
Our Seven Principles: Change is in the Air

Wellspring Wednesday

with Rev. Kathleen C. Rolenz
Wednesday, February 8, 2023.



How Do You
Define a Non-
Creedal Faith?

Several iterations...



ARTICLE II STUDY REPORT

2021-2023



Prepared By
Article II Study Commission



Unitarian Universalism's attempt
to define itself

A Statement of Faith written by William Channing Gannett for the 1887 meeting of the Western Unitarian Conference in Chicago, adopted by a vote of 59 to 13.

- We believe that to love the Good and to live the Good is the supreme thing in religion;
- We hold reason and conscience to be final authorities in matters of religious belief;
- We honor the Bible and all inspiring scripture, old and new;
- We revere Jesus, and all holy souls that have taught men truth and righteousness and love, as prophets of religion;
- We believe in the growing nobility of Man; We trust the unfolding Universe as beautiful, beneficent, unchanging Order; to know this order is truth; to obey it is right and liberty and stronger life.

We believe that good and evil invariably carry their own recompense, no good thing being failure and no evil thing success; that heaven and hell are states of being; that no evil can befall the good man in either life or death; that all things work together for the victory of the Good;

We believe that we ought to join hands and work to make the good things better and the worst good, counting nothing good for self that is not good for all;

We believe that this self-forgetting, loyal life awakes in man the sense of union here and now with things eternal—the sense of deathlessness; and this sense is to us an earnest of the life to come;

We worship One-in-All — that life whence suns and stars derive their orbits and the soul of man its Ought, — that Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, giving us power to become the sons of God, — that Love with which our souls commune.

Original 1961 Article II Principles

In accordance with these corporate purposes, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Association, dedicated to the principles of a free faith, unite in seeking:

1. To strengthen one another in a free and disciplined search for truth as the foundation of our religious fellowship;
 2. To cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized in the Judeo-Christian heritage as love to God and love to man;
 3. To affirm, defend and promote the supreme worth of every human personality, the dignity of man, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships;
 4. To implement our vision of one world by striving for a world community founded on ideals of brotherhood, justice and peace;
 5. To serve the needs of member churches and fellowships, to organize new churches and fellowships, and to extend and strengthen liberal religion;
 6. To encourage cooperation with men of good will in every land.
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The Current UU Principles (1985-1986)

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;

Comparison of 1961 and 1985-6 Principles

1961 Principles

In accordance with these corporate purposes, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Association, dedicated to the principles of a free faith, unite in seeking:

1. To strengthen one another in a free and disciplined search for truth as the foundation of our religious fellowship;
2. To cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized in the Judeo-Christian heritage as love to God and love to man;
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5. To serve the needs of member churches and fellowships, to organize new churches and fellowships, and to extend and strengthen liberal religion;
6. To encourage cooperation with men of good will in every land.

1985-86 Principles (Current)

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The ideas in the second and fifth principles from 1961 are moved to other parts of Article II – #2 to the Sources (below the Principles) #5 to the Purposes

Proposed 8th Principle

“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.”

Without Reading them, what about
the UU Principles is most meaningful
or important to you?

inherit worth and dignity
justice and compassion
structure for community
ok as they are
structure for questions
personal truth
inherit worth of everyone
respecting options
dignity of every human
interconnectedness
shared values
reassuring of my values
easy to understand
interdependence
respect for all
earth-centered
integrity
inherent
welcoming
defining
fair
nature
look at big picture
acceptance respect
interconnected web
values
dignity
compassion
democratic
tolerance
realistic
interdependent web
all beliefs
caring
justice
sensible
repeatability
curiosity
brevity
love
depth
respect
responsible
love honor respect
reassuring
search for truth and mean
interdependent web of lif
search
web of life
value unity
community u
kindness
safe space
environment
complete
equal
core
community
cohesion
openness
trust
variety
covenanted agreement
specific
the fact that they exist
acceptance
financial management
democracy
administrative responsibi
worth
green
straightforward
web of existence
encompassing
community support ing peo
inclusive integrity
equality
truth
beliefs
recognition of world web
democracy inherent worth
do not mess with them

Changes to the 1985-1986 Article II Through the Years

**1995: Sixth Source added to the “Sources”
in the C-2.1 Principles Section**

Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions
which celebrate the sacred circle of life and
instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of

