

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROPOSED 8TH UU PRINCIPLE

1) What is the proposed 8th UU Principle?

“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.”

2) Why is the 8th Principle being proposed?

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 dealing with the current effects of our country’s long history of systemic racism and other oppressions.
- To move our congregations away from our denominational history as a largely white congregation that has often not supported our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and other Persons of Color) clergy and members.

Our Unitarian Universalist church communities harm our BIPOC members and visitors by not recognizing and addressing smaller hurtful comments (often referred to as micro-aggressions), as well as by assuming that we have a common expectation about the culture of the church, one that is not welcoming to all.

3) Who wrote 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. You can read more about the development of the 8th Principle [here](#).

4) Isn’t the 8th Principle already implied in the existing 7 Principles?

Our existing 7 Principles *imply* this 8th Principle, but do not *explicitly* hold us accountable for working to address the systemic racism and other oppressions that permeate our society or for working to make our individual congregations and our association welcoming to BIPOC individuals. Without the 8th Principle our members can too easily believe they are good UUs without acting on these issues.

5) If UUC adopts the 8th Principle, does that mean that all UUC decisions will be made through a racial justice lens?

Yes, in the same sense that we currently do, or aspire to, make all UUC decisions in the light of our existing 7 Principles. All UU Principles are intended to guide our actions.

The 8th Principle is consistent with the direction the church is already taking. In 2020-2021 the UUC Board of Trustees adopted new Board Policies that include a process for identifying a short list of open questions about the church's future every year. ([Board Policies, I.E.](#)) For the 2021-2022 church year, one of these open questions is "how can UUC be a more anti-racist congregation?" The Board will be asking all UUC groups to consider this question for themselves.

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

The 8th Principle does not require each of us to become an activist by engaging in public protest or joining one of UUC's social justice groups. Just like the other 7 Principles, we each contemplate these and integrate them into our lives individually. Some from our congregation may form partnerships in the larger community, while others may focus on looking within UUC to examine how we truly create a more beloved community for all. And some may provide support from their armchair by gaining deeper understanding and showing solidarity.

We might consider how each of us interprets and lives out the other 7 Principles individually as we think about adopting another principle. At times, UUC groups or the congregation make decisions, prioritize resources, or develop relationships based on one of the 7 Principles. This will also occur if the 8th Principle is adopted. We may establish goals or priorities based upon any one of the Principles, including ways to confront racism within and beyond our UUC community.

7) Is the 8th Principle saying that we are racist?

No, the adoption 8th principle does not imply we are racist. Instead, the principle provides an aspirational goal that will assist us in recognizing racism and challenges us to prevent/confront/root out racism in our daily endeavors and in our congregational community.

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

To be accountable means we are subject to the obligation to report, explain, or justify something; we are responsible and answerable for the choices we make. This will require our community to review our current practices and structures to identify which are most in need of change that reflect a just, equitable, antiracist organization.

Because all organizations and churches are different, how we do this will manifest in a variety of ways. To help us begin we could list out how white culture shows up in UUC. In doing so, we would uncover unconscious biases that have become the norms and standards that make it difficult to welcome other cultural norms and standards.

For example, Earth Ministry has a native land acknowledgement guide, they pay Real Rent to the Duwamish, and encourage their community to learn about and acknowledge the Indigenous histories of the land they occupy. See Earth Ministry's JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion)

Commitments page at www.earthministry.org/native-land-acknowledgment-guide/ and www.realrentduwamish.org for more information.

9) Why are individual UU congregations adopting the 8th Principle, rather than working for adoption by the UUA?

The current effort to encourage congregations to adopt the 8th Principle is a grassroots movement. Leading BIPOC UU organizations such as Black Lives of Unitarian Universalists (BLUU) and Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM) have endorsed the 8th Principle. They encourage all Unitarian Universalists to advocate for the formal adoption of the 8th Principle by the UUA and many congregations around the U.S. have adopted or are currently considering the 8th Principle.

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.

10) Is the UUA asking individual congregations to adopt the 8th Principle? Is the UUA considering adopting the 8th Principle? If so, what is the process and how long will it take?

The UUA is not formally asking UU congregations to adopt the 8th Principle at this time, but they are currently engaged in a process of reviewing the 7 Principles that includes considering adding the 8th Principle.

The 7 Principles are included in [Article II](#) of the UUA bylaws, Principles, Purposes and Sources, so adopting the 8th Principle requires amending the bylaws. Article II is reviewed every 15 years. In accordance with the bylaws an [Article II Study Commission](#) was established in 2020 to engage in that review, which specifically includes considering the 8th Principle. The Commission's statement on the 8th Principle can be found [here](#).

Amendment of the Principles is governed by Article XV, Section C-15.1 (c) which requires establishment of a commission to engage in a two-year study process followed by approval of amendments at two successive General Assemblies. A proposal from the Commission is expected to come before the General Assembly in June 2023 for the first vote, with a second vote in June 2024.

11) If I don't like some of the language in the 8th Principle, can I propose amendments before UUC adopts it?

The UUC 8th Principle Process Team recommends that our church not engage in a redrafting or amendment process for three reasons. First, given the support that the 8th Principle as written has received from BIPOC individuals and groups around the denomination, it would be disrespectful of their efforts to wordsmith the language. Second, if concerns over the current language become an obstacle to adoption, we believe it is important to support the spirit of the Principle. Third, the language may be revised before the 8th Principle is adopted on a denomination-wide basis, so redrafting is not a productive use of our resources.