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UUA Embraces Change at General Assembly 2023

Delegates Vote to Advance Changes to Article II & Elect First Out Queer Individual & First Woman of Colour to be President

June 28, 2023

On June 22, 2023, the outgoing President of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), Susan Frederick-Gray, delivered her final report to members at General Assembly, the annual gathering where the UUA conducts business, gathers in community, explores the theological underpinnings of the UU faith, and emphasizes the Association's mission, values, and principles. In her speech, Frederick-Gray called on Unitarian Universalists to "get uncomfortable and innovative in the mess of change."

Delegates rose to the challenge by voting 86.3% in favour of advancing recommended changes to Article II of the UUA Bylaws—changes that include identifying six core values centred around "love" as "the enduring force that holds us together." (See [Appendix A.](#))

Article II, which contains the "Principles and Purposes" of the UUA, is the foundation for the work of the Association, covenanted communities, and member congregations, including 16 Canadian congregations. The last significant revision of Article II was in 1995 when a sixth source of the faith – earth-centered traditions – was added.

In the two years leading up to this historic vote, the Article II Study Commission engaged Unitarian Universalists (UUs) in the United States and, to a lesser extent, internationally, in passionate discussions about the proposed changes to Article II—and the questions they raise about how we define our shared faith. Members of the commission held a series of consultations to gain feedback and carefully considered what they learned.

CUC President (and Religious Educator) Kiersten Moore, who followed the consultations and subsequent vote closely, says: "The overwhelming support for the proposal reflects how thoughtful and collaborative the whole process has been."



Vyda Ng, the Executive Director of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) who was at General Assembly, agrees, adding that “a series of amendments to the wording of the proposed Article II revision had passed prior to the main vote. Delegates had the opportunity to speak to both the pro and con sides before they voted.”

Ng observed that “there was a sense of quiet celebration when the decision was announced, with acknowledgement that many UUs continue to be very attached to the principles and feel a deep sense of loss at this outcome. The UUA is entering a new phase with this decision.”

Over the next year, the Article II Study Commission will continue to consult with Unitarian Universalists. The final vote on the recommended changes to Article II will take place at the virtual GA in 2024.

“The CUC will continue to be guided by our eight Principles, although we will give careful consideration to how the UUA’s decision will impact resources and programming for Canadian UUs.” says Ng. “We will remain engaged with the conversations and with UUA leaders over the coming year.”

“Political borders are artificial,” adds Moore, “and nothing makes that clearer than the continuous flow of ideas and ideologies. We have work to do together, may we approach it with humility, compassion and with a willingness to lean into our tradition of transformation.”

In another historic vote, Rev. Dr. Sofía Betancourt was elected President of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) with the support of more than 2,300 UU delegates on June 25, 2023. Rev. Dr. Sofía Betancourt will be both the first out queer individual and the first woman of colour elected to the role. She succeeds the Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray, who was the first woman president of the UUA, and will begin her tenure on July 10th.

The Canadian Unitarian Council congratulates Rev. Dr. Sofía Betancourt. We look forward to working with her and share her commitment to “the work of radical inclusion, faithful witness, and the embrace of a wide range of voices and leaders for our faith.”



APPENDIX A:
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION
ARTICLE II
PURPOSES AND COVENANT

Section C-2.2. Values and Covenant.

As Unitarian Universalists, we covenant, congregation-to-congregation and through our association, to support and assist one another in our ministries. We draw from our heritages of freedom, reason, hope, and courage, building on the foundation of love. Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.

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Inseparable from one another, these shared values are:

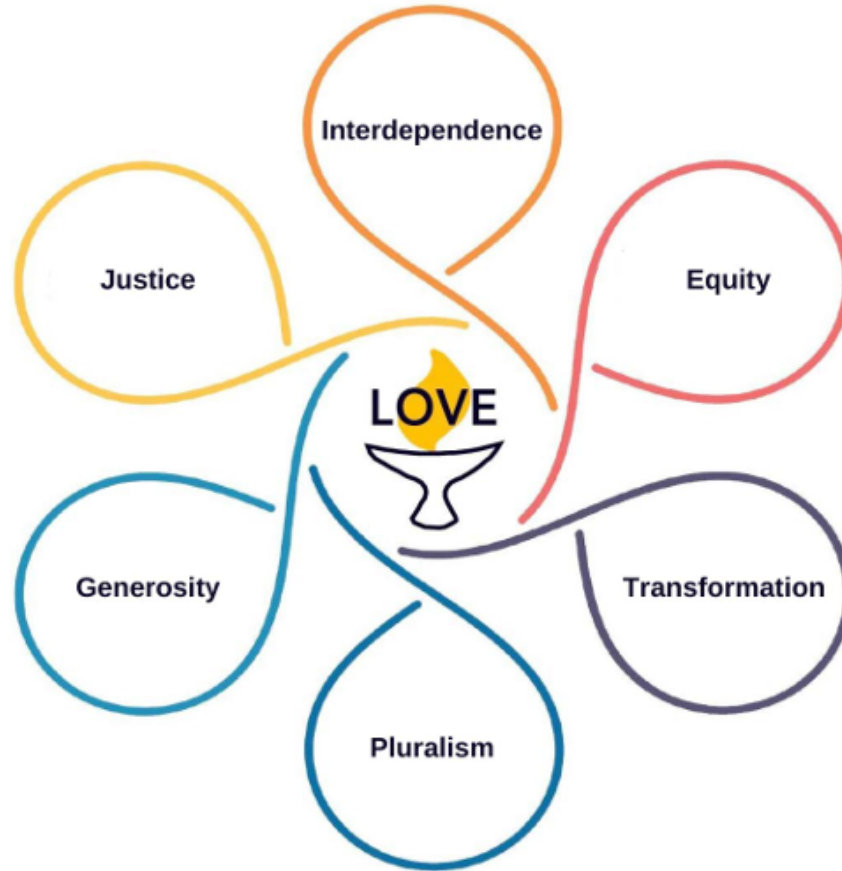


Image Description: This image is of a chalice with and overlay of the word love over the flame, with six outstretched arms that create a circle around each of the core values and form a six petal flower shape. Each arm is a different color and clockwise they are: Interdependence (Orange), Equity (Red), Transformation (Purple), Pluralism (Dark Blue), Generosity (Teal), and Justice (Yellow).



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.

Pluralism. We celebrate that we are all sacred beings diverse in culture, experience, and theology.

We covenant to learn from one another in our free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We embrace our differences and commonalities with Love, curiosity, and respect.

Justice. We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all thrive. We covenant to dismantle racism and all forms of systemic oppression. We support the use of inclusive democratic processes to make decisions.

Transformation. We adapt to the changing world.

We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically. Openness to change is fundamental to our Unitarian and Universalist heritages, never complete and never perfect.

Generosity. We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope.

We covenant to freely and compassionately share our faith, presence, and resources. Our generosity connects us to one another in relationships of interdependence and mutuality.

Equity. We declare that every person has the right to flourish with inherent dignity and worthiness.

We covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities.



Background

Resources from the Canadian Unitarian Council

- [The UUA is Doing What to the Principles and Sources?](#) - Kiersten Moore, February 2023

Resources from the Unitarian Universalist Association

- [Unitarian Universalists Elect Rev. Dr. Sofía Betancourt to Serve as President of the Unitarian Universalist Association at General Assembly \(June 26, 2023\)](#)
- [Statement from the UUA Board About Proposed Revisions to Article II \(June 12, 2023\)](#)
- [Article II Study Commission Information](#)
- [Article II Study Report](#)
 - Revised Article II is on page 19.