

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS about the proposed 8th PRINCIPLE

1. What is the (proposed) 8th Principle?

"We 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."

There are currently 7 Principles codified in the UUA bylaws. The proposed 8th Principle began as a grassroots effort and has gained popularity since its inception. It has been adopted by 234 individual congregations (21 in the Southern Region) while awaiting consideration by the UUA.

2. What is Beloved Community?

Martin Luther King (MLK) popularized the term "Beloved Community" in his lifetime and gave it new meaning. His was a global vision, one in which all people could share in the wealth of the earth. One where poverty, hunger and homelessness would not be tolerated because international standards of human decency would not allow it.

8th Principle Beloved Community is represented by multiculturalism and helping "others" not out of altruism, but for our own sake, too. Again, in the words of MLK: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time, but if you have come here because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." (Read more [here](#)).

3. Who wrote the 8th Principle?

Paula Cole Jones, an African American and UUA Central East Regional Group Director of Racial & Social Justice, developed the idea of the 8th Principle and Beloved Community in collaboration with Bruce Pollack-Johnson, a white UU racial justice leader in Philadelphia. A first draft was produced in 2013. Together with a larger group of activists, they then worked to refine it, and in 2017 recommended that the UUA adopt it. (Read more [here](#)).

4. Why was the 8th Principle proposed?

Many feel the UUA and individual congregations have made significant progress on discrimination against women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and persons who are differently abled, but not enough is being done on issues of race and culture. Our largely white UU denomination has sometimes harmed or failed to act in ways that

Black, Indigenous, and other Persons of Color (BIPOC) friends, members and clergy perceive as welcoming or supportive.

Working to break down barriers and the cultural and societal systems in our country, community, and congregations that allow hatred and racism to perpetuate will promote spiritual wholeness and support the journey to build Beloved Community.

5. Isn't the 8th Principle already implied in the existing 7 Principles?

While the existing 7 Principles affirm and promote some of the same values necessary to accomplish it, they do not specifically call on us to change the organizational structures and systems that perpetuate the existence of racism and other oppressions in ourselves, our society, and our institutions today.

6. Can we change the language of the 8th Principle if we don't like the way it's phrased?

No. Given the support that the 8th Principle as written has received from BIPOC individuals and groups around the denomination, it would be disrespectful to wordsmith the language. Concern over the current language should not become an obstacle to adoption, it is important to support the spirit of the Principle.

7. How will the 8th Principle affect church operations and decision making?

Adoption of the 8th Principle will ask us to consider potential impacts on and the perceptions of BIPOC and other marginalized or oppressed groups, when we analyze problems, seek solutions, and define success---in the same way that we currently do, or aspire to do, with our existing 7 Principles. Our current church efforts at recycling, use of pronouns, and the land acknowledgment at the beginning of each service are examples of this.

8. Will adopting the 8th Principle require that we all become activists? Does our congregation then just become a social justice program?

No. The 8th Principle does not require each of us to become an activist by engaging in public protest or joining a social justice group. Some from our congregation may reach out to form partnerships in the larger community, while others may focus on looking within our church to examine how we truly create a more beloved community for all. And some may provide support from their armchair simply by gaining deeper understanding and showing solidarity.

9. Does the 8th Principle imply that we are racist?

No. The adoption of the 8th Principle does not imply we are racist. Instead, the principle will assist us to prevent, identify, confront, and root out racism in our daily lives, and in the lives of our congregation and community.

10. What does it mean to be accountable as stated in the 8th Principle?

Being accountable means that we will strive to do what we say we will do. This may be done in a variety of ways. Already, our church has made changes many of us have embraced, including bringing more diversity to our pulpit, services, guests, readings, and music. We have engaged in responsible social justice partnerships and outreach. We will continue to offer challenging educational programs on differing cultural norms, biases, and racial justice topics.

As we make the journey toward Beloved Community a part of our identity, the 8th Principle calls us to develop effective mechanisms for BIPOC and other marginalized or oppressed persons to express needs and concerns and be heard. Accountability is a process, and there will be mistakes as we learn and grow. Listening carefully to the perceptions of others will improve our efforts to welcome and empower BIPOC presence and participation in our church.

11. Why do congregations adopt the 8th Principle on their own? Why hasn't the UUA adopted it?

The 8th Principle began as a grassroots effort in 2013. In 2017 the former UU Church of the Restoration congregation in Philadelphia was the first to adopt it and recommended adoption by the UUA. Black Lives of Unitarian Universalists (BLUU) and Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUM) have also endorsed the 8th Principle and have advocated for formal adoption.

Changing the Principles at the UUA level is a democratic process and often lengthy. Unless there is overwhelming support for a specific change, it requires establishing a special Article II Study Commission and beginning a formal two-year process. (Learn more [here](#).) In March 2017 however, the Commission on Institutional Change was formed to address a controversy which broke out regarding the UUA's hiring practices and institutional racism, and the UUA Board determined it should wait until after a report was submitted before establishing an Article II Commission review process to consider any changes. The Commission on Institutional Change produced the "Widening the Circle of Concern" report in June 2020. (Read more [here](#).)

The delay in consideration of the 8th Principle by the UUA did not stop its progress, and since then many congregations have continued to pass the proposed 8th

Principle on their own, committing themselves to the journey toward spiritual wholeness, sooner rather than later.

12. Why consider adopting the 8th Principle now, since recent proposed changes to Article II may move us away from using the Principles to describe our covenant?

The proposed changes to Article II are built on the values and strengths of the 8th Principle movement. (Read more [here](#).) To adopt it now means that we will establish and preserve the intent of the 8th Principle in our covenant as a congregation now and continue its spirit and growth during the 2-year process of deliberations on Article II changes. The Principles will always remain part of our religious tradition and history, no matter how long it takes to adopt Article II, or what form or language our denominational covenant ultimately takes.

The 8th Principle validates our past efforts and generates new energy and focus that renew our commitment to love, anti-racism, and anti-oppression work. Today we watch state and national legislative bodies chip away at human rights by passing laws that ban books, erase Black history, affect the health and choices of women and immigrants, stigmatize LGBTQIA+ persons and punish parents who seek to provide their children with gender affirming healthcare. We see unremitting mass incarceration and police violence against people of color, unfavorable Supreme Court decisions on Voting Rights and Affirmative Action, and the election of political leaders and followers openly supporting white supremacists. Our faith calls us to take action to reverse these destructive trends now. We should not stop our efforts to approve the 8th Principle.

Reference List:

Unitarian Universalist Association

Uua.org

University Unitarian Church Seattle
[Church](#)

[Proposed 8th UU Principle – University Unitarian](#)

River of Grass UU Cong Ft Lauderdale

<https://riverofgrassuu.org/8thprinciple.html>