

Article II Study Guide
October 2022

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Agenda

- Why have an Article II discussion?
- What is Article II?
- What's the background/history of the Article II sections?
- Review 2009 Article II Recommended Revisions
- Review Draft Language of Article II

Objectives of Discussion

Establish a baseline and common understanding to

- Review current contents of Article II
- Understand Changes made to Current Article II - 1985-2013
- Review 2009 Article II recommended changes
- Review the draft language for Article II

Extra Discussion Topics

- 1961 Principles and other Article Sections
- Congregation Autonomy and Congregational Polity

Why Have this Discussion?

At the June 2023 General Assembly, delegates will be required to vote on whether to advance changes to Article II to the 2024 General Assembly for adoption. This is an important vote that requires UUs to be knowledgeable of the contents of Article II and the implications of proposed changes.

This pending vote is due to a UUA bylaw provision that requires a review of Article II every 15 years. The UUA Board of Trustees appointed the Article II Study Commission to a two-year term in August 2020 with the freedom to “to revise, replace, or restructure” all sections of Article II.

Article XV Amendments; Section C-15.1 (c).6

- **If no study process of Article II has occurred for a period of fifteen years, the Board of Trustees shall appoint a commission to study Article II for not more than two years**
- and to recommend appropriate revisions, if any, thereto to the Board of Trustees for inclusion on the agenda of the next regular General Assembly.

What is Article II?

Article II contains the Principles, Sources, Purpose of the Association, Inclusion and Freedom of Belief statements. **Underlined text has been changed since 1987.**

Section C-2.1. Principles.

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

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

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

Section C-2.1. Sources.

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

1. 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.
2. Words and deeds of prophetic people (Changed from “men and women” in 2008) which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.
3. Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life.
4. Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves.
5. 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.
6. 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. (Added in 1995)

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-2.2. Purposes.

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.

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 welcomes all persons and commits to structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation. (New language added in 2013).

Section C-2.4. 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.

What's the background/history of the Article II sections?

Changes to Current Article II - 1985-2013

1985 Revision of Article II

In the 1980s a bottom-up initiative resulted in a significant update to our principles sponsored by the UU Women's Federation (UUWF). The UUWF was formed in 1963 from the merger of two historic women's groups, the Association of Universalist Women, founded in 1869, and the Alliance of Unitarian and Other Liberal Christian Women, founded in 1890.

The UUWF, aware that the U.S. had undergone a cultural shift in the use of language and the understanding of gender roles, advocated for further updates to our principles. A draft of the new principles was available by 1982, and votes were taken in 1984 and 1985 that finalized the process. A revised set of Seven Principles was adopted in 1985 along with the creation of Five Sources.

Comparison of 1985 to 1961 Principles

The 1985 Principles preserved many of the concepts found in our original 1961 Principles. See the underlined text below.

1961 Principles

1. To strengthen one another in a free and disciplined search for truth as the foundation of our religious fellowship. (Represented in Fourth Principle)
2. 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. (Represented in 1985 Sources)
3. 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. (Represented in First and Fifth Principles)
4. To implement our vision of one world by striving for a world community founded on ideals of brotherhood, justice, and peace. (Represented in the Sixth Principle)
5. To serve the needs of member churches and fellowships, to organize new churches and fellowships, and to extend and strengthen liberal religion. (Represented in the Purpose of the Association)
6. To encourage cooperation with men of good will in every land. (Represented in the Sixth Principle)

1995 Sixth Source Added

In 1995, a sixth source was added, “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.”

2009 Article II Commission Revisions Rejected

In 2009 at the Salt Lake City General Convention, the first vote on new principles and sources was voted down. Article II changes were not advanced for adoption. For more details see the section entitled “2009 Article II Recommended Revisions.”

2013 Inclusion Statement Language Replaced

At the 2013 Louisville General Assembly, the Inclusion clause originally rejected in 2009 was resurrected and passed. The language of the Article II Inclusion clause was moved to Rule G-2.3. Non-discrimination.

2018 Gender-neutral Language Update

In 2008 at the Kansas City General Assembly the wording of the second source was adjusted, replacing “men and women” with “people” to reflect a more refined understanding of gender-neutral language.

2009 Article II Recommended Revisions

An Article II Study was conducted by the Committee on Appraisal (2007-2009) per the bylaw provision to review Article II every 15 years. Proposed revision of Article II was presented at General Assembly 2009.