Changes to the 1985-1986 Article II Through the Years

2009: Changes Rejected

- **Purposes:** Change “the Unitarian Universalist Association” to “association of free yet interdependent congregations” and “serve the needs of its member congregations” to “supports the creation, vitality, and growth of Congregations.”
- **Sources:** Replace the bulleted list of sources with paragraphs explaining our two religious heritages of Unitarianism and Universalism and that, as an evolving religion, Unitarian Universalism draws from the world’s religions and names Humanism, earth-centered spiritual traditions, and Eastern religions, but leave out the verbiage describing their contributions.
- **Principles:** In the 5th Principle, drop everything after “democratic process.” In the 7th Principle, change “Respect for the interdependent web” to “Reverence for the interdependent web.”
- **Inclusion:** “Non-discrimination” changed to “Inclusion.” Change “persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories,” to “replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect.” [These were changed in 2013.]
- **Freedom of Belief:** Change “individual freedom of belief” to “congregational freedom.”

The vote was
573 to 586 !!

Changes to the 1985-1986 Article II Through the Years

2013: Some of the previously rejected changes in 2009 are made to the “Non-Discrimination” section, now titled “Inclusion”

“Non-discrimination” changed to “Inclusion.”

Change “persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories,” to “replace such barriers

Changes to the 1985-1986 Article II Through the Years

2017 Amendments both Pass and Fail

Failed: Change the first principle from “We covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of **all people**” to of “...**all beings.**”

Passed: Change one of the sources from “prophetic words and deeds of **men and women**” to “...**people.**”

Changes to the 1985-1986 Article II Through the Years

2017 Amendments both Pass and Fail

Failed: Change the first principle from “We covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of **all people**” to of “...**all beings.**”

Passed: Change one of the sources from “prophetic words and deeds of **men and women**” to “...**people.**”

Changes to the 1985-1986 Article II Through the Years

Recent Years: An 8th Principle has been suggested, and passed by individual congregations.

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

What is Article II?

Article II of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Bylaws, Principles and Purposes, is the foundation for all of the work of our UUA and its member congregations and covenanted communities. It is the covenant to which all of our congregations and covenanted communities pledge themselves when they become members of our UUA.



2023 Proposed Article II: Purposes and Covenant

We therefore charge this commission to root its work in Love as a principal guide in its work; attending particularly to the ways that we (and our root traditions) have understood and articulated Love, and how we have acted out of Love.

What Is Our Center?

LOVE

The “Sources” Compared with “Inspirations”

Current “Sources”

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision.

As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

Proposed “Inspirations”

As Unitarian Universalists, we use, and are inspired by, **sacred and secular understandings** that help us to live into our values. We respect the histories, contexts and cultures in which they were created and are currently practiced. These sources ground us and sustain us in ordinary, difficult, and joyous times. Grateful for the religious ancestries we inherit and the diversity which enriches our faith, we are called to ever deepen and expand our wisdom.

