

## Story for All Ages (Amanda)

The story Laurel shared in our chalice lighting isn't the only example of Unitarian Universalists assuming risk in the course of justice work.

In the mid-1900s, some UU churches in the South deferred to the violence of white supremacy by disbanding, or continuing to operate while excluding non-whites in violation of UU values. But some didn't, and faced consequences. Many lost their meeting space or drew the attention of the KKK, and in several tragic cases UU ministers lost their lives as a result of holding firm to their beliefs in public.

Before *Roe v. Wade* went into effect in the 70s, many UU ministers were part of the [Clergy Consultation Service](#). This was an underground network of faith leaders who provided assistance and access for those seeking illegal abortions. In practice, that mostly meant helping socially and economically marginalized people, because those with access were more likely to have doctors that would agree to classify their pregnancies as life-threatening and therefore allow them to receive safe and sanctioned abortions. The Clergy Consultation Service providers understood that the law compromised the safety of the marginalized in particular, and they broke this law together in a principled and organized way, rooted in values of equity and care.

A while ago our congregation started to examine what social justice issues we care about. It turns out we care about all of them. We care loud and deep and big. If caring was enough, though, we'd already live in the world we want. If we want to put that caring into action in the tradition of UUs before us, and we want to move together, we should talk about how. And that requires understanding what risks we're collectively willing to assume in the name of what we care about.

When the reproductive rights group attended trainings with Side with Love over the summer, we were gifted resources to help us think about various kinds of risk and share common language around them. Risk, defined as the potential negative consequences of an action *or inaction*, can be financial, legal, reputational, physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual. It's important to remember that action and inaction both contain risk, such as the spiritual risk of failing to act in accordance with our moral convictions. The way we perceive risk is subjective and affected by how our life experience has taught us to feel and respond to fear, both for ourselves and for those in our community. For example, trauma can impact how we assess the likelihood of certain consequences coming to pass. Or privilege may have insulated us from exposure to over-policing and the legal system, rendering the concept of defying it an amorphous and terrifying unknown. It's natural for individuals to have different levels of risk tolerance, which is the degree of risk someone can assume without experiencing significant discomfort, anxiety, or fear.

Data analytics is one of many tools we have to understand groups of people. In the pursuit of gathering data around our shared risk tolerance, I put together a survey that will ask you to consider what types and amounts of risk you think we as a congregation should assume in the

course of doing justice work. Once the data has been collected, I'll be analyzing it to understand what we agree and disagree on, and where our average risk tolerance lies. You can find the survey at [bit.ly/riskscales](https://bit.ly/riskscales) (we'll also send it out over email after the service). This survey presents seven scales from one to ten, each of which measures risk tolerance along a particular risk axis. I'm going to take us through two of them now and give you some time to think about what your number will be. (I'm not collecting responses during this activity though, so please go to the survey link and enter your answers after church!)

The first scale is about taking a public stand. On a scale of one to ten, how loud and public should UUCSW be with our convictions about social issues? So you would be a one if you completely agree with this statement: "Our congregation has a moral obligation to stay out of politics to create a "big tent" where all beliefs are welcome." Your number would be ten, on the other hand, if you completely agree with this statement: "Our congregation has a moral obligation to take bold public stances about current and political issues, such as abortion and LGBTQ rights." I'm going to give you ten seconds to think about what your number will be, and then if you're comfortable feel free to hold up that number of fingers or type it into the chat. Again, one is stay out of political issues, ten is bold public stands on everything.

Okay, this second scale is about how quickly we should move when responding to crises. On a scale of one to ten, how much should we prioritize quick responses over congregational consensus and harmony? So a one would be you agree completely with this statement: "Decision-makers should seek to build the broadest possible buy-in from and consensus among our membership before taking any risky action, even when that means going very slowly and missing opportunities for timely action and partnership." Ten would be: "Decision-makers should move quickly to respond to the urgency of the moment, even when they know doing so might cause significant conflict within the congregation." Once again, I'll give you ten seconds and then you can hold up your fingers or type in the chat if you'd like to. And again, one is get total buy-in and consensus, ten is act quickly and risk significant conflict.

Interesting! I'm excited to see what the results are, and I'll share them in a later service. Please remember to fill out this form today and hit "submit" at the bottom! It's [bit.ly/riskscales](https://bit.ly/riskscales).