

## Discussion Guide for Restoration, Reparations, Accountability, Resources and Final Thoughts

### Introduction (5 mins)

**Opening Words**, from Final Thoughts: “In spite of the promise of our movement, we still need to address the bias and oppression within our systems to build resilience in our living tradition for the times we are in and strengthen it for future generations. Making these changes will allow us to stay relevant. Addressing these issues will allow us to live into the theology we profess. Furthermore, if we are committed to this work as central to our faith, we will create the conditions in which all who are attracted to the theological premises of our faith can thrive.

This form of creative, faithful engagement is *joyous* when it is done in a spirit of aspiration to deepening our spiritual commitments. It can also be heartbreaking. Much of that heartbreak comes from the fact that we spend most of our time talking about whether we have a problem... again. As a faith, we have struggled to engage this question decisively, putting into relief our investment in maintaining the structures that create and perpetuate unequal arrangements.”

### Is someone willing to take notes?

**Check In** (20 mins) How are you thinking about Widening the Circle since we last met? Extra time included to hear from those who attended the Center for the Study of White American Culture (CSWAC) and/or Trans Inclusion workshops.

**How UU Principles link to Characteristic of a Multi-Cultural Organization**-Margaret (5 min)

**Time for Questions about either of the trainings?** (5 mins)

This session is heavy on goal review. We do not plan to reword or tweak goals and actions we have already agreed to (these are presented in black), that can happen on the committee level when groups are deciding how to implement these goals and actions. Newly proposed goals & actions are presented in purple.

### COIC Report Recommendations: Restoration and Reparations (20 mins)

USG goals and actions are bolded/starred if they were prioritized.

**Recommendation** *As an act of reparations, funding and administrative support* for groups that allow Black/Indigenous/people of color and other marginalized groups to convene and gain the support necessary to worship and serve in predominantly white communities should remain a priority.

USG proposed goals and actions:

H3 Goal: Provide support for convenings at the regional and cluster level for marginalized groups, including people of color, young adults and youth.

C1.2/G3.4 Actions: Have an active denominational affairs committee/point person that talks year round about denomination offerings and our connection to the denomination. (Also noted in governance.)

C1.4 Action: Promote UUA caucus offerings to people of diverse identities to achieve critical mass for a sense of community.

**\*H3.1 Action**: **Make funding available for people who want to go to regional and cluster events who would be unable to attend without financial support.**

Are there any others we should add?

**Recommendation** Methods for *encouraging and channeling productive conflict* should be established and promoted to decrease harm.

USG Proposed goals and actions:

T3/RR1 Goal: Continuing education in anti-oppression and skill building dealing with conflict to promote engagement with conflict rather than shutting it down, which often continues oppression, for all lay leaders (includes Board, MET, Committee chairs, Worship Associates) and staff

**\*T3.1 Action:** Each lay leader and staff member commits to attend a structured, facilitated workshop/course/program focused on anti-oppression per year or at least every two years. Annual anti oppression training expectation could be met with skill building around dealing with conflict.

T4 Goal: Develop accountability process for addressing/repairing the harm of microaggressions

T4.1 Action: Revise USG covenant statements to include more actions at the individual as well as “system” & policy levels

**\*T4.2 Action:** Increase congregational knowledge & use of the Covenant of Right Relations through publicity & education (Board sub group planning to update the covenant with the T4 goals and actions in mind.)

T4.3 Action: Develop practices that increase accountability to the Covenant of Right Relations

T4.4 Action: Consider revisions to the Covenant of Right Relations that address microaggressions

T4.5 Action: Consider creating a Right Relations Task Force (or expanding the Committee on Ministry) to implement & support these ideas

NEW:

RR1.1 Action: Skills around conflict resolution could be explicitly required for members of the Committee on Ministry as they are currently our Conflict Resolution Team.

Thoughts about new proposed goal and actions? Any others we should add?

**Recommendation** Channels and procedures for *identifying harm, making amends, and financial reparations* should be established. For example, the cost of trying to enter into volunteer or underpaid leadership in Unitarian Universalism affects Black, Indigenous and other people of color disproportionately due to financial and time burdens taken on by uncompensated lay leaders as well as education and credentialing fees for religious professionals. USG’s goals and actions with the first COIC recommendation above partially address this.

