

# 2009 TENTATIVE AGENDA

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UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST  
ASSOCIATION OF  
CONGREGATIONS

The Tentative Agenda is also available online at  
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## This Tentative Agenda contains:

- Report of the Commission on Social Witness
- Text of the proposed Statement of Conscience, *Peacemaking*
- Proposed Amendments to Bylaws and Rules

All proposed Bylaw Amendments will appear on the Final Agenda for General Assembly.

Congregations must be certified for 2009 in order to send voting delegates to General Assembly. To check on your congregation's certification status and its reported membership for 2009, go to [uua.org](http://uua.org) > leaders > data services or contact [data\\_services@uua.org](mailto:data_services@uua.org).

# 2009 TENTATIVE AGENDA REPORT OF THE CSW

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## Report of the Commission on Social Witness

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*February 2009*

### **Dear Congregational Members, Leaders and Delegates to GA 2009:**

The main social witness actions in GA 2009 are:

- A two-session mini-assembly to propose amendments to the Draft Statement of Conscience on Peacemaking (DSOC)
- Debate and Vote on adopting the Peacemaking DSOC
- Proposing, collecting signatures, and voting on Actions of Immediate Witness
- Workshops on Peacemaking and the Congregational Study/Action Issue on Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice

Since GA 2008, congregations have continued to study and act on Peacemaking and Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice, as Congregational Study/Action Issues (CSAIs). The Peacemaking Core Team has produced a DVD on Peacemaking, and organized working groups, conference calls and a symposium. The Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice Core Team was created after GA 2008 and developed the Study/Resource Guide and other channels to assist congregations in moving forward. (Core Teams are groups of volunteers selected to organize and assist congregations on Congregational Study/Action Issues.)

The Commission on Social Witness (CSW) prepared a DSOC on Peacemaking in July 2008 and assisted with the design of the Congregational Poll on whether to advance the DSOC to the Final Agenda for GA 2009. The CSW will also be receiving and reviewing comments on the Peacemaking DSOC and the Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice CSAI. If at least 25% of certified congregations participate in the Congregational Poll by February 2, 2009, the CSW will redraft the DSOC, as necessary, after the deadline for receipt of comments on February 2, 2009.

Additional information on Peacemaking can be found at [www.uua.org/peacemaking](http://www.uua.org/peacemaking), and on Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice, at [www.uua.org/ethicaleating](http://www.uua.org/ethicaleating).

Two goals of the CSW are to emphasize study and action over printed words and to address SOC's to Unitarian Universalists, our primary audience. Yet, the question of appropriate wording of this DSOC is drawing intense interest, beyond that of much prior study and action. We Unitarian Universalists face a paradox here, as we seek to draft and comment on a prospective SOC on Peacemaking that is eliciting an increasing number of responses that are neither compassionate nor peaceful. Our challenge is to act in ways consistent with our shared ideas of peacemaking as we try to reach agreement on what the SOC should say. To credibly advocate for peace in all its forms within our own religious movement and in the public square, we must practice what we preach. Otherwise, we will not be listened to outside of General Assembly 2009

David S. May, Chair  
Commission on Social Witness

Rev. Dr. Jan Carlsson-Bull • Catlin DuBois • Dr. John Hooper • Rev. Dr. Paul Johnson • Dr. David May

# 2009 TENTATIVE AGENDA STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE

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## Peacemaking: A Draft Unitarian Universalist Statement of Conscience, November 2008

War is abhorrent. Violence is reprehensible. Human history has been marked by both. Religion has been a catalyst for war and for peace, sanctioning behaviors individual and international. What is our religious response as Unitarian Universalists to the historic habits of war and the timeless challenges of peace? Should we reject the use of any and all kinds of violence and war and affirm a commitment to seek just peace through non-violent means? Should we continue with the more conventional practice of seeking peace through application of "just war" criteria? Are these our only options as we seek to promote "a world community of peace, liberty, and justice for all?" This Statement of Conscience results from widespread deliberation and presents an approach arising out of our history, theology, and understanding of human nature for building a peaceful, just, and sustainable global future.

### Theology and History

Our theology affirms the holy as that which demonstrates love, compassion, and inclusiveness. Peace is an extension of this affirmation; war is abhorrent to it; violence is in conflict with it. Our principles and purposes are consonant with this understanding and have emerged from a long history of prophetic discernment, but they have not led to agreement on issues of war and peace. It is community in covenant that sustains us across these differences.

Covenant lies at the core of our religious belief and aspiration and is grounded in a commitment to persuasion over coercion. This commitment to persuasion is evident in our promotion of "a world community of peace, liberty, and justice for all," which is closely aligned with the covenantal character of the United Nations.

