

Unitarian and Universalist Affirmations of Faith, 1790-1985

Articles of Faith, Philadelphia Convention of Universalists (1790)

Section 1. OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to contain a revelation of the perfections and will of God, and the rule of faith and practice.

Section 2. OF THE SUPREME BEING. We believe in One God, infinite in all his perfections; and that these perfections are all modifications of infinite, adorable, incomprehensible and unchangeable Love.

Section 3. OF THE MEDIATOR. We believe that there is One Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; who, by giving himself a ransom for all, hath redeemed them to God by his blood; and who, by the merit of his death, and the efficacy of his Spirit, will finally restore the whole human race to happiness.

Section 4. OF THE HOLY GHOST. We believe in the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to make known to sinners the truth of their salvation, through the medium of the Holy Scriptures, and to reconcile the hearts of the children of men to God, and thereby dispose them to genuine holiness.

Section 5. OF GOOD WORK. We believe in the obligation of the moral law, as to the rule of life; and we hold that the love of God manifest to man in a Redeemer, is the best means of producing obedience to that law, and promoting a holy, active and useful life.

Winchester Profession of Belief, New England Convention of Universalists (1803)

Article I. We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a revelation of the character of God, and of the duty, interest and final destination of mankind.

Article II. We believe that there is one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness.

Article III. We believe that holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected, and that believers ought to be careful to maintain order and practice good works; for these things are good and profitable unto men.

As we believe these to be truths which deeply concern the honor of the Divine character and the interests of man, we do hereby declare that we continue to consider ourselves, and our societies in fellowship, a Denomination of Christians, distinct and separate from those who do not approve the whole of this Profession of Belief, as expressed in the three above Articles. ...

Yet while we, as an Association, adopt a general Profession of Belief and Plan of Church Government, we leave it to the several Churches and Societies, or to smaller associations of churches, if such should be formed, within the limits of our General Association, to continue or adopt within themselves, such more particular articles of faith, or modes of discipline, as may appear to them best under their particular circumstances, provided they do not disagree with our general Profession and Plan.

And while we consider that every Church possesses within itself all the powers of self-government, we earnestly and affectionately recommend to every Church, Society, or particular Association, to exercise the spirit of Christian meekness and charity towards those who have different modes of faith or practice, that where the brethren cannot see alike, they may agree to differ; and let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

American Unitarian Association Statement of Purpose (1825)

The objects of this association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity throughout our country.

American Unitarian Association Statement of Beliefs (1853)

We desire, in a denominational capacity, to assert our profound belief in the Divine origin, the Divine authority, the Divine sanctions of the religion of Jesus Christ. This is the basis of our associated action. We desire openly to declare our belief as a denomination, so far as it can be officially represented by the American Unitarian Association, that God, moved by his own love, did raise up Jesus to aid in our redemption from sin, did by him pour a fresh flood of purifying life through the withered veins of humanity and along the corrupted channels of the world, and is, by his religion, forever sweeping the nations with regenerating gales from heaven, and visiting the hearts of men with celestial solicitations. We receive the teachings of Christ, separated from all foreign admixtures and later accretions, as infallible truth from God.

WE BELIEVE in one God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Father of spirits, the righteous Governor and Judge of the world.

WE BELIEVE in Jesus Christ, the everlasting Son of God, the express image of the Father, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the God-head bodily, and who to us is the Way and the Truth and the Life.

WE BELIEVE in the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, the teacher, renewer, and guide of mankind.

WE BELIEVE in the Holy Catholic Church as the body and form of the Holy Spirit, and the presence of Christ in all ages.

WE BELIEVE in the Regeneration of the human heart, which, being created upright, but corrupted by sin, is renewed and restored by the power of Christian truth.

WE BELIEVE in the constant Atonement whereby God in Christ is reconciling the world to himself.

WE BELIEVE in the Resurrection from mortal to immortality, in a future judgment and Eternal Life.

WE BELIEVE in the coming of the Kingdom of God, and the final triumph of Christian Truth.

