



Unitarian Universalist District of Metropolitan New York

Anti-Racism and Diversity Committee

January 4, 2010

Dear Congregational Leader,

For many years, those of us involved in the work of dismantling racism and other systems of privilege and oppression have heard people ask for a more positive way to frame this work. The words “anti-racism,” “anti-oppression” and “non-discrimination” all begin by defining what we oppose instead of what we seek.

Thanks to the hard work of the UUA Commission on Appraisal (COA), we have a wonderful new way to engage in this discussion—by using the language of inclusion. By making the discussion about inclusion, we acknowledge the existence of inequality and oppression while focusing our efforts towards a positive outcome: that all might be welcome and included in our communities of faith.

We are asking every congregation in the Metro New York District to engage in this conversation with us. In order to make sure this happens, we are sending this packet of information and resources (which includes, among other things, a ready-to-go workshop) to ministers, religious educators, congregational Presidents, and both social justice and denominational affairs chairpeople. In addition, because this work began at the last General Assembly, we are sending this to all MNYD attendees to GA. We apologize if you get this more than once; we hope that by sending this to so many people a team can be easily formed to begin this conversation.

At General Assembly 2009, the COA presented a proposal for changes to Article II of the UUA By-Laws, which include our Principles, Sources and Purposes. Among the proposals were changes to the section currently entitled “Non-Discrimination;” the COA proposed a new language, entitled “Inclusion.” While the proposal failed to pass the GA in its entirety, many wished that we could vote separately on the language of inclusion—and instructed the Board to put it on the agenda for GA 2011. Between now and then, the GA delegates asked congregations to take up this work (as we were reminded by a letter from the UUA Board last month, included at the end of this packet).

It is our hope that every congregation in the Metro New York District will, at a minimum, convene a discussion on this topic between now and April. Where that discussion should happen—at the Board, in Small Group Ministry, in an after-service forum or a special meeting—will depend on your congregation. We will be collecting stories of these discussions to pass along to the UUA for a report at the 2010 General Assembly.

It might be possible to tie these discussions to upcoming events. The celebration of the birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, provides us with an opportunity to discuss inclusion in the

context of his dream of racial equity. The UUA's *Standing on the Side of Love* campaign hopes that congregations will use Valentine's Day to address issues related to justice and love—this is certainly one.

We hope that you will also consider changing your own congregational by-laws to add a section on inclusion (which would replace language on non-discrimination if that's in there already). Further, we encourage congregations to engage in ongoing work to determine how our policies, procedures and congregational culture can make real the goals in this work.

Members of the ARDC will be following up with your congregation in the coming weeks. We hope to help you along in this process in whatever ways would be most beneficial to your congregation. If you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact the Rev. Dr. Michael Tino, ARDC co-chairperson at mtino@uuma.org or 919-949-1158 (cell phone).

We look forward to seeing how this work transforms our congregations, our district and our world.

In faith and with great hope,

The Metro New York Anti-Racism and Diversity Committee

The Rev. Dr. Michael Tino and the Rev. Wendy Pantoja, co-chairpeople

Adopting the Language and Policies of Inclusion Resources for Congregations

Background

The Committee on Appraisal of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations undertook a review of Article II of the UUA Bylaws during the period 2006 to 2009. Their work resulted in the recommendation of a number of changes to Article II of the UUA Bylaws. One of the proposed revisions is the replacement of the current “non-discrimination” section with language of inclusion.

Although the proposed revisions were narrowly defeated at the 2009 General Assembly in Salt Lake City, the discussion prompted the Delegates to adopt a responsive resolution urging the delegates to act upon the pledge and covenant contained in the proposed inclusion language, and to report back to the UUA Board of Trustees before the 2010 General Assembly.

The Metro New York District’s Anti-Racism and Diversity Committee has created this packet of resources, including a ready-to-go workshop, to provide congregations with an opportunity to discuss the concepts set forth in the inclusion provision.

The workshop can be used as an after-Sunday service one-hour gathering, as a Small Group Ministry (Covenant Group) session, as part of a pot luck supper or as the material for a special Board of Trustees meeting.

The proposed bylaw for use by congregations is below:

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 a congregation that truly welcomes all persons and commits to structuring congregational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone’s participation.

“Workshop in a Box:” Hospitality and Inclusion

Opening Reading; Chalice Lighting

UUA Principles read by facilitators, as found in the beginning of *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Check-in

Have participants go around the room and briefly check in about what’s going well in their lives.

Community Practices

If the group has not already done so, create a covenant amongst participants for the workshop. This addresses how the group will be in community with each other.

