



Frequently Asked Questions about the 8th Principle at Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church

May 5, 2022

What is the 8th Principle?

The proposed 8th Principle was written in 2013 by Paula Cole Jones, an African American former staff member of what is now the UUA Central East Region, and Bruce Pollack-Johnson, a white racial justice leader at the UU Church of the Restoration in Philadelphia. The text reads:

*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.***

Why do we need the 8th Principle?

The 8th Principle was developed in response both to conditions in our own denomination and in the larger world. It is founded in the belief that UU congregations need a renewed commitment to addressing the effects of our country's history of systemic racism and other oppressions. The 8th Principle also calls for us to move our congregations and denomination away from a shared history as a largely white space that has not provided sufficient support for BIPOC clergy and members. In light of renewed focus on societal racism around the US, as well as declining membership in our congregations due, in part, to a church culture that is unwelcoming to many members of the BIPOC community, it is important for UU congregations to respond. Adopting the 8th Principle responds to these concerns with a call to accountable action.

The proposed 8th Principle is a step in the UUA's historical work combating racism dating back to the 1964 resolution on the Commission on Religion and Race. It is not meant as a political call to action, but rather a call to action to address the ways in which systems of oppression have worked within our faith communities and the UUA at large to stifle not only our congregation's growth but also our collective spiritual growth. At the 2020 General Assembly the *Widening the Circle of Concern* report found that anti-racism and anti-oppression are at the heart of our faith and addressing racism and other systems of oppression allows us to live into the faith and theology that we profess.

Don't the existing 7 Principles imply what is addressed in the 8th Principle?

The existing 7 Principles do imply dignity, respect, equity, and inclusion for all, but do not call for the *accountable action* that is necessary to provide a significant and sustained change towards anti-racism in the UUA and individual congregations. If the 7 Principles were adequate in addressing racism and other oppressions, we would not have such a disproportionately white faith community and BIPOC members of our community would feel a greater sense of belonging.

If I don't like some of the language in the 8th Principle, can it be changed for NUUC?

The NUUC 8th Principle Steering Committee is recommending that NUUC adopt the 8th Principle as currently written for three reasons:

- 1) The 8th Principle was written by BIPOC and allies within the UUA and the wording has been endorsed by Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU) and Diverse Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries (DRUMM).
- 2) Individual congregations have been asked by BLUU and DRUMM to adopt the 8th Principle as written to provide a clear message that there is significant support of the meaning of the 8th Principle. If every congregation wordsmithed the 8th Principle to their liking the grassroots support of the movement may become muddled.
- 3) The Article II Study Commission is in the process of reviewing the possible amendments to the UUA Bylaws, Principles and Purposes. The Commission's recommendations will be presented to the UUA Board in January of 2023 and then placed on the agenda for the 2023 GA where it will be given a first vote. This process will allow for many opportunities for wordsmithing. Rewriting the 8th Principle as an individual congregation would not be an efficient use of our limited resources.

We believe that it is important for us to reflect on what the adoption of the 8th Principle *means* to us as a community and work together through open and honest conversations to bring the 8th Principle into action at Neighborhood.

Has the UUA changed its principles before? What is the process to add in the 8th Principle?

The UU Principles were designed to be a living document that stays current to changes in society and to address our evolving values and needs within our denomination. The UUA Bylaws provide a process for reviewing the principles at least every 15 years and for adopting a new principle between those reviews (Article XV, Sections C-15.1 and C-15.2). There were originally 6 Principles After the formation of the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1961, there were originally 6 principles. The 7th principle was adopted in 1985. Proposals are considered and voted upon during a multi-year process, with plenty of time for review and discussion. Currently, the UUA has charged the Article II Study Commission with examining

More information about the Article II is available [here](#)

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What is *Beloved Community*?

Beloved Community happens when people of diverse racial, ethnic, educational, class, gender, abilities, sexual orientation backgrounds/identities come together in an interdependent relationship of love, mutual respect, and care that seeks to realize justice within the community and in the broader world.

What does it mean to be *accountable*?

White UUs hold themselves accountable to communities of color, to make sure whites do what they say they will do. In practice, that can mean having a People of Color Caucus within congregations, districts,

etc., to discern and express needs and concerns to the rest of the community. Black UUs hold each other accountable and help each other see and dismantle signs of internalized racism. We need an effective mechanism or structure to ensure this. Similarly for other oppressions.

Why single out racism?

At a global level, this would not necessarily make sense (for instance, the oppression of women is fundamental to poverty and lack of development in many areas), but in the USA, racism stands out. The two worst crises of the UUA (late 1960's and now) were both related to race. Racism in the US stems from chattel slavery, where people were uniquely legally treated as property that could be inherited, for something (skin color) they had no control over.

Have other congregations already supported this resolution?

Yes! As of April 2022, 160 congregations have adopted the 8th Principle and expressed support for the 8th Principle to be adopted by the UUA. This is well above the 15 congregation minimum that was needed to move it forward to GA.

*adapted from www.8thprincipleuu.org,
<https://www.ruuuc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FAQ-for-8th-Principle-May-1-2021.pdf>, and
<https://www.uuchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FAQs-8th-Principle-7-14-2021.pdf>*