



Proposed Article II: Session 3

Session 3: Love

Email to Participants

Dear UU Wellspring Participants,

Welcome to Session 3 of our Proposed Article 2. This week we will be reflecting on how the values and covenant of the Proposed Article 2 impacts our identity as a Unitarian Universalist faith.

Love

Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values.

We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.

UUA Proposed Article II, 2023.

You might find it interesting that *love* was missing from our UUA Principles. Yet, it has been a cornerstone of our faith. For example, the Iowa Sisterhood created community, support and love in congregations that did not have leadership and were diminishing. Women have changed the idea of loving pastoral support and this has become a model in Unitarian Universalism of how our faith supports us in love.

Unitarian Universalism touches the hearts of many theologies. The concept of Universalism was based on "God is love, Love is God" and process theology includes a sense that god is an energy of love that lures us to more love. Historically oppressed communities and others might use the term *cosmos* as a way of connecting to this universal love. Liberating theologies lift up love.

In preparation for this week's session please watch and read the following materials and use your journal to make note of anything that resonates with you or that raises questions for you.

Session PreWork:

Love:

- [Sermon at 2016 General Assembly](#) by Rev. Bill Sinkford. (start at 1 hour 19 minutes 24 seconds and ends at 1 hour 54 minutes)
- [UUA: Love Brings Us Together: Love as a Common Theological Core](#). Article II Study Commission.
- ["Siding with Love"](#) by Fred Small

- ["An Essential Spiritual and Moral Value"](#) by Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, September 2019, The UU World.
- ["What Do You Say After you Run Out of Sermons on Love? The Vision of the Liberal Church"](#) by James Ishmael Ford in Monkey Mind. Watch the music video at the end of the article for an uplifting sound of love through the eyes of children.
- ["The Many Paths and Challenges of Love"](#) sermon by Rev. Michelle Scott-Huffman at the First UU Springfield, MO.
- ["No One is Outside the Circle of Love"](#) by Rev. Susan Frederick Gray and Erika Hewitt.
- ["How Do We Fall in Love with a Messed Up World"](#) Reflection by Rev. Jason Cook.

Reflection Questions:

- What meaning do you ascribe to love in the context of the Proposed Article II?
- How is love at the center of Justice? Generosity? Pluralism? Transformation? Equity? Interdependence? Choose two or three of these values in the Proposed Article II and think of a story or experience that centers love in the values you chose to explore.
- When have you "fallen in love with the world?" as Rev. Jason Cook asks.
- How is love at your core? And if love doesn't fit for you, what word describes what is at your core? At the core of Unitarian Universalism?

Additional Resources

- ["Ethics of Love"](#) by Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray in UU World, Spring 2022.
- ["We are Unitarian Universalists: We Need Not Think Alike to Love Alike"](#) UUA Video.
- ["Love Is the Spirit of This Church"](#) (45:58 to 1:08). Reviews the Current Principles and Sources and Introduces Proposed Article II. Includes a history of the Bylaw changes.

Materials for this week's meeting

- a journal or notebook and a pen
- snacks and beverages nearby
- an open mind and open heart

We look forward to seeing you this week,

Facilitator(s) name(s)

Session Plan

Chalice lighting, opening reading, silence, and/or music (10 minutes)

Note to Facilitator: Recite the words, light your chalice and hold the silence for 3 to 5 minutes or play one of the musical selections below the reading.

Say:

"We will begin this session with the chalice lighting with the words from Gretchen Haley.

*For this one moment
Know only that you are loved
That you are safe, and whole and loved
Know that you belong here
Here among us, here upon this earth
In your body
However tired, or broken
Your heart may be
Whatever fear, disappointment, anger
you carry
For this hour know you are not alone
Feel the presence of others
Surrounding you,
Breathing beside you, and with you,
Discovering together the way our voices rise, and fall together
In harmony, in hope
Claim here a resilient freedom
The choice for love, for light, to live with joy
and gratitude and praise
as a form of resistance
Already we are organizing
Come, let us (be)*, together*

**Note: Original word was "worship."*

Rev. Gretchen Haley

Note to Facilitators: You can offer silence or the music of Blessing Offor, "[Love Something](#)."

Meditation/Reading

Say the following to those present:

"As we contemplate love as the core of our Unitarian Universalist faith, we will read "[The Home That Love Made](#)" by Rev. Amanda Poppei, which can be found on the Worship Web. **Please think of your own congregation as we read this piece.**"

Note to Facilitator: Invite the group to respond to each line with "This is the home that love made." Invite participants to imagine themselves in their house of worship, either as a child or now.

The Home That Love Made

By [Amanda Poppei](#)

This is the home that love made.

It is full of the love that the founders felt, when they planned out these walls and raised these beams above us.

This is the home that love made.

It is full of the love of all who have worshipped here; those who have celebrated and grieved here; the babies dedicated, couples married, and family members mourned here.

