

Sermon: “Our Living Tradition” Rev. Laurel Gray

Change is one of life’s constants. It’s also, generally, an uncomfortable experience.

This process of reassessing our core guiding principles and documents is not an effort to change the very core of our tradition. It’s an effort to be more clearly and more fully rooted in that core. Authenticity requires the ability to sense when we’re veering off course and find our way back to ourselves. We do this as people and we do this as organizations.

This collective revision process is about clarity and deep roots, it’s not an effort to change what we hold most dear about Unitarian Universalism.

Our seven principles form the core of our collective covenant. A lot of UUs talk about being first and seventh principle UUs - we live by inherent worth and our profound interconnectedness. Can anyone name the third principle? What about the sixth? Can anyone name all of the six sources? Me neither! And I’ve been a UU my entire life and I’m a minister.

You may also be familiar with the move to add an eighth principle, which is about dismantling white supremacy and creating accountability. Lots of UU congregations voted to adopt the eighth principle for their own congregations. Meanwhile, lots of people also felt like anti-racism work is already bound up in the first principle. However you feel, the movement to create the eighth principle indicates that we need to be clearer with our words and how we covenant together.

Part of the practice of living by covenant is reviewing our covenants so that we can live into them more fully. So it would make sense that that would happen at the highest level of our denomination. And, being Congregational in political structure, means that the choice to make any changes belong to the collective vote of all UU congregations.

This month, the UUA board of trustees will meet to vote on officially putting forward the article II proposal. Over the next several months, there will be regional forums where we can gather to discuss the proposal and recommend amendments.

In order for the recommended changes to go into effect, they will have to be approved by two General Assemblies - meaning at the denomination wide vote at our national conference in June. This year it's in Pittsburgh and we will need to chose delegates to vote for our congregation at General Assembly.

This year, the General Assembly would need to pass the proposal by a simple majority. Then at the 2024 General Assembly, the proposal will need a 2/3 majority to pass and be adopted as the new article II of the UUA bylaws. If either vote fails, a new proposal cannot be considered for two years. No voting fifteen times in the span of days.

I am going to show you the recommendation that has been drafted by the article 2 study commission. And, to quell any anxieties, there are still seven core principles. A little familiarity helps with change.

But first, I want us all to engage in this process a little together, because I think the idea of changing the principles is more shocking than the recommended change itself.

So, when you think of the core of what Unitarian Universalism is, what words come to mind. If you're online you can put them in the chat.

(Time for sharing)

Now we're going to look at the recommendation that the article two study commission has made. And then we'll take some time to share how this all feels.

https://www.uua.org/files/2022-10/article2_draft_language_102022.pdf