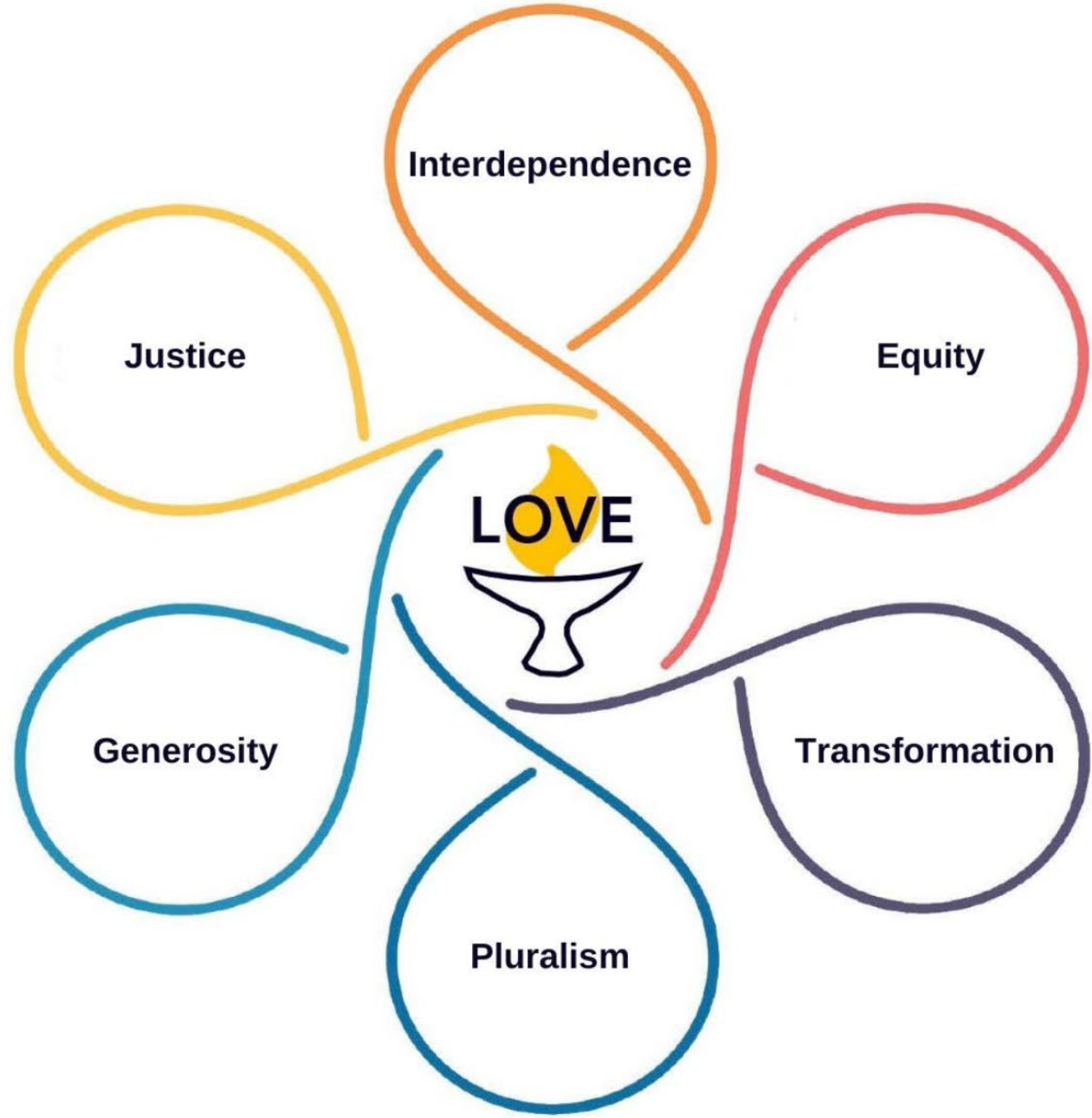
Proposed Values and Covenant (2023)

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.

Inseparable from one another, these shared values are:



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.

Comparing Principles with Values & Covenant

Principles

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

Values

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.

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**.

Other Sources in the Values & Covenant

Martin Luther King, Jr.

In a real sense all life is **inter-related**. All men are caught in an inescapable network of **mutuality**, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be... This is the **inter-related** structure of reality.

Values

Interdependence. We honor the sacred 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.

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**.

Interdependence.

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Comparing Principles with Values & Covenant

Principles

7. **Respect for the interdependent web of all existence** of which we are a part.

Values

Interdependence. We honor the sacred **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.

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.

Comparing Principles with Values & Covenant

Principles

Proposed 8th 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.

Values

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.

Other Sources in the Values & Covenant

James Luther Adams' Five Smooth Stones

JUSTICE: "Religious liberalism affirms the moral obligation to direct one's effort toward the establishment of a just and loving community. It is this which makes the role of the prophet central and indispensable in liberalism."

Values

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.

Comparing Principles with Values & Covenant

Principles

2. **Justice, equity** and **compassion** in human relations;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty and **justice** for all;

Values

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.

Comparing Principles with Values & Covenant

Principles

5. The **right of conscience** and the **use of the democratic process** within our congregations and in society at large;

Values

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.

Right of Conscience appears in the later section “C-2.5 Freedom of Belief”

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.

Other Sources in the Values & Covenant

**James Luther Adams'
Five Smooth Stones**

"Religious liberalism depends on the principle that 'revelation' is continuous."

Values

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.

Other Sources in the Values & Covenant

Lewis Fisher, "Which Way"

"Universalists are often asked to tell where they stand. The only true answer to give to this question is that we do not stand at all, we move. "

Values

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.

