

St. Johns' Unitarian Universalist Church Peacemaking Pledge:- 4/27/08

As part of the UUA 2006-2010 Congregational Study Action Issue, on April 27, 2008, the St. Johns' congregation formally resolved:

1. To amend our Mission Statement by adding "peace" to social justice:
Our Mission: St. John's is committed to creating a safe and caring community, working for **peace and** social justice, and celebrating beliefs that respect freedom of thought.
2. To recommend that the Board propose a Bylaws amendment for approval at the annual Congregational Meeting to add the amended Mission Statement to Bylaws Article IV Purpose.
3. To amend our Covenant adopted November 22, 1998 by replacing the promise
 - "To create and promote programs that begin at home to support justice, and equity, locally and throughout the world." with
 - **To work diligently for justice, peace, and equity through nonviolent means locally and throughout the world.**
4. To make a primary, church-wide, long-term commitment to **Peace and Justice** in the Strategic Plan *that goes beyond Social Action and inspires all congregational activities:*
5. To identify our church building as a place of peace with aesthetic displays such as peace cranes and a Peace Pole on the front lawn with the inscription "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in a different language for each side, including Hungarian,
6. To nurture respect for nonviolence in our youth, educating them in pacifist and just war principles and in their right to choose freely between conscientious objection and military service. For those youth who elect to make a formal commitment as a conscientious objector to war we will provide certification of their commitment to nonviolence based on UU principles.
7. To support peaceful protest including nonviolent civil disobedience against injustice such as military aggression, racial oppression, environmental destruction.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. To maintain a church-wide Committee on International, Environmental, Societal, Interpersonal, Congregational, and Inner Peacemaking responsible for implementation and annual reports.

Peacemaking Task Force Background Paper 4/27/08 [NOT FOR VOTE]

From January to March 2008 The Task Force convened six sessions for consideration of principles and commitments to action that resulted in the following draft – a work in progress to be further revised and implemented based on action taken on the 10 proposals for adoption at the Special Congressional meeting of April 27. [brackets denote absence of consensus on draft text]

I. Peacemaking for International War, Sectarian Violence, and Civil War

1. U.S. unilateral or multilateral military action is only justified when employed as a last resort in accord with UUA principles and policies and international law for a) self defense or b) humanitarian intervention to stop genocide or mass slaughter and when using non-nuclear weapons in accord with the Geneva Conventions.

2. In accord with our Fifth principle affirming the “right of conscience and use of the democratic process” pacifist members who reject “just war” may disavow denominational or church resolutions approving military force in self-defense or for humanitarian intervention.

3. Based on the first UU principle affirming “the inherent worth and dignity of every person” individual members may claim conscientious objector status if conscripted to military service in time of war; international law forbids those who serve from committing war crimes, even when ordered to do so by commanding officers.

4. We respect those in uniform, past and present, and on Memorial and Veterans Day pay special tribute to those who have courageously risked their lives in national service. Our peacemaking efforts directed toward policy makers recognize the extraordinary sacrifice of individuals called to military service.

5. U.S. military personnel and superior officers accused of war crimes are entitled to due process in consideration of alleged misconduct in national military tribunals, but if improperly granted impunity for political reasons they should be subject to universal jurisdiction exercised by the International Criminal Court.

Commitment to Action -- We pledge

1. To continue peacemaking activities undertaken prior to this initiative -- participate in weekly and monthly peace vigils organized by Women in Black protesting the U.S. intervention in Iraq, educating members about casualties from the Iraq War in the weekly Order of Service, and scheduling periodic services on a peace theme near appropriate dates such as September 21 International Peace Day.

2. To recognize those youth who seek formal certification as Conscientious objectors based on UU principles as part of the Bridging Out or other ceremony.

3. To support Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center efforts in Cincinnati public schools to assure that military recruiters have no greater access to students than other recruiters and to educate students in alternative options.

II. Societal Peacemaking Creating and maintaining a peaceful and just society requires

1. Transformation of a culture of violence that embraces gun ownership and music, video, and computer entertainment that simulates and glorifies disregard for human worth and dignity.

2. Community-oriented conflict resolution. tolerance of differences, respect for human dignity and rights, and provision of access to means for expression by all persons in a community, regardless of race, economic status, gender, nationality, heritage or sexual orientation.

3. Opposition to individual as well as systemic violence, institutionalized racism, sexism.

Commitment to Action -- We pledge

1. To serve and sell at church functions Equal Exchange, organic, and sustainably grown products.

2. To continue to honor our commitments as active ‘Friends of the Collaborative’ in Cincinnati.

III. Interpersonal, Congregational, and Inner Peacemaking

1. Compassionate consciousness in communication requires non-evaluative observations instead of judgments, honoring and respecting other's feelings, awareness of our universal needs, and a willingness to find strategies to meet everyone's needs.
2. [Resolution of church disputes requires a process that acknowledges the creative potential in difference of opinion while seeking consensus. Power struggles and remedies mandated by uninformed third parties may cause alienation and estrangement from the community.] Resolution of church disputes requires a consensus process. Power struggles and remedies mandated by third parties cause alienation and estrangement from the community. Resolving differences requires patient understanding of all parties' needs, cultures, perceptions, and interests.
3. Peace within the individual creates the potential for all other peace. Inner peace is achieved by overcoming negative emotions within oneself.

Commitment to Action -- We pledge

1. To invite speakers with experience in Non-Violent Communication to give introductory presentations and begin a practice group within the Adult RE Program beginning in fall 2008.
2. [To develop guidelines for creation of group covenants for social groups, committees, staff and Boards so that our members can be in Right Relations in all their congregational work. The guidelines will include means for handling conflicts by the Committee on Congregational Concerns (COCC) and the Committee on Achieving Congregational Harmony (COACH), the Alban Institute, and UUA sources. Opportunities for training in decision-making approaches will be provided.] These will include methods to reach consensus, when third-party mediation is helpful or necessary, and other techniques to nurture inclusive and respectful communications. To develop a members' and staff covenant of Right Relationships, including guidelines for handling conflicts by the COCC and COACH, and to provide training in decision-making approaches, such as consensus, that are inclusive and respectful.
3. To support members working to find inner peace, and continue to offer meditation and other spiritual practices for learning to overcome [the affect of] negative emotions.

IV. Peacemaking with Planet Earth

1. [All] Human [activities] political, economic, industrial, agricultural and other systems must 'respect the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part' in order to sustain a planet that enables peaceful life to continue.
2. Conclusive scientific evidence of climate change warrants taking immediate precautionary measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and costly use of fossil fuels.
3. Ecological knowledge must inform education in the humanities and social sciences as well as the natural sciences to assure understanding of how inventions and policies impact the environment.
4. Earth's destiny is our destiny. Environmental justice--sustaining biodiversity, preserving the planet's natural wonders--is an ethical responsibility to this and future generations.
- [5. On a finite planet, peace, equity, and sustainability are inseparably linked. (David Korten, The Great Turning.) If we want peace, we must work for environmental justice.]

Commitment to Action -- We pledge

1. To achieve Green Sanctuary accreditation [within two years] and to expand awareness of the UU Ministry for Earth.
2. To promote environmental responsibility in all Church purchases, resource use, travel, waste disposal and recycling.
3. To host or support an event on behalf of a selected community environmental group where all food prepared is locally produced using permaculture, sustainable agricultural practices.

4. To collaborate with other UU, national and local organizations such as the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center (IJPC) and Cincinnati Non-Violent Communication Planning Committee, Blue-Green Alliance, Imago.