Word Web

“Inclusion” What does it mean?

Ask every participant to think about what the word “inclusion” means, share words and ideas that will be noted on a chart paper web (where related words are grouped near one another and connected; you may do a simple list if this is easier), and then ask each person to report his or her understanding.

The leader(s) will then prompt discussion: How can you be inclusive if there is not a common understanding of the term?

Hospitality

How do we make people feel welcome? Ask every participant to contemplate a time when she or he felt included, and a time when he or she felt excluded.

1. The group, if large enough, can be broken into groups of two or three for this discussion. Each person should be invited to share instances of inclusion and instances of exclusion. [Examples to prompt discussion: Being the favorite child (or not being the favorite child), sports teams in gym class selecting their own team members, the American Idol elimination process, being (or not being) the teacher’s pet, generational issues, diversity, accessibility, being the “only” _____ in the room.]
2. There should be a de-briefing by each dyad or triad, and the leaders should summarize the common themes.

Language of Inclusion

The leaders should read the proposed inclusion language

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 a congregation that truly welcomes all persons and commits to structuring congregational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone’s participation.

The leaders should encourage the participants to think about the language. This will be our future. Remember what was discussed.

Extinguish the Chalice

Use Reading #576, "A Litany of Restoration," by the Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley. It can be read responsively with the group or two people can take turns with it.

Involving Children in the Discussion of Inclusion: Multigenerational Components

Stories and Songs for Children

"Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer"

"The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus (other resources available at <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/LIBERTY/lazarus.html>)

"Hello" song (Children's Hymnal)

The Story of Ruby Bridges by Robert Coles

Through My Eyes by Ruby Bridges (especially if done during Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend).

Squizzy the Black Squirrel, by Chuck Stone

No Mirrors In My Nana's House, by Ysaye Maria Barnwell (this is both a song sung by Sweet Honey in the Rock and also a lovely children's book with illustrations by Synthia Saint James)

Chrysanthemum, by Kevin Henkes

We Are Best Friends, by Alike

The Hundred Dresses, by Eleanor Estes

Swimmy, by Leo Lionni

Your Move, by Eve Bunting

Crow Boy, by Taro Yashima

Why War Is Never a Good Idea, by Alice Walker

Worship Elements on the Theme of Inclusion

Hymns

In Singing the Living Tradition:

We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table - #407

As with all traditional African-American spirituals, it is good to honor the privilege with which we sing this song today. The Rev. Phyllis Hubbell in 2004 said of this song and the theology of hospitality and justice that it espouses: "...The Welcome Table, honored in the Jewish tradition by the Seder table at which one seat is left empty for Elijah, or for the stranger. Modeled in the Christian tradition by Jesus' radical table fellowship with sinners and prostitutes. Sung of in the African American tradition as the future reign of justice and freedom."

Come, Come, Whoever You Are - #188

Based on a poem popularly attributed to 13th century poet Jalaluddin Rumi, this hymn can be seen as casting a covenant of inclusion for a group gathered to worship. The original text has also been translated as follows (which makes a lovely reading):

*Come again, please, come again,
Whoever you are.
Religious, infidel, heretic or pagan.
Even if you promised a hundred times
And a hundred times you broke your promise,
This door is not the door
Of hopelessness and frustration.
This door is open for everybody.
Come, come as you are.*

We Would Be One - #318

This hymn, set to the traditional hymn tune Finlandia, was written to celebrate the merger of the American Unitarian Youth and the Universalist Youth Fellowship to form Liberal Religious Youth. Sam Wright, who wrote these words, was the first executive director of LRY. The formation of LRY in 1953 pre-dated the consolidation of the Unitarians and Universalists by eight years, and thus this hymn can also be understood to honor the prophetic voices of our youth even as it sings of the broader theme of inclusion and unity.

We'll Build A Land - #121

For many, this is a powerful hymn of the possibility of justice, with words adapted from the Hebrew prophets Isaiah and Amos. Others, however, react differently to this hymn. Many Native Americans, for example, see the words of this hymn as an unfortunate reminder of the theological justification with which Europeans colonized the Americas and slaughtered indigenous peoples. If you choose this hymn, please be sensitive to these multiple interpretations.

