

Discussion Guide 2 Restoration, Reparations, Accountability and Resources

Introduction (5 mins) Lisa

Opening Words

From [“The Spiritual Practice of Hospitality”](#) by David Rynick, *UU World*

- The spiritual practice of hospitality cannot be “just another program” or it will fail. Only if you discover and articulate the relevance of this practice to your central purposes as a faith community will you be able to begin to break out of the gravitational field of “the way things have always been.”
- We must stop trying to figure out how to get other people to change and begin instead to look at our own actions. It’s easy for members to believe that the church governing board or the minister or the welcome committee or someone else should be the ones to change how we do things, that “it’s not my job.” But each of us needs to begin to accept responsibility for creating the kind of church we want to be a member of. In other words, hospitality and welcoming becomes a personal choice, rather than an institutional issue.

Is someone willing to take notes?

Check In (15 mins) How are you thinking about Widening the Circle since we last met?

Proposed goal and action review we didn’t get to in May (Andrea):

COIC Report Recommendations: Accountability and Resources (15 minutes)

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.

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

Proposed between March and May meetings:

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.

This section is updates and edits to goals and actions we have already addressed, we are not planning to go through them one by one. If you have questions, concerns, edits, please be prepared to bring them up. Please note, we can talk about Action RR2.4 during Next Steps.

Updates to goals from March meeting: additions/updates in purple (10 mins) Lisa

E 1 Goal: Provide congregants with 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, 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."

From the May meeting: (updates in purple)

For this upcoming section, we think sub groups within WtC can be a way to investigate options.

RR2 Goal: Consider ways USG could make amends and offer financial reparations. (Eg 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.

RR 2.4 Action: Create a group at USG, perhaps a WtC sub group, to look in to what others are doing, and make recommendations for things we could do, eg RR2 actions 1-3.

RR3 Goal: Help the USG congregation to continue to acknowledge the history of white supremacy culture and anti-racist activism 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.

Proposed RR3.1 action, Conduct research in USG archives into USG history related to oppression as well as on USG's history of anti-oppression work." E.g., William Henry Furness, a very effective abolitionist preacher, was senior minister at USG for a time. Longtime USG member Fran Emery did extremely important anti-oppression work.

Next steps (20 mins) Treva

What should our structure be going forward? Options include:

- Accountability group that engages committees about working on goals and actions and tracks progress
- Reparations group that looks at what others are doing and proposes things USG could do
- Leadership Council as part of ongoing mission (maybe 30 mins of meeting)
- Quarterly meetings for full group to share, discuss and process full church issues? Accountability and Reparations would also need to meet separately.
- Others? Staying flexible, Keeping in mind interim minister may have recommendations.

Summer reads, chose one or more, share in the fall:

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

Mistakes and Miracles, Nancy Palmer Jones and Karin Lin (Cited in the WtC report) <https://www.uuabookstore.org/Mistakes-and-Miracles-P18521.aspx>

Centering, Mitra Rahnama, Editor

<https://www.uuabookstore.org/Search.aspx?k=centering>

Disability Visibility

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

Trans/Nonbinary issues:

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/>

Starr King Anti Oppression class next year

Check Out (10 mins) What are your plans to continue to widen our circle? Some possibilities: read books (as part of a group or on your own), attend programs (with/through USG or on your own), be involved with the next phase of widening the circle by working with committees to implement actions, be in a group looking at possible reparations...something else?

Closing Words

Here at USG we want to be a:

Transformed and transforming community with open doors and open hearts, where different groups share power and shape identity, mission, leadership, worship and ministries – from "[Moving from Inviting to Inclusion to Radical Welcome](#)" by Stephanie Spellers (used in the Trans Inclusion Workshop)

If you know what you want to achieve in life, then you are more inspired to change for the better. – Philip Vang

The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new. – Socrates