Comparing Principles with Values & Covenant

Principles

3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

Values

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.

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.

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Comparing Principles with Values & Covenant

Principles

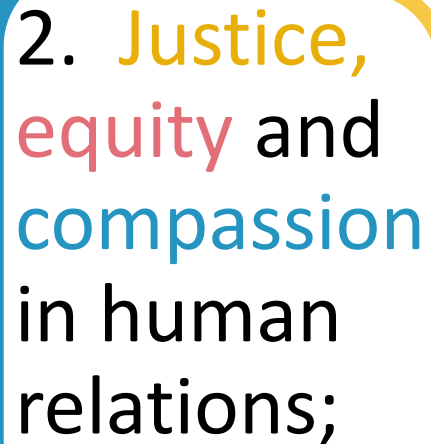
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

Values

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Comparing Principles with Values & Covenant

Principles



2. **Justice**, **equity** and **compassion** in human relations;

Values

Justice. We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all thrive...

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

Generosity. We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope.

We covenant to freely and **compassionately** share our faith, presence, and resources...

The UU Principles – Highlighting what remains in the proposed Article II.

1. **The inherent worth and dignity of every person;**
2. **Justice, equity** and **compassion** in human relations;
3. **Acceptance of one another** and encouragement to **spiritual growth** in our congregations;
4. **A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;**
5. The **right of conscience** and the **use of the democratic process** within our congregations and in society at large;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty and **justice** for all;
7. **Respect for the interdependent web of all existence** of which we are a part.
8. *Proposed 8th 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.

Right of Conscience appears in the later section "C-2.5 Freedom of Belief"

5. The **right of conscience** and the **use of the democratic process** within our congregations and in society at large;

Proposed 8th 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.

6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty and **justice** for all;

2. **Justice, equity** and **compassion** in human relations;

Interdependence

Justice

Generosity

LOVE

Pluralism

7. **Respect for the interdependent web of all existence** of which we are a part.

