



The Joseph Priestley District of the Unitarian Universalist Association

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Principled Leadership

"8th Principle"

The congregations of the UUA affirm and promote:

Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by building a diverse multicultural Beloved Community that accountably dismantles racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

How do UU principles inform UU leaders? Are our expectations of UU leadership shaped by the UU principles? UU principles are central to UU community. The principles are our shared covenant. They frame the covenant we enter into each time we call a minister. They frame the covenant we enter into each time we elect someone new to the boards of our congregations. And they frame the covenant that we enter into when we hire a Director for Religious Education. The "Seven Principles" are foundational in shaping UU identity.

Members of the antiracist community in the JPD are promoting an 8th principle to anchor antiracism, anti-oppression and multicultural inclusion as a core spiritual value for Unitarian Universalists. The 8th principle is a covenant that many of us share and we want it to be shared by all UUs.

As a lifelong UU, a woman of color, and an institutional leader since 1997, the UU principles have a great deal of influence on my life and my work. They are beautiful and inspirational, but they fall short of ensuring that we can fulfill our calling as a pluralistic religious community.

The current UU principles were adopted by the General Assembly in 1985. UU women are credited with starting the process that transformed the language and understanding of UU guiding documents from being male-dominant to being inclusive ("How the UUA's Principles and Purposes Were Shaped and How They've Shaped Unitarian Universalism," Nov./Dec. 2000, UU World Magazine, www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/3643).

I believe if the principles had been written with the depth of understanding that we have gained since 1985, we

would have been more explicit about the Beloved Community and we as an association of congregations would be further along in building Dr. Martin Luther King's vision.

The principles as they stand now are universal and can be embraced by many diverse people. Inclusion is implied in each one, but interpretation through a limited cultural context can limit our vision and application of inclusion. Evidence of this can be seen in differing interpretations of the 7th principle: "We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." For some, the 7th principle's meaning is primarily environmentalism. For others, "interconnected web" isn't thought of without also thinking of multiracial, multicultural inclusion.

The 8th principle as stated above provides Unitarian Universalists with an unmistakable articulation of the spiritual value of the human family whole and reconciled. The multicultural Beloved Community would no longer be implied, it would be explicitly stated as part of our spiritual journey.

The first of our congregations to embrace the 8th principle is the UU Church of the Restoration, Philadelphia, PA.

We urge JPD congregations and organizations to adopt the 8th principle as a shared core value of who we are in the world.

If you are interested in learning more, drop me a line.

Respectfully submitted,
Paula Cole Jones 2013