The proposed changes were defeated. It is worth noting that the delegates at GA represented only a small percentage of UUs. Of the denomination’s then membership 164,684, only 1,159 UUs, less than 1% of the denomination’s members, were engaged in that decision. The final vote was 573 to 586. This General Assembly also voted for a new president of the Association. This same situation will occur in 2023.

Reflecting on the failure to advance their efforts on Article II, a Commission representative noted that unlike the 1985 changes, they did not have any grassroots support. “There was only the Bylaw section mandating review every fifteen years.”

Changes to Article II Submitted to Vote in 2009

RED CAPITIZED text indicates changes from current Article II text. *Purple italic* text is commentary.

ARTICLE II: Covenant

CHANGED FROM PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSE TO COVENANT.

Section C-2.1 Purposes.

Removed “*the primary purpose of the Association is to serve the needs of its member congregations, organize new congregations, extend, and strength Unitarian Universalist institutions. . .*”

This association of free yet interdependent congregations devotes its resources to and exercises its corporate powers for religious, educational, and humanitarian purposes. **IT SUPPORTS THE CREATION, VITALITY, AND GROWTH OF CONGREGATIONS THAT ASPIRE TO LIVE OUT THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PRINCIPLES. THROUGH PUBLIC WITNESS AND ADVOCACY, IT ADVANCES THE PRINCIPLES IN THE WORLD.**

Section C 2.2. Sources.

List of Six Sources replaced by narrative. In the 2009 GA discussion, opposition was expressed regarding this change. "Poetry lost." "Slap in the face to UU pagans."

Unitarian Universalism is rooted in two religious heritages. Both are grounded on thousands of years of Jewish and Christian teachings, traditions, and experiences. The Unitarian heritage has affirmed that we need not think alike to love alike and that God is one. The Universalist heritage has preached not hell but hope and courage, and the kindness and love of God. Contemporary Unitarian Universalists have reaped the benefits of a legacy of prophetic words and deeds.

Unitarian Universalism is not contained in any single book or creed. Its religious authority lies in the individual, nurtured and tested in the congregation and the wider world. As an evolving religion, it draws from the teachings, practices, and wisdom of the world's religions. Humanism, earth-centered spiritual traditions, and Eastern religions have served as vital sources. Unitarian Universalism has been influenced by mysticism, theism, skepticism, naturalism, and process thought as well as feminist and liberation theologies. It is informed by direct experiences of mystery and wonder, beauty and joy. It is enriched by the creative power of the arts, the guidance of reason, and the lessons of the sciences.

Grateful for the traditions that have strengthened our own, we seek to engage cultural and religious practices in ways that call us into right relationship with all.

Section C-2.3 Principles.

New opening language added. Wording of the Principles was reduced.

GRATEFUL FOR THE GIFT OF LIFE, WE COMMIT OURSELVES AS MEMBER CONGREGATIONS OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION TO EMBODY TOGETHER THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF LOVE AS we covenant to honor and uphold:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
2. Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth.
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
5. The right of conscience and the use of democratic processes.
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.
7. Reverence for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The concept of “interdependent” congregations is added. Also included is the concept of “forgiveness and reconciliation.”

AS FREE YET INTERDEPENDENT CONGREGATIONS, we enter into this covenant, pledging to one another our mutual trust and support. **CAPABLE OF BOTH GOOD AND EVIL, AT TIMES WE ARE IN NEED OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION. WHEN WE FALL SHORT OF LIVING UP TO THIS COVENANT, WE WILL BEGIN AGAIN IN LOVE, REPAIR THE RELATIONSHIP, AND RECOMMIT TO THE PROMISES WE HAVE MADE.**

Section C-2.4 Inclusion.

Existing Non-Discrimination language was replaced with Inclusion language. This language was later passed at the 2013 General Assembly.

SYSTEMS OF POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND OPPRESSION HAVE TRADITIONALLY CREATED BARRIERS FOR PERSONS AND GROUPS WITH PARTICULAR IDENTITIES, AGES, ABILITIES, AND HISTORIES. WE PLEDGE TO DO ALL WE CAN 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.

Original Non-Discrimination language.

The Association declares and affirms its special responsibility, and that of its member congregations and organizations, to promote the full participation of persons in all of its and their activities and in the full range of human endeavor without regard to racialized identity, ethnicity, gender expression, gender identity, sex, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, family and relationship structures, age, language, citizenship status, economic status, or national origin and without requiring adherence to any particular interpretation of religion or to any particular religious belief or creed.

Section C-2.5 Freedom of Belief.