Other possibilities include:

O Life That Maketh All Things New - #12

Though I May Speak With Bravest Fire - #34

One More Step - #168

In Singing The Journey:

Thula Klizeo - #1056

This hymn is Zulu chant written by Joseph Shabalala on trip to New York City in 1988. He missed his home in South Africa, and with apartheid still in effect, he did not know if he would ever be allowed to return. He said, "Be still my heart, even here I am at home." Shabalala's simple and powerful hymn, which he has invited Unitarian Universalists to sing, can be used to help us connect with the feeling of being at home in a place that is far from our family, ancestors and birthplace. What would it mean to make our congregations this sort of home for spiritual seekers of all backgrounds? The power in chants like *Thula Klizeo* is in the depth of the meaning, its connection to the traditions of the past and its defiance for a better tomorrow.

Standing on the Side of Love - #1014

This hymn was written by the Rev. Jason Shelton in 2004 to honor the Reverend William Sinkford, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, for his prophetic witness in being one of the leading voices of our movement in the Marriage Equality issue. It has since become something of an anthem for the movement, taking a central role in several congregational initiatives around the country. This hymn is especially fitting if you are tying the issue of inclusion to the UUA's *Standing on the Side of Love* campaign for justice.

Suggested Readings

In Singing The Living Tradition:

Opening Words: #418, #429, #434, #443, #444

Other readings on the topic of inclusion: #459, #502, #562, #580, #601, #609, #639

Responsive Readings: #468, #557, #576, #584, #587

Closing Words and Benedictions: #693, #694, #698

Selected Quotes and Readings

Opening Words – Orlanda Brugnola

Here find a house of welcoming
Here find vision and hope
Here be received as you truly are
Unique and beautiful
Your journey acknowledged
Your love honored
Let us rejoice together.

Chalice Lighting Words – Author Unknown

We come together to renew our faith in the holiness, goodness, and beauty of life;
to reaffirm the way of the open mind and the full heart;
to rekindle the flame of memory and hope;
to reclaim the vision of an earth more fair;
with all her people one.

Chalice Lighting Words, adapted from Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

We need more unselfishness, earnestness and integrity of high and lofty enthusiasm and beacons of light and hope. We light our chalice for people ready and willing to lay time, talent, and money on the altar of freedom.

Opening Words – Eileen J. Karpeles

Look to this day and the promise it holds; greet it with gladness.
Look to the friend whose face blooms with pleasure at the sight of you.
Look as well to the stranger, the woman or man or child whose hand clasps yours in unspoken, undefined promise: it is you alone who has the power to give such a moment definition.
Look to the path that lies ahead: it awaits the mark of your feet as you set out boldly. Only you can create its meaning-or let it fall into oblivion ...
You are the chooser. Look well to this new day.

Opening Words – Wayne Arnason

We come together this morning seeking a reality beyond our narrow selves, that binds us in compassion, love, and understanding to other human beings, and to the interdependent web of all living things.

May our hearts and minds be opened this hour to the power and the insight that weaves together the scattered threads of our experience, and helps us remember the Wholeness of which we are a part.

Opening Words – Harold Babcock

We gather this morning to affirm the potential we all share; for building community, for undertaking constructive change, for engaging in mature growth, for achieving greater humanity than we have known.

May this hour be a time of reflection on possibilities untried. May it help us on our perilous ways during the week ahead.

Closing Words - Mark L. Belletini

Go in peace. Live simply, at home in yourself.

Be just in your word, just in deed.

Remember the depth of your own compassion.

Do not forget your power in the days of your powerlessness.

Do not desire with desire to be wealthier than your peers,
and never stint your hand of charity.

Practice forbearance in all you do. Speak the truth or speak not.

Take care of your body, be good to it, it is a good gift.

Crave peace for all peoples in this world, beginning with yourselves,
and go as you go with the dream of that peace set firm in your heart. Amen.

It's Hard Work – Rosemary Bray McNatt

For just as the body without the spirit is dead, faith without works is also dead. - James 2:26

Why are we still talking about inclusivity and diversity when we have done so little to make them real? Why are we still looking pained about the lack of diversity in the denomination? Because diversity, inclusivity, is terribly hard, terribly uncomfortable, definitely unsettling, and often quite frustrating.

What I know about being inclusive--crossing from culture to culture, learning the language of diversity--is that it's the work of a lifetime. It's hard to accept people who are not like you, who don't talk the way you do, or believe the things you believe, or dress or vote as you do. It's even harder to appreciate them for the things about them that are not like you, to find them interesting and fun, to enjoy the learning that's part of the experience, and to acknowledge, finally, that you may have to agree to disagree.

The truth is this: If there is no justice, there will be no peace. We can read Thoreau and Emerson to one another, quote Rilke and Alice Walker and Howard Thurman, and think good and noble thoughts about ourselves. But if we cannot bring justice into the small circle of our own individual lives, we cannot hope to bring justice to the world. And if we do not bring justice to the world, none of us is safe and none of us will survive. Nothing that Unitarian Universalists need to do is more important than making justice real--here, where we are. Hard as diversity is, it is our most important task.

