

Proposed Substitute Sections for Statement of Conscience – January 11, 2008¹

St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church, Cincinnati

Peace and Justice² (*Proposed Substitute for "Peacemaking" Title*)

I. Introduction (*Proposed Substitute for Lines 1-10*)

1. This Statement of Conscience results from a multi-year search for common ground between pacifism and just war initiated by a Peacemaking congregational study action issue:

Should Unitarian Universalists reject the use of any and all kinds of violence and war to resolve disputes between peoples and nations and adopt a principle of seeking just peace through non-violent means?

2. While universally desiring peace, UUs have enduring differences over when, if ever, lethal force is an appropriate response to aggression or injustice. We have repeatedly opposed the unjust use of force in international relations but in many situations have accepted military action as a last resort for lawful self defense as well as for properly authorized multilateral collective security, peacekeeping, and international policing to prevent crimes against humanity. When addressing irreconcilable differences we honor the democratic process, a commitment to the free and responsible search for truth, and community in covenant. UU Statements of Conscience, whether for or against the use of force, require a two-thirds super majority at General Assembly, and those who disagree have the "right of conscience" under our fifth principle to disregard any call to action that violates their convictions.³

II. Theology and History⁴ (*Proposed Substitute for Lines 11-30*)

1. Unitarian Universalist principles affirm our commitment to both peace and justice, values that have led to nonviolent resistance against unjust wars as well as to support for military action in self defense and for humanitarian ends. Our hymnal contains music that celebrates heroes who died for justice and readings that promote forceful resistance to tyranny⁵ as well as peace songs and eloquent calls for active nonviolence.⁶ Based on our principle affirming "the inherent worth and dignity of every person" some UU pacifists unconditionally oppose all war while many others are selective conscientious objectors.

2. In the 19th Century critics of the Mexican American War approved the war to abolish slavery.

¹ Four substitute sections are proposed for the November 2008 Commission on Social Witness draft. Considerable CSW draft language has been retained in the final section "Calls to Action" in *italicized text* with original line numbers. Footnotes explain recommended additions/deletions and changes. University of Cincinnati Professor of Political Science and adjunct Professor of Law Howard Tolley chaired the St. John's Peace Team, and the minister, the Rev. Frank Carpenter of the CSAI core team collaborated in the drafting. Helpful feedback on prior versions of the St. John's recommendations was received from CSAI core team member Provost Sharon Welch of Meadville Lombard Seminary, Rev. Paul Rasor director of the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom at Virginia Wesleyan College and several others. Further discussion of the proposals are planned for a January 17-18 class at Meadville and a Peace Theology Symposium at St. John's on March 7, 2009.

² "Peace and Justice" is more appropriate than the title "Peacemaking" -- a narrowly defined policy that applies to multilateral international dispute resolution procedures on a continuum of approaches that also includes "peacekeeping" and "peace building" as distinct from use of the military for "peace enforcement."

³ This introductory section offers a substitute for the opening of the CSW draft by providing an immediate, direct response to the CSAI question.

⁴ This proposed revision to the "Theology and History" section from the CSW draft identifies UU core principles supporting the SOC and provides concrete illustrations of practices that illustrate the difficulty of reconciling our commitment to both peace and justice.

⁵ "Forward Through the Ages," Hymn #114, "The Limits of Tyrants" Frederick Douglas, Reading #579.

⁶ "Dona Nobis Pacem" Hymn #388, and "It is possible to live in peace" Mohandas K. Gandhi Reading #577.

In the 20th Century most but not all Unitarian Universalists supported both World Wars. Most but not all opposed the Vietnam War, and the Beacon Press publication of the Pentagon Papers contributed to the anti-war movement. When the UUA president endorsed the bombing of Kosovo to stop ethnic cleansing, some opposed that use of force for humanitarian intervention. At the outset of the 21st Century, General Assembly has both supported enforcement of a no fly zone to stop genocide in Darfur and objected to a preemptive attack on Iran. In 2007 the UUA Social Justice Office collaborated in organizing protests in Washington against the Iraq war and the UUA President called on the U.S. to apologize for its military intervention. We approach disputes over war with humility, recognizing that our wisdom is limited and that no choice can be final.