New opening language replaced the concept of “individual freedom” with the concept of “congregational freedom.”

CONGREGATIONAL FREEDOM IS CENTRAL TO THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST HERITAGE. *Note: This observation regarding congregational freedom differs from the freedom belief statement in the 1961 principles . . . “individual freedom of belief which is inherent in the Universalist and Unitarian heritages.”*

CONGREGATIONS MAY ESTABLISH STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE, COVENANTS, AND BONDS OF UNION SO LONG AS THEY DO NOT REQUIRE A STATEMENT OF BELIEF

AS A CREEDAL TEST FOR MEMBERSHIP; NOR MAY THE ASSOCIATION EMPLOY SUCH A TEST FOR CONGREGATIONAL AFFILIATION.

Draft Language Article for II

UUA Board of Trustees Review

On the October 22, 2022 agenda of UUA Board of Trustees meeting was a review of draft language for Article II submitted by the Article II Study Commission. The Commission exercised the authority granted by the UUA Board in August 2020 to “revise, replace, or restructure” of Article II.

Summary of Changes

- Purpose of the Association: Replaced with new language.
- Principles: Eliminated. Replaced with value and covenant statements.
- Sources: Eliminated. Replaced with a narrative description of inspirations.
- Inclusion Statement: Unchanged.
- Freedom of Belief: Retained most of the original language, but an appended statement outlines how beliefs must be expressed.

Voting Schedule

At the June 2023 General Assembly, draft language approved by the UUA Board will be placed on the agenda for a vote. A simplified rendering of the voting process is if a majority vote is achieved in 2023, the revised language will be placed on 2024 General Assembly agenda, where a 2/3 vote is required to adopt the changes.

Submitted Draft Language for Article II

Section C-2.1. Purposes.

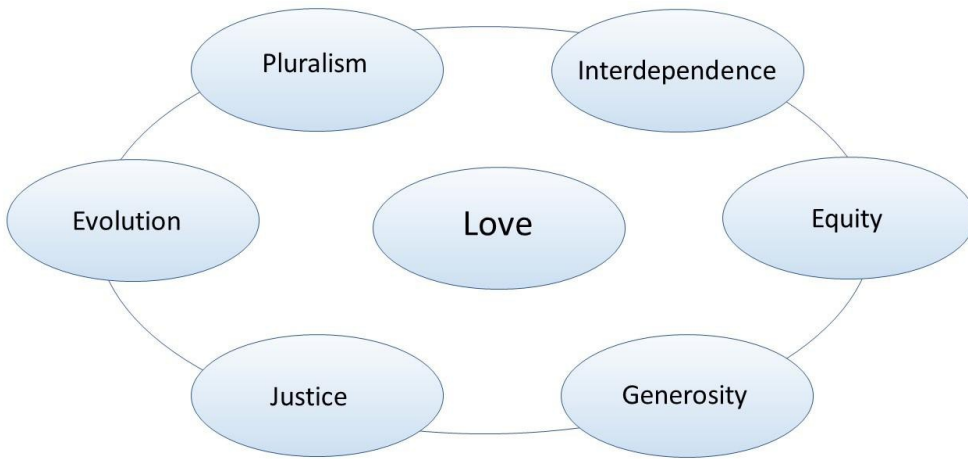
The Unitarian Universalist Association shall devote its resources to and exercise its organizational powers for religious, educational, and humanitarian purposes. Its primary purposes are to equip congregations for vital ministry, to support and train leaders both lay and professional, to heal historic inequities, and to advance our Unitarian Universalist values in the world. We will transform the world by our liberating love.

Section C-2.2. Values and Covenant.

Love is the enduring force that holds us together.

As Unitarian Universalists in religious community, we covenant, congregation-to-congregation and through our association, to support and assist each other in engaging our ministries. We draw from our heritages of freedom and reason, hope and courage, building on the foundation of love.

Love inspires and powers the passion with which we embody our values. Inseparable from one another, these shared values are:



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Justice. We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all people thrive. We covenant to dismantle racism and all forms of oppression within individuals and our institutions. We are accountable to each other for this work.

Generosity. We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope. We covenant to freely share our faith, presence, and resources. Compassionate generosity connects us one to another in relationships of mutuality.

Evolution. We adapt to the changing world. We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically. Evolution is fundamental to life and to our Unitarian Universalist heritages, never complete and never perfect.

