

**Peacemaking, Force, and Justice:  
Responding to the Needs of the World and the Demands of Conscience**

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Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Shelter Rock, February 28, 2009

Good morning. I want to thank Dick Kopp and the members of the two congregations, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Huntington, for inviting me. It is great to be with you.

I have to confess that the title I turned in– “Peacemaking, Force, and Justice: Responding to the Needs of the World and the Demands of Conscience” – now seems a bit cumbersome. But that was what came to me a few months ago when Dick reminded me that I needed to give him a title. These large-scale issues are still on my mind, and I hope I can say something useful about them this morning. The way I plan to do this is by attending to the task I was assigned, which is to present my views on the Draft Statement of Conscience on Peacemaking prepared by the Commission on Social Witness. I do not plan to go through the draft line by line, though I will comment on several of its specific parts as we go along. Instead, I want to offer a framework for thinking about our statement, and to make some suggestions about what we might want to include.

As it turns out, I have offered more specific language than I had originally planned. My intention here is not to offer a substitute draft of the entire Statement, but rather to illustrate my suggested framework by offering some examples. This is what the handout does, and my hope is that we can treat this as a kind of discussion starter. As we move through the day, I’m sure many of you will add your own views to the mix, and that will enrich our discussion.

I should say that I have no official status in this process. I am not a member of the Commission on Social Witness or the Core Team that was charged with assembling the background materials and making recommendations. In other words, I am speaking here only for myself, though my thoughts have been informed by conversations with lots of other people, some of whom do have a more formal role in this process.

I also want to acknowledge that the topic we are addressing today is difficult, not only for our denomination as a whole, but also for many of us as individuals. We will have many disagreements, some of them deep and deeply felt. For many of us, this is a personal issue that touches us at an emotional level. I want to encourage all of us to be sensitive to this reality as we share with each other today, and to treat our differences, and each other, with kindness and respect.

As we look at the Statement itself, I want to begin with a few preliminary observations. A document like this will always carry with it a set of background assumptions. These may or may not be expressed in the document itself, but it is important to be as clear as possible about these assumptions at the beginning. So, here are some of mine.

First, we should be clear that a Unitarian Universalist Statement of Conscience on Peacemaking is a religious statement, not a political statement. The discernment process we are now undertaking involves moral and theological reflection, not political and social policy debate. Our religious position will inevitably have political consequences; indeed, it would be a failure if it didn't. But we are acting as a religious body, not a political party.

Second, we need to be clear about the Statement's purposes and its intended audience. We should have a clear sense of how the Statement is meant to be used and by whom, and then make sure it is suitable for these purposes. I have something specific in mind here. I assume

that it will be used primarily as a basis for advocacy and public witness by our congregations and our Washington Office. But I believe this Statement should also serve a pastoral function. It should provide useful guidance for individuals who may be considering critical life decisions, such as whether to join the military or to become a conscientious objector, and it should be a resource for ministers and military chaplains and family members and others who counsel people facing these difficult choices.

For me, this means that we need to say explicitly that being a conscientious objector and being a soldier are both acceptable choices within our tradition. This serves two important practical and spiritual purposes. It addresses a lingering prejudice that makes those who serve in the military feel unwelcome in many of our congregations, and it provides support for conscientious objectors who may need to show commanding officers or Selective Service officials that their position is consistent with denominational policy.

Third, we should acknowledge that we have differences on these issues, and that we respect and value these differences. I think there is a right way and a wrong way to do this. The wrong way is to become wishy-washy – to state our positions in ambiguous or noncommittal language that tries to avoid offending anyone. That is impossible anyway. The right way is to be clear about where we stand, *and* clear about the fact that we honor the individual right of conscience to disagree.

And finally, whatever positions we finally adopt, we need to state them clearly. Anyone who picks up our Statement of Conscience should be able to read it and know where we stand.

It is apparent from the Draft that the Commission on Social Witness shares at least some of my starting assumptions. The Draft reflects a clear intention to be theologically grounded, for example, and it acknowledges that we have differences. I think the biggest problem with the

Draft is its lack of clarity. This has partly to do with certain choices of language and organization, but there are also many ambiguities relating to content.

Now I don't want to be unfair about this. The Draft states a strong presumption in favor of peace, and I believe we can discern a basic position supporting humanitarian intervention, though this isn't stated very clearly. It also reflects a clear intention to avoid the old dichotomy between the pacifist and just war approaches. This is important because the original Study/Action Issue framed the central question in these terms. But what follows from this is not clear. I'm not sure whether the Draft adopts or rejects the just war criteria, for example. This is a serious ambiguity, and I'll say more about this later on. The point I want to make at this point is that these sorts of ambiguities can undermine both the advocacy and the pastoral functions this Statement should serve.

Let me turn now to the specific framework I'd like to offer for thinking about these issues. I want to get at this by proposing a basic organizational structure for the final document. I think this structure is already implicit in the Draft, so in this sense I'm trying to build on and clarify what is already there. I find it helpful to think in terms of four main sections: (1) an introduction focusing on purposes; (2) a summary of the Statement's historical and theological grounding; (3) a clear articulation of our actual substantive positions; and (4) calls to action. These might overlap at times, and of course there may be other and better ways of doing this. But I think it helps us keep track of our message, and makes the document clearer, if we treat these sections separately. I especially think the third part – the statement of our actual positions – needs to be separated from the others. One of the difficulties with the current Draft is that we

can't always tell whether it is affirmatively taking a stance or simply explaining a concept. Clear organization can help.

I'd like to follow this structure now and look at each of these sections in turn. Here, you might want to refer to the handout.