3. This Statement of Conscience is grounded in the following theological principles:
 - A. The fundamental unity and interdependence of all existence, which leads us to see the peoples of the world as one community.
 - B. The inherent worth and dignity of all persons, including the right to a meaningful and fulfilling life, which tells us that war inherently violates the right to life itself and restricts the possibilities for human fulfillment.
 - C. Just and inclusive communities based on respect for human rights, non-coercive institutions, and shared power.
 - D. Fundamental human freedom, expressed in our striving for fulfillment and liberation; this includes recognizing the limits of our freedom and our dual capacities for good and evil.

III. Commitment to Just and Lasting Peace⁷ (*Proposed Substitute for Lines 31-78*)

1. Religious leaders and scholars seeking a third way between pacifism and just war have promoted “just peacemaking” and “just policing,” approaches that offer considerable common ground in fulfilling the moral responsibility to protect without taking life to save lives. Both the just war emphasis on last resort and the pacifist emphasis on nonviolence imply an obligation to seek nonviolent alternatives. All can support a variety of nonviolent diplomatic and development alternatives to traditional military intervention as a first response when refugees flee civil war or governments slaughter innocent victims:

- A. peacekeeping—intervention to monitor a ceasefire and prevent large scale war,
- B. peacemaking—mediating between hostile parties, negotiating equitable and sustainable peace agreements that include attention to the pressing need for post-conflict restoration and reconciliation.
- C. peacebuilding— the creation of long-term structures for redressing injustice and resolving ongoing conflict, as well as addressing the root causes of armed conflict -- economic exploitation, political marginalization, and lack of judicial accountability for those who commit war crimes and crimes against humanity.

2. These alternative responses to violence can significantly reduce the divide between advocates of just war and advocates of nonviolence by promoting joint efforts to prevent war, stop genocide, and repair the damage caused by armed conflict. Just peacemaking and international policing offer those engaged in nonviolent resistance to unjust war a viable non-military alternative while offering those prepared to use force as a last resort a credible precondition to military action.

- A. We categorically reject the preventive war doctrine proclaimed in the 2002 US National Security Strategy, and support diplomacy, economic development, education, international law, just peacemaking and the democratic process as critical means to prevent war.
- B. We support U.S. unilateral or multilateral military action only when employed as a last resort in accord with UUA principles and policies and international law for a) lawful self defense against aggression or b) international policing to stop crimes against humanity.

⁷ This section substitutes for three from the CSW draft on Pacifism and Just War, Human Biology, and Just Peacemaking in order to provide an improved explanation of key concepts.

- C. We insist that military action whether against state or non-state actors be conducted in accord with the Geneva Conventions.
- D. We support individual members who claim conscientious objector status in time of war based on the first UUA principle affirming “the inherent worth and dignity of every person” and insist that those who perform military service comply with humanitarian law.
- E. We support the International Criminal Court and due process for military personnel accused of war crimes whether prosecuted in national tribunals or subject to ICC jurisdiction when improperly shielded from prosecution at the national level.
- F. We support ongoing research to improve our understanding of war and commit ourselves to apply better knowledge to public policy and law.

IV. Calls to Action⁸ *(Proposed Partial Substitute for Lines 79-127. Original Draft in italics)*

1. As people of faith committed to peace and justice, as an Association, as congregations, and as individuals we advocate non-violence and honor the right of conscience when our members disagree on whether the use of force as a last resort is legitimate or unjust. We covenant to work for justice, peace, and equity through nonviolent means locally and throughout the world.

Denominational

A. Reaffirm past GA resolutions on nuclear disarmament, the 1967 Resolution on Conscientious Objection, and the 1979 “New Call to Peacemaking” offering support to war tax resisters.

B. *95 Support the establishment of a national network or working group among Unitarian
96 Universalists to identify and disseminate information on peacemaking programs and
97 resources.*

C. Require that public statements by UUA officers speaking on behalf of the denomination in opposition to war or in support of U.S. military action have prior, formal approval by the Board of Trustees or clear reference to a GA policy resolution, unless those officers make clear that they are speaking solely for themselves in exercise of their own right of conscience.⁹

D. Acknowledge that members who reject denominational or church resolutions that either approve or oppose military force have the “right of conscience” under our fifth principle to disregard any call to action that violates their principles.

