

Moral Values for a Pluralistic Society

2007 Statement of Conscience

Moral values increasingly frame public discourse. As Unitarian Universalists, we must affirm the moral influence of liberal religion in society.

At great personal risk, the forebears of our faith have taken public positions on issues of consequence such as religious freedom, abolition, women's suffrage, and civil rights.

This tradition continues in our advocacy of the freedom to marry.

People often make religious claims about controversial issues such as reproductive rights, stem cell research, the death penalty, and the teaching of evolution. Their efforts to advocate one perspective, to the exclusion of others, are influencing every branch and level of government. Consequently, the United States is moving away from its constitutionally mandated separation of church and state.

It is time for Unitarian Universalists to assert and defend two basic principles underlying the United States Constitution: (1) the basic principle of freedom, the right of all human beings to follow a life of their choosing as long as others are not harmed, and (2) the basic principle of the inherent equal dignity of all human beings, which includes the right of all human beings to equal justice.

Our moral values are drawn from many sources. We are a blended family with diverse theologies but common moral values. "Values" can be defined as principles or qualities considered worthwhile by members of communities holding them and "morals" as discernment of behaviors that contribute to well-being. We recognize that we live in a moral context that spans many levels—planetary ecology, societies, cultures, individuals, cells, and molecules that we depend upon for our individual and organizational well-being.

As an Association, we have covenanted to affirm and promote each of our seven Principles.

The moral values of Unitarian Universalism correspond profoundly with those embodied in the founding documents of our nation. The Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution embody freedom of religion, the right of conscience, and the worth and dignity of every person.

Like the values to which we aspire as Americans, our Unitarian Universalist values are distilled from the hopes, dreams, experiences, and struggles of all who honor them. Our Unitarian Universalist Principles parallel the Ends Principle, the Golden Rule, and the founding documents of this nation. History shows the dire consequences when this core morality is rejected. Although our country has not fully implemented the

promises of its founding documents to all of its people, we Unitarian Universalists strive to help this nation fulfill those promises.

Arising from our Principles, the common denominators of Unitarianism Universalist values are Compassion, Justice, Equity, The Right of Conscience, Reason, and Respect for Others. As Unitarian Universalists, we have a responsibility to give voice to the moral values on which our faith is grounded, not only with a statement of conscience but through acts of conscience that honor the values we espouse.

As individuals, let us:

- Speak out on moral issues with clarity and confidence;
- Listen to people with whom we find ourselves in conflict, recognizing them as our neighbors, our kin;
- Model a religion that embraces liberalism and morality; and
- Apply our moral values to improve society.

As congregations, let us:

- State the moral grounding of our social justice agendas;
- Speak collectively on moral issues;
- Give ourselves clear and accessible language to describe our moral values; and
- Urge our religious leaders to proclaim our moral values in the public square.

As an association of interdependent congregations, let us:

- Speak out forcefully on issues using Unitarian Universalist moral values;
- Articulate Unitarian Universalist values and their application to living with respect and compassion;
- Support civil liberties and the separation of church and state; and
- Work across faith, cultural, and national boundaries to cultivate a Beloved Global Community.

Let us proclaim Unitarian Universalist moral values to our communities and our nation. We will reinvigorate our living tradition so that it is visible, audible, and valued in the public square.