*From *Been In The Storm So Long*, Mark Morrison-Reed and Jacqui James, eds.
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From Pedagogy of the Oppressed, by Paulo Friere

Because love is an act of courage—not fear—love is a commitment to other people. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is a commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical.... Only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made impossible. If I do not love the world, if I do not love life, if I do not love people, I cannot enter the dialogue.

Ralph Waldo Emerson on Race

Ralph Waldo Emerson, despite being a leading intellectual of his time, had some very disturbing views of race and racial superiority and inferiority. The following reading is one example.

"I believe that nobody now regards the maxim that all men are born equal as any thing more than a convenient hypothesis or an extravagant declamation. For the reverse is true--that all men are born unequal in personal powers and in those essential circumstances, of time, parentage, country, and fortune. The least knowledge of natural history of man adds another important particular to these; namely, what class of men he belongs to--European, Moor, Tartar, African? Because, Nature has plainly assigned different degrees of intellect to these different races, and the barriers between are insurmountable. This inequality is an indication that some should lead, and some should serve."

-Ralph Waldon Emerson, as quoted in Porte, Joel, Ed., *Emerson in His Journals* (Cambridge, Havard University Press, 1982) pp. 19-21.

Million Man March - Maya Angelou

The night has been long,
The wound has been deep,
The pit has been dark,
And the walls have been steep.

Under a dead blue sky on a distant beach,
I was dragged by my braids just beyond your reach.
Your hands were tied, your mouth was bound,
You couldn't even call out my name.

You were helpless and so was I,
But unfortunately throughout history
You've worn a badge of shame.
I say, the night has been long,
The wound has been deep,
The pit has been dark,
And the walls have been steep.

But today, voices of old spirit sound
Speak to us in words profound,
Across the years, across the centuries,
Across the oceans, and across the seas.

They say: draw near to one another,
Save your race.

You have been paid for in a distant place,
The old ones remind us that slavery's chains
Have paid for our freedom again and again.
The night has been long,
The wound has been deep,
The pit has been dark,
And the walls have been steep.

The hells we have lived through and live through still,
Have sharpened our senses and toughened our will.
The night has been long.

This morning I look through your anguish
Right down to your soul.
I know that with each other we can make ourselves whole.
I look through the posture and past your disguise.
And see your love for family in your big brown eyes.

I say, clap hands and let's come together in this meeting ground,
I say, clap hands and let's deal with each other with love,
I say, clap hands and let us get from the low road of indifference.

Clap hands, let us come together and reveal our hearts,
Let us come together and cleanse our souls,
Clap hands, let's leave the preening
And stop impostering our own history.
Clap hands, call the spirits back from the ledge,
Clap hands, let us invite joy into our conversation,
Courtesy into our bedrooms,
Gentleness into our kitchens,
Care into our nurseries.
The ancestors remind us, despite the history of pain
We are a going-on people who will rise again.
And still we rise!

It Helps Now And Then - By Oscar Romero

It helps now and then,
To step back and take a long view.
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of
the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of
saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.
That is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing they hold future promise
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects
far beyond our capabilities.
We cannot do everything,
and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.
This enables us to do something, and do it very well.
It may be incomplete, a step along the way, opportunity
for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,
But that is the difference between the master builder
and the workers.
We are workers, not master builders,
Ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.

Selected Materials from the UUA Worship Web

Closing Words - Jean M. Rickard

We have a calling in this world:
We are called to honor diversity,
To respect differences with dignity,
And to challenge those who would forbid it.
We are people of a wide path.
Let us be wide in affection
And go our way in peace. Amen

The Rainbow Prayer – Andrew M. Hill

Great Rainbow Arch
your bright light
your seven colours
your cool dew
link sky and earth above the Christmas stable.

Hold us all in your encompassing arms.

Forgive our exclusion of others
earth and life and child.

So may we too forgive those who have excluded us.
Save us from the darkness of deep winter.
Show us the returning light;
for the light and the colours and the dew,
all space and time,
and your seven-fold rainbow compassion
dwell ever in God.

Meditation on Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer – Edward Harris

What can we say about Rudolph?

He was excluded by other reindeer. They did not let him play with them. We may feel confident that they made fun of him and his red nose.

It is possible that they hurt poor Rudolph. He was on the outside. The other reindeer had a special relationship with Santa Claus. They were the elite: Dancer, Dasher, Prancer, Comet, Blitzen, fine

names, sturdy names, bespeaking solidarity, stability, education, training, ability, access to the very best. These reindeer were strong and fast.