E. Support peaceful protest including nonviolent civil disobedience against military aggression, racial oppression, environmental destruction or other injustice recognizing that as citizens in a democracy we have a responsibility to protest and bear public witness for peace when our government engages in the unjust use of force,

F. Support and respect those who following UU principles engage in military service and chaplaincy, past and present, who courageously risk their lives in national service. Our peacemaking efforts directed toward policy makers recognize the extraordinary sacrifice of individuals choosing military service.

L. Support education that nurtures respect for nonviolence in our youth, informing them of their right to choose freely between pacifism, just war, and just peacemaking principles. For those youth who elect to make a formal commitment as a conscientious objector to war we will offer documented certification and ceremonial recognition of their commitment to nonviolence based on UU principles.

106 Congregational

107 We covenant to take up peacemaking as part of our mission through worship, religious education,

⁸ This section has been reorganized to use sub-headings from the 2006 SOC for three levels of action. *Text in italics* with line numbers taken from CSW draft.

⁹ UUA Bylaws C-8.2 “the President . . . is responsible to the Board of Trustees.” Section C-4.2. Powers and Duties. “General Assemblies shall make overall policy for carrying out the purposes of the Association and shall direct and control its affairs.” And Section 4.12 on Statements of Conscience as providing “Association policy.”

108 and social action by:

Amending Bylaws and other statements of mission and purpose to include commitments to both peace and justice

Identifying our church as a place of peace with aesthetic displays such as peace cranes or a Peace Pole.

109 · Developing Peace Teams to provide training in compassionate communication and conflict

110 resolution and engage the congregation in multi-level action toward a culture of peace;

111 · Working through congregational governing bodies to develop and honor behavioral

112 covenants in all aspects of congregational life;

113 · Working through our lifespan religious education structures to provide workshops on conflict

114 resolution and compassionate communication, to encourage understanding and participation

115 in social justice ventures, and to utilize Unitarian Universalist resources such as “Peacemaking

116 in Congregations: A Guide to Learning Opportunities for All Ages;” and

117 · Becoming a peacemaking resource within our communities in cooperation with other faith

118 traditions.

To invest congregational assets in socially and environmentally responsible funds and to encourage periodic financial contributions to peace initiatives by the UUA, UUSC, national, and local allies.

To promote sustainable economic development, peace and environmental education, the rule of law, diplomacy, mutual gains conflict resolution, consensus building, and the democratic process to prevent violence.

119 Individual

120 Peace within the individual creates the potential for all other peace. As individuals we covenant to: seek inner peace by overcoming negative emotions within ourselves

121 · Learn and practice the skills of compassionate communication;

122 · Honor the behavioral covenants of our congregations; and

123 · Adopt lifestyle changes that reflect reverence for the interdependent web of all existence.

Advocacy Goals

Support policies and institutions that *move the United States toward collaborative leadership in building a peaceful, just, and sustainable world. These include: 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 its work for human rights and justice and 91 addressing structural violence in all its forms;

92 · Supporting interfaith groups such as the Center on Conscience and War in advocating for the

93 right of conscientious objection, including education and resources on the availability of this

94 option; and Collaborating with peace networks such as the Olive Branch Interfaith Peace

Partnership

Exploring and evaluating the systematic and institutional forms of preventing war and responding to genocide and crimes against humanity, such as the Preventive Defense Project, the 3 D security Initiative, and the United Nations Emergency Peace Service.¹⁰

99 We covenant to act in the wider community in reducing the causes of structural violence. We do this 100 through: 101 · Supporting the socially responsible investment of our Association and congregational assets;

102 · Supporting Association and congregational initiatives aimed at eradicating racism, classism,

103 and other forms of cultural and economic oppression; and

104 · Supporting Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth in adopting life styles and polices that

105 promote harmony with our natural environment.

¹⁰ http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/project/2/preventive_defense_project.html (UU William Perry), <http://www.3dsecurity.org/>, <http://www.globalactionpw.org/unepps/index.htm>