This is the home that love made.

It is full of the love of our children, as they learn and laugh together, and our youth, as they grow into their own sense of purpose and meaning.

This is the home that love made.

It is full of the love of the staff who have served it, full of their hopes for this congregation, their hard work and their acts of dedication.

This is the home that love made.

It is full of the love of the choir, the love made so clear in the voices lifted here on Sunday morning.

This is the home that love made.

It is full of our love: the love of this community, despite our differences and our disagreements; the love that holds us together as a people.

This is the home that love made.

Can you feel it? May the love be with us always. Amen.

Note to Facilitator:

After the last line of the litany, thank the group, and move on to the check in.

Check in (10 minutes)

Say to those present:

“It is good to be with you. We’re going to take a moment to first remind everyone of our names, pronouns and today, we invite you to add a brief story or what immediately comes to mind when you connect your congregation to the concept of love. We'll take the time we need to tell these stories.

Note to Facilitator:

Lead the check-in so that people can get a rough idea of what to do.

Covenant Review (5 minutes)**Note to Facilitator:**

Share the draft covenant from the Proposed Article II and read through it aloud (Use your adapted covenant if you changed it.) Invite people to share a word or phrase that is resonating for them today from one of the covenant lines.

No fixing, no advising, no setting each other straight.

Pause when harm is done.

Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.

We covenant to protect Earth and all beings from exploitation. We will create and nurture sustainable relationships of care and respect, mutuality and justice. We will work to repair harm and damaged relationships.

We covenant to learn from one another in our free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We embrace our differences and commonalities with Love, curiosity, and respect.

We covenant to dismantle racism and all forms of systemic oppression. We support the use of inclusive democratic processes to make decisions within our congregations, our Association, and society at large.

We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically. Openness to change is fundamental to our Unitarian and Universalist heritages, never complete and never perfect.

We covenant to freely and compassionately share our faith, presence, and resources. Our generosity connects us to one another in relationships of interdependence and mutuality.

We covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities.

Ask:

"Is there anything about the covenant that we should address? If not, note that this is the covenant you will commit to while we are together, knowing that we can revisit as needed."

Note to Facilitator:

If changes are needed now, ask for one or two people to listen closely to a few comments and work on the wording between now and the next session.

Reflection (60 minutes)

Introduce the reflection questions and say to those present:

"Today we will be reflecting on the core value in the Proposed Article II: Love. However you are now feeling about the Proposed Article II, the significant effort and our time together discussing how love is core to Unitarian Universalism may be meaningful and even fill our cups."

Love:

Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values.

We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of love.

Reflection questions:

What meaning do you ascribe to *love* in the context of the Proposed Article II?

Note to the Facilitator:

You might find taking a break here to let participants think of a story that is different from their check in story, to broaden their understanding of how love is connected to the other values in the Proposed Article II.

Additional Reflection Questions:

How is love at the center of Justice? Generosity? Pluralism? Transformation? Equity? Interdependence? Choose two or three of these values in the Proposed Article II and think of a story or experience that centers love in the values you chose to explore.

When have you "fallen in love with the world?" as Rev. Jason Cook asks?

How is love at your core? At the core of Unitarian Universalism? And if love doesn't fit for you, what word describes what is at your core? At the core of Unitarian Universalism?

Note to Facilitator:

If your group is large, divide the time available by the number of people in the group. An electronic timer is very useful — allow the sound of the timer to remind someone their time is up instead of you having to cut them off. Some people appreciate a “one minute warning” so they know to start wrapping up. Be sure to leave silence in between each speaker as well.

Your job this session (as always) is to protect the process. Make sure everyone can share their stories and thoughts in a safe and loving space. Do not let this run into the next session.

If you have extra time after everyone has shared, ask the group:

What new insights do you have about your own story (thoughts) now that you have heard from others?"

So What? (10 minutes)

Note to Facilitator:

This section helps to create a bridge between the reflection discussion and application outside of these sessions.

To those present say:

“How do your reflections inform your thoughts on *love* as the central value of Proposed Article 2, or in other words, as a central value of your faith?"

Note to Facilitator:

Let participants know that they don't have to have an answer at that moment. Those are questions for them to carry with themselves and to think about over the next few weeks. Leave space for those who wish to share.

Gratitude and Closing (5 minutes)

Note to Facilitator:

Have everyone focus on the chalice. Each person, as moved, says one or two words about something from this session for which they are grateful, how they are feeling in this moment or a word or phrase from the Proposed Article 2 that is stirring for them. After everyone has said a word, close with a brief statement of thanks and appreciation. You might play this hymn as people depart "[Love Will Guide Us](#)." from Foothills Unitarian Church. Note that this tune was

first called "Olympia" the first Universalist woman to be fully ordained. (Ref. Rev. Kimberly Debus, The Far Fringe.)