Persuasion doesn't always work, as 20th century Unitarian Universalist theologian James Luther Adams witnessed while residing in Germany during the early years of the Third Reich. The Nazis chose violence as the tool of state, with the aim of world domination. Adams advocated U.S. military action to meet this demonic threat, a position counter to the pacifist stances of 19th century Universalist Adin Ballou and 20th century Unitarian John Haynes Holmes. Holmes, affirmed by his congregation in New York City, maintained his pacifist stance over against the American Unitarian Association's threat to withdraw support from congregations not committed to the war effort of World War I. A half century later, the Unitarian Universalist Association witnessed widespread congregational discord over the Vietnam War, with so many Unitarian Universalists being against the war. Amid the harsh realities of war and peace, there are no easy answers.

### Pacifism and Just War

Pacifism and just war are multi-dimensional strategies and stances in opposition to war. Pacifism can be absolute, conditional, or selective. Just war is a centuries-old framework for taking a moral stance on a particular war. Common just war criteria include: just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, last resort, proportionality, and probability of success. The last resort criterion, for example, is a judgment regarding the exhaustion of all non-violent means for preventing war. Proportionality is a consideration of the ratio of good presumably achieved over the suffering unleashed. "Just war" itself is a misnomer. No war is just. The operant term is "justifiable." Just war criteria are invoked to determine whether a particular war is justifiable in re-establishing peace and justice. Conscientious objectors span pacifist and just war positions.

# 2009 TENTATIVE AGENDA STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE

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Pacifism and just war are both stances of conscience and reason. Both acknowledge our human inclinations toward competition and cooperation.

## **Human Biology**

Human violence reflects our evolutionary history. From distant times, the stronger and more violent have often prevailed. Anger and violence leap full flower in each of us from an early age. Physically and mentally we have an evolved capacity for violence that can result in physical, emotional, economic, or environmental injury. Violence occurs across all levels of human interaction. By adulthood most of us have learned to restrain our use of physical violence. Yet violence among nations occurs with regularity and commonly achieves desired ends unless circumscribed by law or mores.

Humans also have an evolved capacity for cooperative behavior, resulting in our development of morals, laws and institutions to minimize the use of violence. Cooperative behavior is the foundation of nonviolence and peace. It is the basis of trust. Intentional nonviolence paired with cooperative behavior encourages compassionate communication and peaceful resolution of conflict.

## **Just Peacemaking**

Building a culture of peace at all levels of human interaction requires a transformation of consciousness, individual lifestyles, and public policies. At the heart of this transformation is the will to understand the truths voiced on all sides from a stance of empathy and love.

We are called to stand on the side of love. We are also called to stand on the side of justice and against the violence of oppression in all its manifestations. When a conflict or the threat of a conflict emerges in our world, we as Unitarian Universalists draw on our history as champions of both nonviolence and justice, informed by a diversity of views. As a faith holding covenant over creed, we eschew claims of absolute truth, so we need an approach to conflict—including the horrific conflict that is war—which transcends the dichotomy of pacifism vs. just war. We need an approach that honors affirmations common to both pacifist and just war traditions, affirmations of "the inherent worth and dignity of every person" and of "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations."

Just Peacemaking is this approach. Just Peacemaking calls us to understand peace as normative and violence as aberrant, while evaluating the prospect of violent conflict by balancing the goal of peace preservation with the desire for war prevention. The former just war criteria become Just Peacemaking guidelines. With each guideline, we must ask not what justifies war, but what justifies the humanitarian preservation or restoration of peace. If force is ever to be used, it must be in the service of ending violence of much greater magnitude. We support our military personnel who have made the decision to engage in such service.

Our Unitarian Universalist values commit us to work toward a culture of peace that makes war and all other forms of violence avoidable and universally recognized as reprehensible and ineffective for honoring human rights and human dignity. Just Peacemaking melds love and justice in moving us toward a culture of peace at all levels of human interaction.

## **Calls to Action**

Just Peacemaking calls for action at all levels of human interaction. To be effective, our actions must be incorporated into existing structures and institutions and new systems must be created.

# 2009 TENTATIVE AGENDA STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE

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## **International Peacemaking**

We covenant as an Association, as congregations, and as individuals to advocate vigorously for policies that move the United States toward collaborative leadership in building a peaceful, just, and sustainable world. These include:

- Supporting the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office in advancing the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, the Earth Charter, the International Criminal Court, the United Nations Convention Against Torture, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Supporting the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee in ending the use of torture and addressing structural violence in all its forms;
- Supporting interfaith groups such as the Center on Conscience and War in advocating for the right of conscientious objection, including education and resources on the availability of this option; and
- Supporting the establishment of a national network or working group among Unitarian Universalists to identify and disseminate information on peacemaking programs and resources.

## **Societal Peacemaking**

We covenant to act in the wider community in reducing the causes of structural violence. We do this through:

- Supporting the socially responsible investment of our Association and congregational assets;
- Supporting Association and congregational initiatives aimed at eradicating racism, classism, and other forms of cultural and economic oppression; and
- Supporting Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth in adopting life styles and polices that promote harmony with our natural environment.