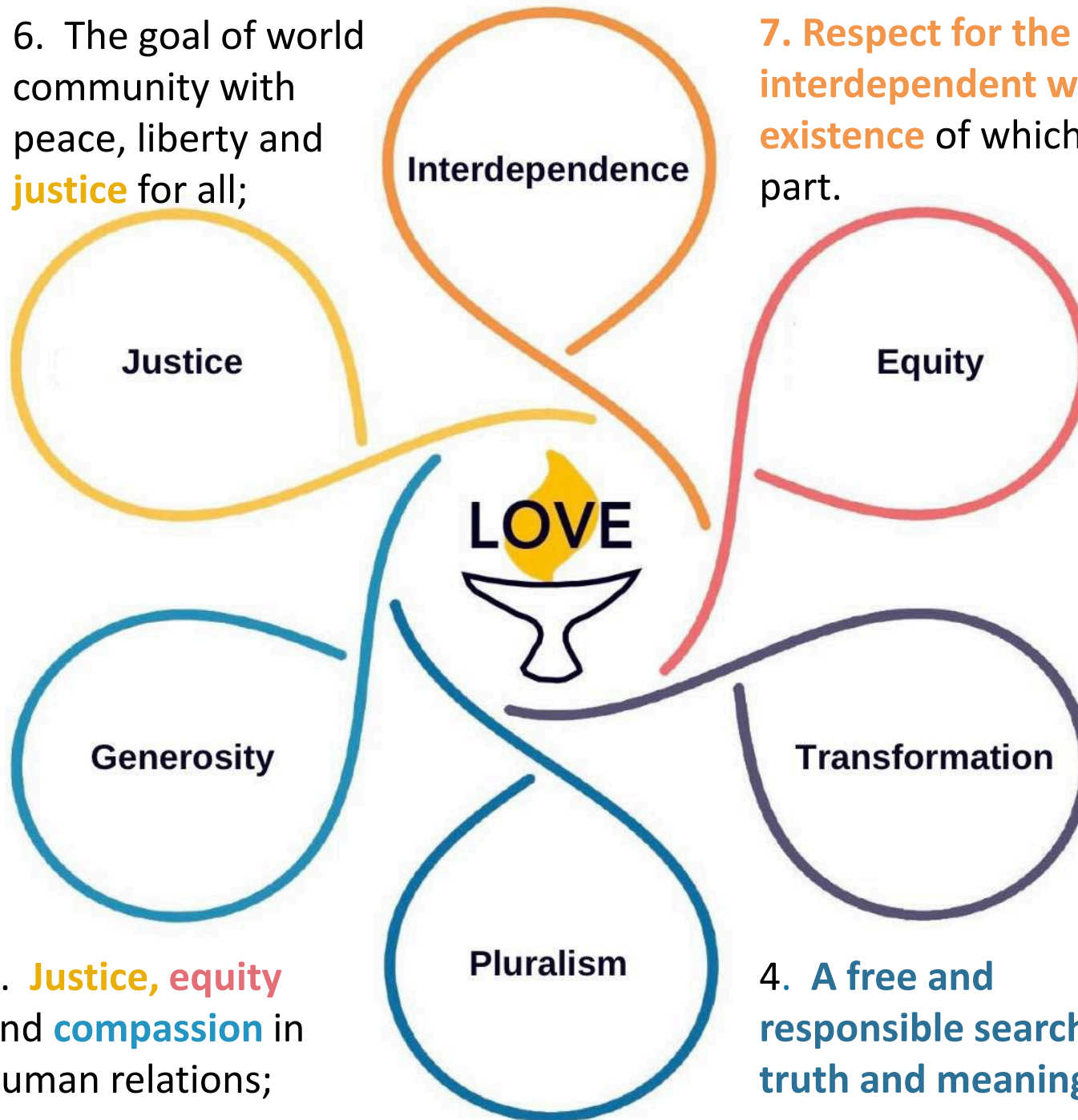
Equity

Transformation

4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

1. **The inherent worth and dignity of every person;**

3. **Acceptance of one another** and encouragement **to spiritual growth** in our congregations;



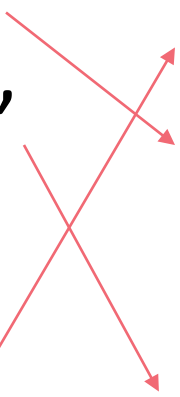
Article II is More than the Principles

Current Article II: Principles and Purposes

- Section C-2.1. Principles
 - Includes the “Sources” section
- Section C-2.2. Purposes
- Section C-2.3 Inclusion
- Section C-2.4 Freedom of Belief

Proposed Article II: Purposes and Covenant

- Section C-2.1. Purposes
- Section C-2.2. Values and Covenant
- Section C-2.3 Inspirations
- Section C-2.4 Inclusion
- Section C-2.5 Freedom of Belief



Purposes

Current Purposes

The Unitarian Universalist Association shall devote its resources to and exercise its corporate powers for religious, educational and humanitarian purposes. The primary purpose of the Association is to serve the needs of its member congregations, organize new congregations, extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalist institutions and implement its principles.

Proposed Purposes

The Unitarian Universalist Association will devote its resources to and use its organizational powers for religious, educational, and humanitarian purposes. Its primary purposes are to assist congregations in their vital ministries, support and train leaders both lay and professional, to foster lifelong faith formation, to heal historic injustices, and to advance our Unitarian Universalist values in the world. The purpose of the Unitarian Universalist Association is to actively engage its members in the transformation of the world through liberating Love.

Inclusion

Current Inclusion

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We strive to be an association of congregations that truly welcome all persons and commit to structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation.

Proposed Inclusion

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We strive to be an association of congregations that truly welcome all persons **who share our values**. We commit to being an association of congregations that empowers and enhances everyone's participation, **especially those with historically marginalized identities**.

Freedom of Belief

Current Freedom of Belief

Nothing herein shall be deemed to infringe upon the **individual freedom of belief** which is inherent in the Universalist and Unitarian heritages or to conflict with any statement of purpose, covenant, or bond of union used by any congregation unless such is used as a creedal test.

Proposed Freedom of Belief

Congregational freedom and the individual's right of conscience are central to our Unitarian Universalist heritage. Congregations may establish statements of purpose, covenants, and bonds of union so long as they do not require that members adhere to a particular creed.

Right of Conscience is from the
5th Principle.

For General Assembly 2023 – First Vote

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.