Additional Possible NEW:

RR2 Goal: Consider ways USG could make amends and offer financial reparations. Green St Friends is providing legal resources to people in the neighborhood to help them clear their titles and create wills.

RR2.1 Action: Provide support for UU seminary (Meadville Lombard and Starr King) students with under represented identities through contribution to scholarship or student aid funds. Consider asking Sullivan Assistance or designating a Share the Plate once a year.

RR2.2 Action: Consider creating a policy that a contribution to a local music group working with Black youth whenever a Negro Spiritual is used in a service. Article about a church in Boston doing this: <https://www.wgbh.org/news/arts/2021/11/16/this-church-is-paying-royalties-when-it-sings-spirituals-composed-by-enslaved-africans> Worship Arts could be asked to consider whether this idea works for them and where they think the money should come from.

RR2.3 Action: Consider an STP for this year and a budget line item starting next year for an annual contribution to BLUU.

Other ideas?

**Recommendation** Widespread practices of acknowledging *Unitarian Universalism’s foundational complicity with racist practices*, especially against Indigenous and Black people, are essential to understanding the need for continued support.

Possible USG goal:

RR3 Goal: Help the USG congregation to acknowledge the history of white supremacy culture at USG

and in the UUA, through worship services, articles, ASD classes to help build support for the transformation required to truly widen the circle.

### **COIC Report Recommendations: Accountability and Resources**

**Recommendation** Accountability should be embedded in the structure of the Boards of the Association and other key organizations, including all affiliated and professional organizations. **Action:** Include in the bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association an explicit commitment to become anti-oppressive and equitable and to serve the full diversity of those who resonate with our theological tradition.

#### **Possible USG goal:**

A1 Goal: Accountability to commitment to become anti-oppressive and equitable should be embedded in the structure of USG's governance and operations.

A1.1 Action: USG will consider adding to the Bylaws an explicit commitment to become anti-oppressive and equitable and to serve the full diversity of those who resonate with our theological tradition and develop policies/procedures to ensure accountability to this goal.

**Recommendation** Ongoing monitoring is needed to ensure that work to counter bias and oppression is not interrupted again.

A1.2 Action: The ongoing to work of accountability to the goals and actions proposed by the Widening the Circle group can be continued by a subset of the Widening the Circle group.

**Recommendation** The UUA should establish an ongoing independent body to identify systemic changes and monitor accountability on work toward equity, inclusion, and diversity. This body should be based on representatives of groups of oppressed people and should have direct representation on the Association Board.

USG could commit for following and adopting the practices of the body recommended above.

**Recommendation** Those responsible for managing and negotiating in times of change and conflict should have training in anti-oppression work.

Can be met by expectation of training for leaders and staff.

### **Possible USG Goals and Actions (15 mins)**

**From last meeting:** additions/updates in purple

E 1 Goal: Resources and tools that ensure a variety of entry points into the spiritual work of embracing one's own identity and the identity of others, a path to understanding the work of equity, inclusion, and diversity and resources on healing religious wounds and productive conflict engagement, are all needed as a part of faith development.

E1.1 action: DSD will be asked to provide a list of resources/recommendations for people to engage anti-oppression/multi-culturalism including a workshop/training/course at least once a year. Donna Harris from UUCDC provides seminars as a Stirfry Seminar consultant (stirfryseminars.com) and would be excellent to consider for fall 2022.

T4.1 Action: Revise USG covenant statements to include more actions at the individual as well as "system" & policy levels. Consider adding expectation that congregants will engage equity, inclusion and diversity as part of faith development.

C1.3 Action: Develop identity based caucuses for ongoing conversation and community. Continue White Anti Racist Discussion Group for as long as it is helpful to people.

E1.2 action: Designate a place for people to share their concerns around the changes at church and assist them with processing. Interim minister or Committee on Ministry could offer. Plan to offer a meeting quarterly, rather than just responding to problems.

T1.3 Action: Create a church services about anti-oppression, perhaps using the Avatars from the WCC Report with the goal of continuing to Widen the Circle twice a year? On a regular basis? At least annually? To elevate voices with under represented identities.

RP1 Goal: Recruit and hire religious professionals at USG with a wide range of educational, professional, and life experiences, inclusive of those who are not well represented in UU communities, and ensure that everyone is fairly compensated.