## **Congregational Peacemaking**

We covenant to take up peacemaking as part of our mission through worship, religious education, and social action by:

- Developing Peace Teams to provide training in compassionate communication and conflict resolution and engage the congregation in multi-level action toward a culture of peace;
- Working through congregational governing bodies to develop and honor behavioral covenants in all aspects of congregational life;
- Working through our lifespan religious education structures to provide workshops on conflict resolution and compassionate communication, to encourage understanding and participation in social justice ventures, and to utilize Unitarian Universalist resources such as "Peacemaking in Congregations: A Guide to Learning Opportunities for All Ages;" and
- Becoming a peacemaking resource within our communities in cooperation with other faith traditions.

## **Interpersonal Peacemaking**

As individuals we covenant to:

- Learn and practice the skills of compassionate communication;
- Honor the behavioral covenants of our congregations; and
- Adopt lifestyle changes that reflect reverence for the interdependent web of all existence.

## **Inner Peacemaking**

We covenant to develop spiritual practices that impart internal peace.

In reverence for all life, we covenant to practice peace by minimizing violence at all levels of human interaction.

## Proposed Amendments to Bylaws and Rules

The following Bylaw amendments are placed on the agenda by the UUA Board of Trustees

The following proposed changes to Article II of the Bylaws are a result of a process initiated when the Board of Trustees appointed the Commission on Appraisal to serve as the study commission referred to in Bylaw Section C-15.1(c)(4). The Commission on Appraisal subsequently proposed changes which have been amended by the Board of Trustees.

### ARTICLE II: Covenant

#### Section C-2.1 Purposes.

This association of free yet interdependent congregations devotes its resources to and exercises its corporate powers for religious, educational, and humanitarian purposes. It supports the creation, vitality, and growth of congregations that aspire to live out the Unitarian Universalist Principles. Through public witness and advocacy, it advances the Principles in the world.

#### Section C 2.2. Sources.

Unitarian Universalism is rooted in two religious heritages. Both are grounded on thousands of years of Jewish and Christian teachings, traditions, and experiences. The Unitarian heritage has affirmed that we need not think alike to love alike and that God is one. The Universalist heritage has preached not hell but hope and courage, and the kindness and love of God. Contemporary Unitarian Universalists have reaped the benefits of a legacy of prophetic words and deeds.

Unitarian Universalism is not contained in any single book or creed. Its religious authority lies in the individual, nurtured and tested in the congregation and the wider world. As an evolving religion, it draws from the teachings, practices, and wisdom of the world's religions. Humanism, earth-centered spiritual traditions, and Eastern religions have served as vital sources. Unitarian Universalism has been influenced by mysticism, theism, skepticism, naturalism, and process thought as well as feminist and liberation theologies. It is informed by direct experiences of mystery and wonder, beauty and joy. It is enriched by the creative power of the arts, the guidance of reason, and the lessons of the sciences.

Grateful for the traditions that have strengthened our own, we seek to engage cultural and religious practices in ways that call us into right relationship with all.

## Section C-2.3 Principles.

Grateful for the gift of life, we commit ourselves as member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association to embody together the transforming power of love as we covenant to honor and uphold:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of democratic processes;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Reverence for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

As free yet interdependent congregations, we enter into this covenant, pledging to one another our mutual trust and support. Capable of both good and evil, at times we are in need of forgiveness and reconciliation. When we fall short of living up to this covenant, we will begin again in love, repair the relationship, and recommit to the promises we have made.

## Section C-2.4 Inclusion.

Systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories. We pledge to do all we can to replace such barriers with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. We strive to be an association of congregations that truly welcome all persons and commit to structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation.

## Section C-2.5 Freedom of Belief.

Congregational freedom is central to the Unitarian Universalist heritage.

Congregations may establish statements of purpose, covenants, and bonds of union so long as they do not require a statement of belief as a creedal test for membership; nor may the Association employ such a test for congregational affiliation.

The proposed text for Article II would replace the current Article II which is as follows:

## ARTICLE II Principles and Purposes

### Section C-2.1. Principles.

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

# 2009 TENTATIVE AGENDA AMENDMENTS TO BYLAWS & RULES

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## **Section C-2.2. Purposes.**

The Unitarian Universalist Association shall devote its resources to and exercise its corporate powers for religious, educational and humanitarian purposes. The primary purpose of the Association is to serve the needs of its member congregations, organize new congregations, extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalist institutions and implement its principles.

## **Section C-2.3. Non-discrimination.**

The Association declares and affirms its special responsibility, and that of its member congregations and organizations, to promote the full participation of persons in all of its and their activities and in the full range of human endeavor without regard to race, ethnicity, gender, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, age, language, citizenship status, economic status, or national origin and without requiring adherence to any particular interpretation of religion or to any particular religious belief or creed.

## **Section C-2.4. Freedom of Belief.**

Nothing herein shall be deemed to infringe upon the individual freedom of belief which is inherent in the Universalist and Unitarian heritages or to conflict with any statement of purpose, covenant, or bond of union used by any congregation unless such is used as a credal test.