Inseparable from one another, these shared values are:

Thoughts on the Principles

“For me the particular formulation of what the principles say is far less important than the way in which they work as an instrument that orients us toward a set of values and commitments we hold in common. The principles are a map, not the territory, meaning both that they're an imperfect reflection of reality, but also that they *do* point to something real, fundamental, grounded, vital -- something that doesn't go away even if we stop paying attention to it. The territory doesn't change even though our ways of mapping it transform over time.

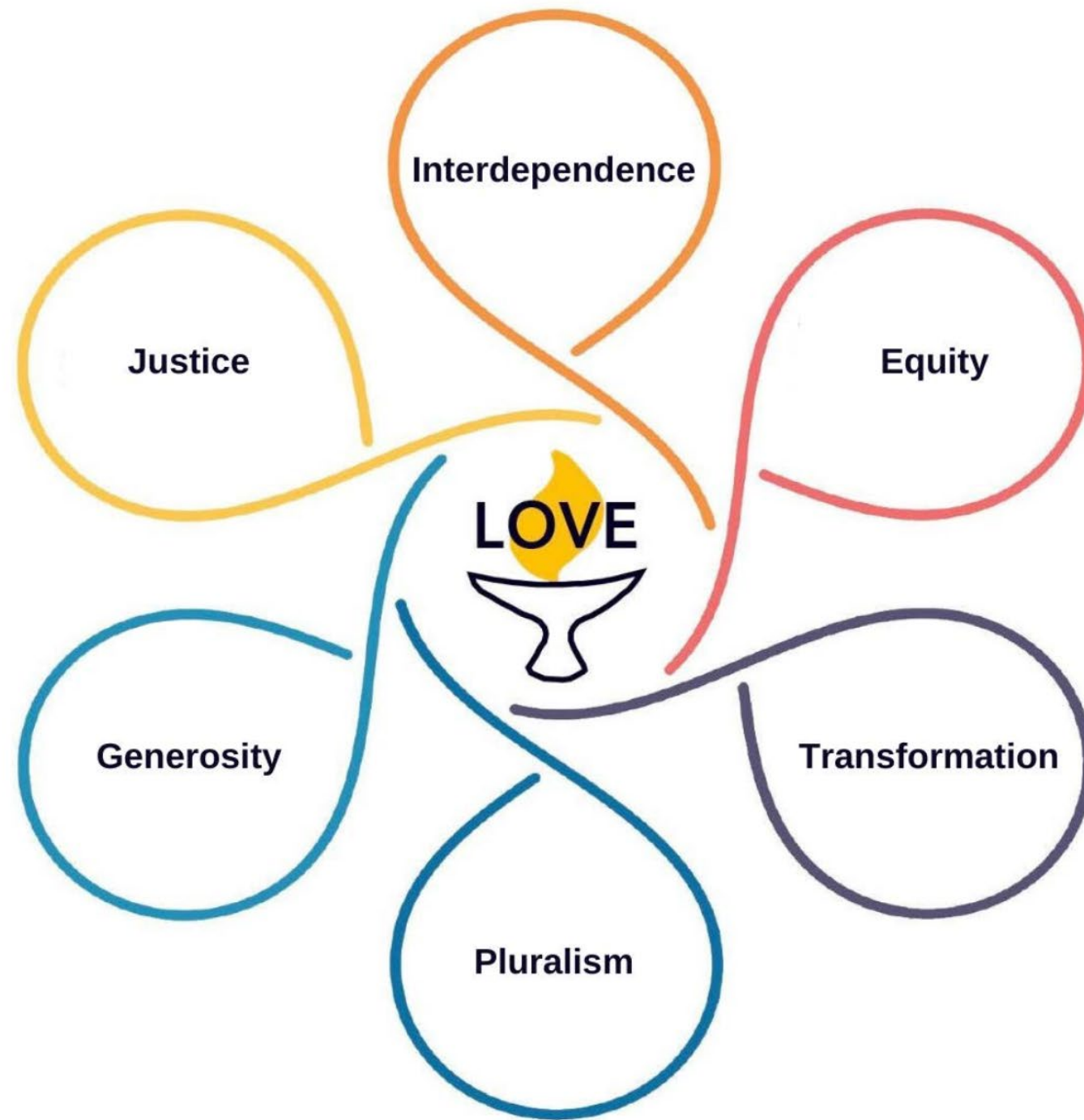
I sometimes find the principles too wordy, vague, un-memorable, non-directive, and uninspired. But that critique misses the point -- the principles aren't the mission of the church, or even a description of the kind of life we invite people into. They describe a set of features of the territory of our shared religious life...”