National Conference of Unitarian Churches Statement of Purpose (1865)

Whereas, the great opportunities and demands for Christian labor and consecration at this time increase our sense of the obligations of all disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ to prove their faith by self-denial and by the devotion of their lives and possessions to the service of God and the building up of the Kingdom of his Son, therefore, the Christian churches of the Unitarian faith here assembled unite themselves in a common body to the end of reorganizing and stimulating the denomination with which they are connected to the largest exertions in the cause of Christian faith and work.

Ames Covenant (1880)

[Written by Unitarian minister Charles Gordon Ames; adopted by many congregations, often in revised form.]

In the freedom of truth,
and in the spirit of Jesus Christ,
we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

James Freeman Clarke's Five Points of Unitarian Faith (1886)

[Adopted as a faith statement by many congregations.]

The Fatherhood of God;
The Brotherhood of Man;
The Leadership of Jesus;
Salvation by Character;
The continuity of human development in all worlds, or the progress of mankind onward and upward forever.

Blake Covenant (1894)

[Written by Unitarian minister James Vila Blake; adopted by many congregations, often in revised form.]

Love is the spirit of this church,
and service is its law.

This is our great covenant:
to dwell together in peace,
to seek the truth in love,
and to help one another.

Boston Declaration, Universalist General Convention (1899)

The conditions of fellowship in this Convention shall be as follows: The acceptance of the essential principles of the Universalist faith, to wit: The Universal Fatherhood of God; The spiritual authority and leadership of His Son, Jesus Christ; the trustworthiness of the Bible as containing a revelation from God; the certainty of just retribution for sin; the final harmony of all souls with God. The Winchester Profession is commended as containing these principles, but neither this, nor any other precise form of words, is required as a condition of fellowship, provided always that the principles above stated be professed.

Declaration of Social Principles, Universalist General Convention (1917)

The Universalist Church recognizes the fact that no individual and no nation can live a completely effective Christian life in an unchristian social order. We therefore declare the primal task of the church of to-day to be the reconstruction of the world's civilization in terms of justice, peace and righteousness, so that the spiritual life of all may develop to its fullest capacity. ...

The Universalist Church offers a complete program for completing humanity:

First: An Economic Order which shall give to every human being an equal share in the common gifts of God, and in addition all that he shall earn by his own labor.

Second: A Social Order in which there shall be equal rights for all, special privilege for none, the help of the strong for the weak until the weak become strong.

Third: A Moral Order in which all human law and action shall be the expression of the moral order of the universe.

Fourth: A Spiritual Order which shall build out of the growing lives of living men the growing temple of the living God.

Williams Covenant (1933)

[Written by Universalist minister J. Griswold Williams; adopted by many congregations, often in revised form.]

Love is the doctrine of this church,
the quest of truth is its sacrament
and service is its prayer.

To dwell together in peace,
to seek knowledge in freedom,
to serve mankind in fellowship,
to the end that all souls shall grow into harmony with the divine,
thus do we covenant with each other and with God.

Universalist Bond of Fellowship (1935)

The bond of fellowship in this Convention shall be a common purpose to do the will of God as Jesus revealed it and to co-operate in establishing the kingdom for which he lived and died. To that end, we avow our faith in God as Eternal and All-Conquering Love, in the spiritual

leadership of Jesus, in the supreme worth of every human personality, in the authority of truth known or to be known, and in the power of men of goodwill and sacrificial spirit to overcome evil and progressively establish the Kingdom of God.

Unitarian Universalist Principles (1961)

The Association, dedicated to the principles of a free faith, shall:

- (a) Support the free and disciplined search for truth as the foundation of religious fellowship;
- (b) Cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized in the Judeo-Christian heritage as love to God and love to humankind;
- (c) Affirm, defend, and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships;
- (d) Implement the vision of one world by striving for a world community founded on ideals of brotherhood, justice, and peace;
- (e) Serve the needs of member societies;
- (f) Organize new churches and fellowships and otherwise extend and strengthen liberal religion;
- (g) Encourage cooperation among people of good will in every land.

Principles and Purposes (1985)

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. [Added in 1995]

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.