RP1.1 action: Review and revise desired qualifications and job descriptions for religious professionals on an ongoing basis.

RP1.2 action: Ask the Board to create policy that states USG compensates staff according to the UUA fair compensation guidelines. (Approved at a recent meeting.)

Note: The current Job Description for the Personnel Committee states the following: "10. Reviewing staff salaries with respect to fair compensation guidelines and making adjustment recommendations when indicated."

Proposed since last meeting:

C1.7 action: Evaluate and modify USG practices related to music selection and presentation to ensure that it "speaks" to and is inclusive of a diverse audience. Music (Search) Committee and Worship Arts responsible. Advisory Committee to new music director could be created to help give feedback.

**Where do we go from here?** (5 mins) Meet in June, take July and August off, plan to meet September 7 to continue to make sure we're making progress/being accountable. We will have a list of things groups can be working on over the summer at the June meeting, for example Latifah could be working on programs for the fall, Worship Arts could continue working on their goals, etc.

**Possible next steps** (5 mins)

Accountability group that engages committees about working on goals and actions and tracks progress  
Starr King Anti Oppression class next year

Summer reads, chose one, share on our return:

The Darkness Divine, by Kristen L. Harper, Black UU minister inviting transforming perceptions of Blackness <https://www.uuabookstore.org/The-Darkness-Divine-P18949.aspx>

Disability Visibility, by Alice Wong (recommended by Andrea Durham)

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/617802/disability-visibility-by-alice-wong/>

Mistakes and Miracles, Nancy palmer Jones and Karin Lin (Cited in the WtC report)

<https://www.uuabookstore.org/Mistakes-and-Miracles-P18521.aspx>

Trans/Nonbinary issues (recommended by Molly Collet):

She's Not There, a memoir by Jenny Boyle- for adults

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/16892/shes-not-there-by-jennifer-finney-boylan/>

George by Alex Gino- YA book about a trans girl

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-book-news/article/87750-alex-gino-debuts-new-title-and-cover-for-groundbreaking-trans-novel.html>

Trans Bodies Trans Selves: A Modern Manual By and For Trans People, by Laura Erickson-Schroth

<http://transbodies.com/second-edition/>

Gender Born Gender Made, by Diane Ehrensaft-for parents

<https://theexperimentpublishing.com/catalogs/winter-2011/gender-born-gender-made/>

**Check Out** (10 mins): How are you feeling about WtC next steps? Any recommendations for how to move forward that haven't already been shared?

**Closing Words**, from Final Thoughts

"As we prepare to close, we would offer one further distillation of all of that is contained within these pages. We affirm that, ultimately, what we have been talking about for these years are basic commitments that grow out of our theological legacy. Retailored for our time, these are the commitments:

- **Hospitality**—the willingness to welcome all who would find solace, comfort, and inspiration in the values that we hold.
- **Common sense**—the idea that we can often just do things in a more simple and basic way that makes sense rather than make things unnecessarily convoluted.
- **Empathy**—the ability to perceive and care about another’s [c]ore struggle even if it is not your own, recognizing that it is part of ours and that we are bound together through the interdependence that is part of our faith.
- **Compassion**—the ability to walk with another and to be caring toward that one as if they were ourself.
- **Self-awareness and mindfulness**—recognizing the power we have over one another, simply allowing ourselves to wake up to that, not to be shamed or made guilty, rather simply to allow ourselves to prepare our own hearts for transformation.
- **Continuity**—the recognition that we would not be having these conversations in 2020 if we had kept them going in the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s, for commitment and continuance are what will allow real progress.
- **Humility**—knowing we don’t know the answers, especially in these times; offering to one another those glimpses of what we do know and so, together, creating a clearer sense of where we are going. In the spirit of that humility, we acknowledge that we have no doubt forgotten some ideas and recommendations that should be included and have perhaps misformulated others. And once again we acknowledge the debt to our ancestors: much that is written here is the collective wisdom of those who have travelled in the valley places of our faith. With this we pass the baton for others to pick up and carry.
- **Restoration**—understanding that where harm has been done, effort must be expended to provide address and redress.
- **Prioritization**—Many of our recommendations are about focus and emphasis, rather than money. Though investments are needed in specific areas, much can be accomplished through education and attention.”