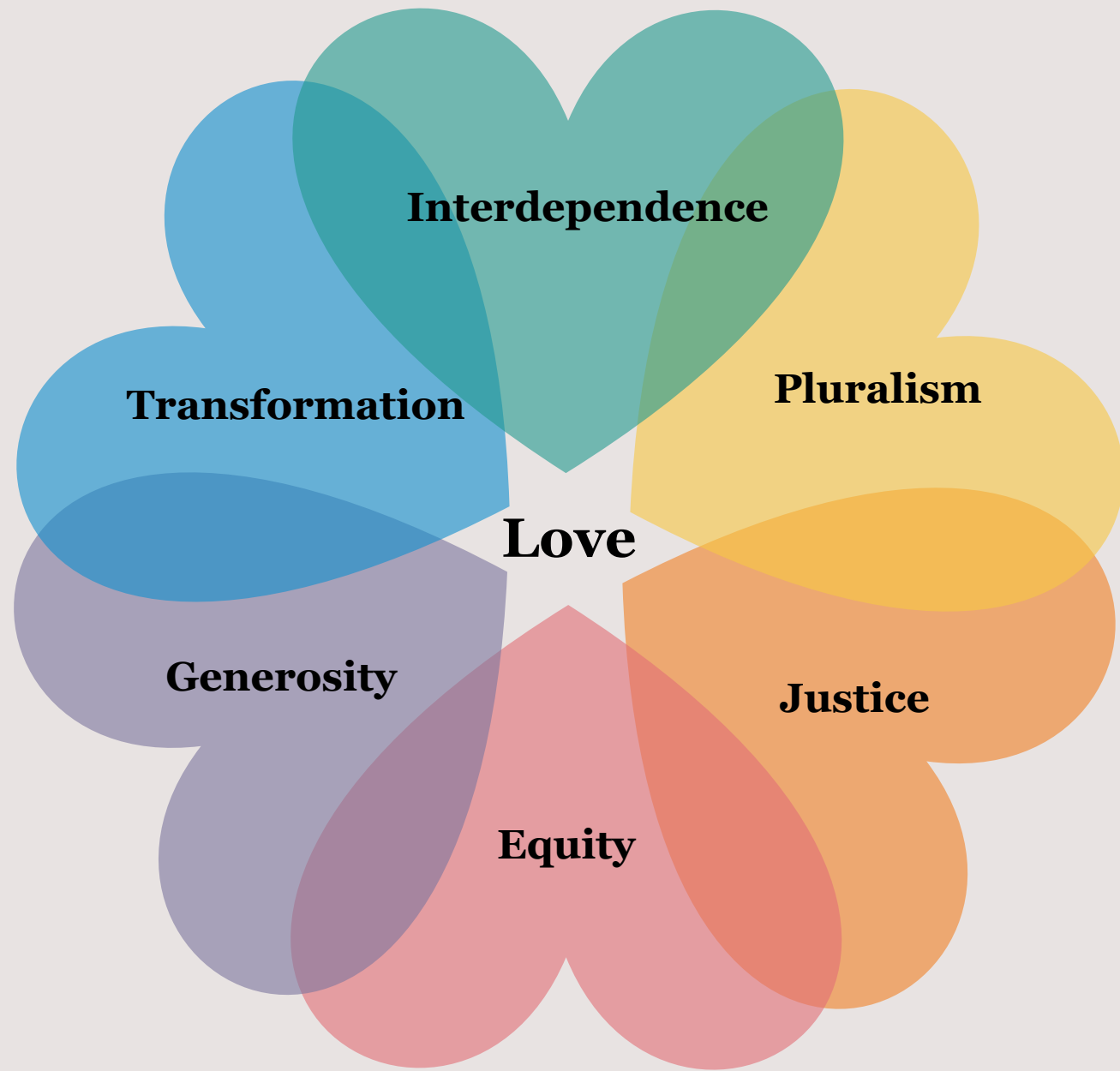
How do we engage with Article II?

Read it the first time to observe how it makes you feel

Read a second time, observe what it makes you think

Finally read it a third time before thinking about any suggestions.





Graphic by
Cynthia Landrum

