

## Unitarian Church of Lincoln: The 8th Principle at a Glance

Check out the [8th Principle Resource Guide](#) online containing a roadmap to learning more about the goals, history, and congregations working for racial equity and justice. The [8th Principle Calendar](#) provides a wealth of learning activities, including discussions, movies, field trips, and the like. It is updated continually.

**What is the 8th Principle?** The 8th Principle is a proposed addition to our current seven principles to explicitly hold us accountable for identifying and addressing oppressive patterns and behaviors in ourselves and our institutions. It states:

*“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.”*

**What is a Beloved Community?** A Beloved Community is composed of people of varied racial, ethnic, educational, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation or backgrounds/identities who come together to form an interdependent relationship of love, mutual respect, and care. It is the “we” that seeks to realize justice and equity within the community and in the world.

**Why consider adopting the 8th Principle when the history of the Unitarian Church of Lincoln reflects an ongoing journey toward racial equity and justice?** The 8th principle reminds us that our journey towards building a diverse community is a journey toward *spiritual wholeness*. We are called to be *more intentional about* our work—and *accountable*—as we continue to dismantle racism and other forms of oppression in ourselves, our congregations, and community. We will stand in solidarity with over 200 Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) congregations across the United States who have already adopted the 8th Principle.

**Don't the Seven Principles already do that job?** Although all Unitarian Universalist congregations covenant to affirm and promote the current principles, none of the principles specifically address racism. The 8th principle is one way of being more intentional about our work—to live out the potential of the existing principles.

**Why single out racism?** The 8th Principle calls us to take a long hard look at how we grew up within a system that catered to people with white skin. Often it was taken in so unconsciously that we are unaware of how the American system of racism affects our attitudes and actions in our daily lives. Uncovering it takes deliberate and hard work. Our denomination has a long and mixed history when it comes to racism. In the late 1960's a large number of Black Unitarian Universalists left the church and in 2017 the UUA's president resigned because of reasons relating to race.

**Where did the 8th Principle come from?** It grew from work done by Paula Cole Jones when she was director of Racial & Social Justice, Joseph Priestley District (now part of Central East Regional Group). She realized that a person can believe they are following the seven Principles without even thinking about racism and other oppressions at the systemic level. She and Bruce Pollack-Johnson, a congregant at UU Church of the Restoration in Philadelphia, drafted the language in 2017. The 8th principle has been endorsed by BLUU (Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism) and DRUMM (Diverse Revolutionary UU Ministries).

**Don't the seven principles define us as Unitarian Universalists?** We are a living faith and our principles are not set in stone. A review of the UUA Bylaws is required every fifteen years. If we

go back to the earliest Universalist principles of 1790 and 1803 and those of the Unitarians in 1853, we see that change is a part of our tradition. As the world and social conditions shift, so does our understanding of what it means to be people of faith. When the two denominations merged in 1961, the principles underwent dramatic transformation. In recent times, changes inspired by the Feminist movement and increasing pluralism were reflected in a 1985 revision. Earth-based spirituality led to another change in 1995. The story of the principles and sources throughout UU history is fascinating. Interested? Check out the [8th Principle Resource Guide](#).

**Why now?** BLUU makes a strong case for immediate action: (<https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/>). Mass incarceration and a discriminatory criminal justice system, police violence against people of color, recent Supreme Court decisions against our voting rights, and the actions of white supremacists call for our immediate attention. The consciousness of all Americans has been awakened by the recent murders of children of color as well as adults. We have witnessed racial violence here in Nebraska. If not now, when?

### **Doesn't this grassroots effort duplicate the work of the UUA's Article II Study Commission?**

The purpose of the Article II Study Commission is to review the UUA's bylaws that are required by the organization every fifteen years. Since Paula Cole Jones is a member of the commission, the objectives of the 8th principle will no doubt be included in the Commission's recommendations presented at the 2023 General Assembly (GA). If they are accepted, they will be voted on by congregational delegates at the 2024 GA. Rev. Oscar Sinclair addressed how adopting the 8th principle supports the work of the Commission at [Sunday service, December 11](#) (You can watch the service on UCL's YouTube channel.). Doing the work to adopt the 8th principle will prepare the congregation for potential changes in the UUA's bylaws.

**Can we change the language of the 8th Principle as it's written now?** This is the proposed language as ratified by over 200 UU congregations. The current wording was written by Black leadership and allies in the UUA and endorsed by Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism (BLUU) and Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUMM).

**How will this help our church and our larger community?** By adopting the 8th Principle we will be acknowledging that an essential part of our journey to spiritual wholeness rests in accepting responsibility for confronting systemic racism in ourselves and institutions. We will also be setting an example for the children and young adults of our congregation.

**What's the 8th Principle decision-making process?** Following discussion at the two regularly scheduled town halls—and other listening and learning opportunities—UCL members will vote on adoption of the 8th Principle at the 2023 Spring Congregational Meeting, May 21, 2023.

**How can I learn more?** Change begins with listening and learning with love and compassion. Movies, books, workshops, learning circles, deep conversations, and town halls will all be part of our work over the next four months. See the UCL *8th Principle Learning Calendar*, attend a Learning Circle and other events planned over the next four months, or talk with a member of the Beloved Conversations Among team. Here are two recommended videos to get you started: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKvym76E-9M> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wpl3z14Th9s>.

This information is offered with thanks to All Peoples Congregation in Louisville, KY; Westside UU Congregation in Seattle, WA; UU Congregation of Fairfax, VA; BLUU: <https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/>; and the UUA Governance Committee: <https://uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-stud-commission/blog/8th> principle.