Rudolph was smaller and his only distinctive feature was a shiny red nose. It seemed to have a glow about it. It made the young Rudolph a figure of fun. "See Rudolph the Red-nosed. Ha! Ha! I'd rather be dead than red in the nose," they'd say.

Still he may have been content to be red-nosed by himself. He probably muttered more than once, "I don't care. Let them have all of the fun. I can have fun by myself."

Did Rudolph wish to be included? We don't know? Probably he did, for it is the deepest wish of all creatures to belong and be accepted.

So what happened?

On a foggy Christmas Eve, Santa realized Rudolph could make the difference in guiding the sleigh. Rudolph could lead them through. Rudolph's special trait was his ugly, shiny, red nose. It was this nose, this trait that was needed.

So Santa goes to little Rudolph and asks him to guide the sleigh. Actually to lead it. He would be in front of the other reindeer. Because their mission of getting Christmas to the boys and girls of the world was so important, it became necessary to rethink past practices.

When Rudolph was asked, what did he say? We don't know; it's not recorded. We know he did not say: "I can't. I'm too little." He didn't say, "Me? The others always make fun of me." He didn't say, "Now you ask me, I've got something else to do. It isn't fair." He didn't say spitefully, "Get somebody else. Let Dancer do it." He didn't say, "I hope you crash, you and all the others."

So we have a classic story of the insiders excluding the newcomer and making fun of his special traits. It happens all of the time in schoolrooms, playing fields, classes, society. We say: "They just don't have it. And if they do, well we got here first and don't have to let them in our group, our company, our church, our country club, our political party, our games."

He just did it. He led the sleigh through. He did the job. It was a hard job but he did it. Then all the reindeer loved him. What does the little story, the bit of doggerel mean? What is its moral?

Some possible meanings: Anybody can serve; we need everyone to be part of the team; even the ugliest (or what we label ugly) and smallest has a special contribution to make; the mission is more important than personalities.

There are perhaps others. (Can you think of some?) Remember them when you hear the song.

A Letter from the UUA Board. December 2009

Information Concerning a General Assembly 2009 Responsive Resolution on Power, Privilege and Oppression

A letter to UUA congregational leaders from the Secretary of the Association

To Our UU Congregational Leaders:

In my role as a member of the Board of Trustees and Secretary of the UUA, I am writing to notify congregational ministers and leadership of a resolution passed on June 28, 2009, by the delegates at the General Assembly in Salt Lake City. The text of this resolution is the following:

2009 Responsive Resolution

The Commission on Appraisal report on Article II of the UUA Bylaws includes section C-2.4 entitled "Inclusion." This section calls us to do all we can to replace barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories with ever-widening circles of solidarity and mutual respect. This section also expresses a covenant among our congregations to strive to truly welcome all persons and commit to structuring congregational and associational life in ways that empower and enhance everyone's participation.

In response to this section of the Commission's report, be it resolved that:

1. The delegates at this General Assembly are urged to act upon the pledge and covenant expressed in proposed Section C-2.4; and further that
2. The congregations represented here report to the UUA Board of Trustees before the 2010 General Assembly on their actions in response to this charge.

The bylaws of the UUA provide for responsive resolutions in response to a substantive portion of a report delivered at the GA either by an officer of the Association or a committee.

The resolution above was moved and passed in response to the report of The Commission on Appraisal and the proposed by-laws change to *Section C-2.4 Inclusion* as follows:

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.

Article II, Section C-2.4 (new) did not pass at GA yet many delegates were moved to acknowledge the importance of the statement and as a result offered the responsive resolution cited above.

It was overwhelmingly supported by the delegates from over 500 UU congregations. I urge you to use this resolution as an opportunity to reflect on how your congregation is engaging with the issues of

power, privilege and oppression and the barriers that creates for some. When delegates representing our congregations gather at 2010 General Assembly in Minneapolis, MN, we will have an opportunity to share our experiences in congregationally-based programs on issues of power, privilege and oppression.

As people of faith we were moved in Salt Lake City to not allow these issues to be dropped as the mere failure of a bylaw amendment but rather, to challenge ourselves to a new engagement in the work that remains to be done. Our experiences together in community show that we have much work to do to live our UU principles more fully. We look forward to hearing from your congregation on how you are responding to this.

In Faith,

Tom Loughrey
UUA Secretary

Write to us at responsiveresolutionC24@uua.org to share with us what your congregation is doing.