vote, please contact me by email (president@uufp.org) or text/phone (757-651-3659). I am truly glad to talk.

In community,
Bek Wheeler

First order of business: Can we change the wording of the Proposed 8th Principle?

Answer: No, because the Proposed 8th Principle has [a definition that is external to the UUFP](#). Furthermore,

- It is said that affirming the specific words and phrases affirms minority and marginalized peoples.
- It is said that challenging the specific words and phrases of the proposed principle insults and demeans minority and marginalized peoples.

Here’s the motion to come before UUFP on Sunday, June 5, 2022:

“Should the UUFP affirm and promote the proposed 8th Principle?”

What a ‘no’ vote means:

- You do not believe the UUFP should affirm and promote the proposed 8th Principle as written, for any number of diverse reasons.
- You may vote ‘no’ and still be committed to anti-racism in both thought and action.

What a ‘yes’ vote means:

- You affirm that UUFP joins the, currently, approximately 17.5% of congregations declaring their commitment to anti-racism through that statement.
- You affirm and promote the proposed principle as written in 2013 and agreed upon by grass-roots groups within Unitarian Universalism — [the 8th Principle Group](#), the Black Lives of UU and others.

What a ‘yes’ vote does NOT mean:

- A ‘yes’ vote does **not** mean that you are “adopting” an 8th Principle, either at UUFP or nationally. Congregations do not adopt Principles; delegates at the General Assembly do, no matter how this has been discussed at UUFP or elsewhere. As a member congregation of the UUA, our covenant with other congregations includes the Principles as enumerated in the UUA bylaws. We cannot add a Principle to the UUA’s bylaws by ourselves.
- A ‘yes’ vote does **not** mean that we add this “proposed 8th Principle” to our UUFP bylaws. That would be redundant. Further, amending our bylaws requires that we follow the multi-stage process prescribed in Article XI of our bylaws.

Wait, wait, I thought we were voting on whether to adopt an 8th Principle.

- There *is no actual 8th Principle*.
- There is the “Proposed 8th Principle,” articulating a detailed “accountable” commitment to anti-racism.
- Grassroots groups of Unitarian Universalists urge us to affirm anti-racism through the language of the proposed principle, and to ultimately include it in our denomination-wide UUA principles.

How do principles actually get adopted, really?

Our current Seven Principles are part of the covenant between UU congregations. They, along with sections on purpose, inclusion, and freedom of belief reside in what’s called [Article II of the UUA’s bylaws](#). Article II is routinely to be reviewed and revised every 15 years. We are behind. The last revision/adoption was 1987.

Following discussions at the 2017 General Assembly, the UUA charged the Article II Study Commission with a deep review and revision of the principles and purposes, along with the entirety of Article II.

*The UUA further charged the Commission to integrate love, anti-racism and Beloved Community into its review/revision and to produce a poetic, memorable set of principles. Since 2017, the commission has been working *hard* to envision what it means to be UU going forward in the 21st century.*

In June 2023, the Article II Study Commission will bring their proposed revision to the General Assembly for discussion among UUs in attendance and the first vote by official congregational delegates.

At the General Assembly in 2024, the delegates from each congregation in attendance will vote for the second time on the proposed new principles and purposes (Article II of our UUA by-laws).

In sum, the Article II Study Commission will propose a new draft of our principles and purposes. Then, delegates at two General Assemblies will vote on adoption. That, at the denominational level of the UUA, is how principles and other foundational statements are made or modified.

Note: The principles will *surely* change. They may look nothing like the current seven principles. There may be more or less than seven principles. They may not be enumerated in this manner. And there certainly will not be an 8th principle in the form proposed. The *ideas* of the proposed 8th Principle may be inside the UUA revised principles, or the ideas may be elsewhere — like in the *inclusion* statement of Article II. This is our current inclusion statement within Article II:

[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.

Thus, the “adopt the 8th Principle” movement and the Article II Commission review/revision are *two separate efforts*.

Question: So what *do* we at UUFP accomplish by voting “yes” at this point on the “proposed 8th Principle”?

Answer:

We signal that UUFP is “accountably” anti-racist.

We signal to the UUA and to other UU congregations that the Article II Study Commission should factor anti-racism into the revision of our UUA's principles and purposes.

We signal to the public visiting our website that anti-racism is a priority at UUFP.