Pluralism. We celebrate that we are all sacred beings diverse in culture, theology, and experience. We covenant to learn from one another and openly explore the depth and breadth of our many wisdoms. We embrace our differences and commonalities with love, curiosity, and respect.

Equity. We declare that every person has the right to flourish with dignity and worthiness. We covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain a fully inclusive and accessible community of communities.

Interdependence. We honor the sacred interdependent web of all existence. With humility we understand our place in the web. We covenant to care for and respect the earth and all beings by fostering relationships of mutuality. We work to repair the bonds we have broken.

Section C-2.3. Inspirations.

As Unitarian Universalists, we draw upon, and are inspired by, the full depth and breadth of sacred understandings, as experienced by humanity. Grateful for the religious lineages we inherit and the pluralism which enriches our faith, we are called to ever deepen and expand our wisdom.

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 structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation.

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 Unitarian Universalist heritages or to conflict with any statement of purpose,

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covenant, or bond of union used by any congregation unless such is used as a creedal test. In expressing our beliefs, we do so in the spirit of love, in ways that further Beloved Community.

Appendix

1961 Article II (at consolidation)

Section 1 – Purpose and Objectives

The Unitarian Universalist Association is an incorporated organization which by consolidation has succeeded to the charter powers of the American Unitarian Association, incorporated 1847, and the Universalist Church of America, incorporated 1866, by virtue of legislation enacted by The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the State of New York, respectively.

The Unitarian Universalist Association is empowered to, and shall devote its resources to and exercise its corporate powers for religious, educational, and charitable purposes. It is further empowered: to solicit and receive funds separately or with others to support its work; to make appropriations to carry on its work including appropriations to its associate members and to other organizations to enable them to assist the Unitarian Universalist Association in carrying on its work; and without limitation as to amount, to receive, hold, manage, invest, and reinvest and distribute any real and personal property for the foregoing purpose.

Section 2 - Principles

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

1. To strengthen one another in a free and disciplined search for truth as the foundation of our religious fellowship.
2. 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. (Changed to humankind in 1974)
3. 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. (Changed to humankind in 1974)
4. To implement our vision of one world by striving for a world community founded on ideals of brotherhood, justice, and peace.
5. To serve the needs of member churches and fellowships, to organize new churches and fellowships, and to extend and strengthen liberal religion.
6. To encourage cooperation with men of good will in every land.

Section 3 – Independence of Member Congregations

The Unitarian Universalist Association hereby declares and affirms the **independence and autonomy of local churches**, fellowships and associate members, and nothing in this

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Constitution or in the By-laws of the Association shall be deemed to infringe upon the congregation polity of churches and fellowships, nor upon the exercise of direct control by membership of associate member organizations, nor upon the **individual freedom of belief** which is inherent in the Universalists and Unitarian heritages.

No minister shall be required to subscribe to any particular interpretation of religion, or to any particular religious belief or creed to obtain and hold Fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Universalists Debate 1961 Principles

The greatest debate the 1961 Principles was led by the Universalists. They objected to the lack of emphasis placed on the Judeo-Christian tradition and the absence of wording such as “the truths taught by Jesus.” These references were alternately dropped, then added back, and then modified.

Changes Offered in 1962 and 1963

The Universalists continued the debate on the 1961 Principles at General Assemblies in 1962 and in 1963. Universalists offered to completely replace the Principles with the following text.

Uniting in the worship of God and the service of man in the promotion of the knowledge and interest of religion as taught by the master prophets of mankind we affirm our faith:

1. In God, as eternal and all-creative love.
2. In the spiritual leadership of Jesus, and the teachings of Buddha, Moses, Muhammed and all the God-men of all the ages.
3. In the supreme worth of every human personality.
4. In the authority of truth, known and to be known.
5. And in the power of men of goodwill and sacrificial spirit to overcome all evil and progressively establish the Kingdom of God.

At both General Assemblies the changes offered by the Universalists were defeated.

1974 Update to Gender-neutral Language

A small modification in 1974 to the wording of the 1961 Principles replacing male-centric with gender-neutral language (e.g., “man” to “humankind”)

Article III Membership (Current)

The language of Article III (below) is outside the scope of the Article II Study Commission. However, there is a potential for this language changing. At the 2022 General Assembly, delegates voted to give a UUA Board appointed committee authority to revise the UUA bylaws. The *Widening of the Circle of Concern* report (published 2020) questioned the value and continued reliance on this concept of congregation polity.

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Section C-3.1. Member Congregations.

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

Section C-3.2. Congregational Polity.

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