

Widening the Circle

Session 3, Theology

Discussion of Recommendation 4

Education about the covenantal nature of our faith will allow members of the USG community to support and nurture one another

- ▶ The WCC group reviewed covenantal documents including UUA principles, USG Congregational mission & values, USG Covenant, USG Covenant of Right Relations, USG Charter
- ▶ Criticisms of these documents included the lack of strong “action” verbs & lack of actions at the policy or system level, suggesting a need to rewrite/edit them

Goal: Develop accountability processes for addressing/repairing harm due to microaggressions

USG Actions under Consideration for Recommendation 4

- ▶ Revise USG covenant statements to include more actions at the individual as well as “system” & policy levels
- ▶ Increase congregational knowledge & use of the Covenant of Right Relations through publicity & education
- ▶ Develop practices that increase accountability to the Covenant of Right Relations
- ▶ Consider revisions to the Covenant of Right Relations that address microaggression
- ▶ Create a Right Relations Task Force to implement & support these ideas

USG Covenant of Right Relations

Preamble: USG is resolved to be a diverse, welcoming, and caring community. It is hoped that a Covenant of Right Relations will help our members deepen our bonds with one another when things are going smoothly and guide us in times of conflict.

Covenant: In this spirit, we, the members of the USG Congregation, covenant to:

- ▶ Welcome and engage members and visitors alike.
- ▶ Express gratitude for the efforts of others, particularly those who volunteer.
- ▶ Ask for help when needed and give help as able.
- ▶ Listen, with an open heart, to fully appreciate another's point of view.

Covenant, cont.

- ▶ Approach disagreements and conflicts constructively, communicating with others in a direct, caring, and responsible manner.
- ▶ Acknowledge our own mistakes and shortcomings, ask for forgiveness, and be willing to forgive mistakes and shortcomings of others.
- ▶ Speak respectfully and compassionately of those present and not present.
- ▶ Accept responsibility in conflict through personal reflection, actively listening to understand others' perspectives, experiences, and feelings, suspending judgment, finding common ground, and seeking creative solutions.
- ▶ Value confidentiality.
- ▶ Be judicious as to both wording and volume in our electronic/cyber communications.

Updated USG Actions for Recommendation 1

Goal: Center the theological perspectives of a diversity of groups in USG activities **with a goal of increasing these voices**

- ▶ Track the contributions from a diversity of voices in worship services (including participants, authors of readings, stories, pieces of music, people in videos) as well as in ASD & CSD programs
- ▶ Highlight the lives and teachings of individuals from a variety of communities in the USG newsletters
- ▶ Create a church service about anti-oppression, using the Avatars from the WCC Report

Updated USG Actions for Recommendation 2

Goal: Provide experiences that are meaningful to people with a wide range of identities

- ▶ Look to a range of communities for wisdom while being sure to credit and acknowledge those sources
- ▶ Examine UUA guidelines about cultural misappropriation to ensure that USG events/worship services comply with them:

<https://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/introduction/misappropriation>

Updated USG Actions for Recommendation 3

Goal: Acknowledge anti-oppression work as an essential theological mandate

- ▶ Require all lay leaders (Board, MET, Committee chairs, Worship Associates) to attend a workshop/course/program focused on anti-oppression each year
- ▶ Encourage all USG members to do the same, offer financial support if needed, consider creating an education fund
- ▶ Identify ways to acknowledge systemic racism & white supremacy culture & invite feedback & critique from individuals who have been harmed by it (Committee on Ministry, use of Quaker type trained “Noticers”)

Decisions & Future Directions

- ▶ Create a living document of proposed goals & actions aimed to Widen the Circle of Concern
- ▶ Engage in discussion of the next chapter on Governance