## I. PURPOSES

In the introductory section, which we might label Purposes, we should probably begin by saying how the Statement came to be written. For example:

This Statement of Conscience was adopted in response to a multi-year study process in which the UUA and its member congregations were asked to reflect on the following question: Should the Unitarian Universalist Association 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 nonviolent means?

Then, as I indicated earlier, I would be as specific as possible about the Statement's purposes and intended audience. We probably cannot anticipate all the ways a document like this will be used, and there may be other purposes I haven't thought of. But for purposes of discussion, I've included this statement of purpose:

This Statement of Conscience is intended primarily for the religious leaders, member congregations, individual members, and friends of the UUA. It is offered as a guide for advocacy and public witness and as a pastoral resource for persons struggling with critical life decisions. We also offer this Statement to public officials, other religious communities, and other interested persons, including the media.

We may also want an introductory statement acknowledging the limits of our perspective as a religious community located in the United States. Some of the substantive positions I have suggested relate specifically to the American situation, for example. Unitarians in Canada, or in Romania or Indonesia or Central Africa, might have a very different view. This may be so obvious that we don't need to say it in the document, but I wanted to raise it as a possible point of discussion. Here is some possible language:

While this Statement addresses issues of concern to the wider international community, several of its positions are directed specifically to the use of military force by the United States. We recognize that Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists living in other countries may have different concerns and must respond to different circumstances. This Statement expresses the position of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and while we hope others will find it useful, it is not intended to speak for the entire world community of Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists.

Finally, I've suggested one way we might acknowledge our differences on these issues:

We acknowledge that we have differences on the issues addressed in this Statement. Those who disagree with one or more positions adopted in this Statement have the right of conscience under our Principles to disregard any Call to Action that violates their convictions.

## II. HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The second section of the document, in my structure, grounds the Statement in our Unitarian Universalist historical practices and theological principles. I think we need to be explicit about this, and the Statement should include a brief summary of the relevant points of reference. The Draft is right to start with this, though I think this section can be clarified considerably. My suggestions here are one possibility for doing this.

### *A. History*

With respect to history, I think it is important to refer to both individual practices and our denominational positions. For individuals, we might want to note that throughout our history, some UUs have been pacifists who unconditionally opposed all wars, while others have opposed or supported specific wars on a selective basis, and many have served honorably in the military. This reflects our diversity and our tradition of respect for individual conscience. But since this is a denominational Statement, it is especially important to connect it to our past denominational

practices. We don't need to recite our entire history, but we should probably indicate some key reference points. For example:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most Unitarians and Universalists opposed the Mexican War but supported the Civil War. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both denominations passed resolutions supporting both World Wars, though not without dissent. However, the Unitarian Universalist Association adopted resolutions opposing the Vietnam War and more recently the War in Iraq. Since 1961, we have supported the use of military force only for humanitarian purposes, though we have been divided on this issue.

The larger point is that as a denomination, we have never rejected the use of all military force. Instead, we have sought to carefully discern the appropriate response in particular circumstances. This means that in practice, we have generally followed the just war model without ever formally adopting it, though our positions on particular wars have often incorporated pacifist principles as well. Yet I think we can discern a clear historical trend away from supporting the use of military force. Aside from an Action of Immediate Witness in 2005 supporting a no-fly zone over Darfur and a Resolution in 1995 urging the United Nations to “act in the most effective way” to stop human rights abuses in the Balkans, I am not aware of a single example in which the UUA has supported a particular war or U.S. military action since its creation in 1961. We have passed many resolutions opposing various forms of military activity, while strongly supporting disarmament, demilitarization, and peace practices.

What this leads to is a way of articulating our current position in light of this history. The language I have suggested here is one possibility:

Our past practice has been to discern the appropriate response in particular circumstances. In this Statement of Conscience, we reaffirm this general approach, while seeking to clarify and limit the range of circumstances in which military force may be used consistent with our theological principles and religious values.

Or, if we wanted to be really bold, we might put it in stronger terms by omitting the language about reaffirmation. For example:

In this Statement of Conscience, we now seek to clarify our position by rejecting war as inconsistent with our theological principles and religious values.

Something to think about.

*B. Theology*

As for the theological context, I think it is important that we name the relevant theological principles that guide our discernment and ground the positions we finally adopt. This is the best way to make clear that we are writing a religious statement and not a political statement. The Draft mentions love and justice and covenant, all of which are important. I have suggested abbreviated versions of some additional principles in my articles.

But I have come to think that we need to say much more about our theology.

I also think it is part of my responsibility this morning to share with you my own theological thinking on these issues, so I have identified several relevant principles to discuss. I have stated these in abbreviated form in the handout, but I'll say a bit more than this about each one. I have also tried to state these not simply as abstract propositions, but rather in a way that connects them to the issues we are dealing with. I realize that my way of thinking through these issues is not the only way to do it, and I welcome your ideas.

1. *The fundamental unity and interdependence of all existence.* Beneath our individuality and our enormous diversity lies a profound relationality that ultimately connects us. The interdependence we have long affirmed as a theological principle has become the day-to-day reality of our globalized world. Isolationism, whether economic, political, cultural, or spiritual, is no longer possible, and the notion of American exceptionalism is a dangerous idea that should

be abandoned. Our interdependence makes it both possible and necessary that we see the peoples of the world as one community in which there is no Other to war against.

2. *The transforming power of love.* Love is one of the deepest theological principles in our tradition, the cornerstone of early Unitarian and Universalist self-understanding. Whether we say that God is love, or that love is a quality of the universe or a capacity for profound human connection, Unitarian Universalists have always affirmed the reality of love as a dynamic and transformative relational power that exists within us and among us. The transforming power of love moves us to create relationships of compassion, respect, mutuality and forgiveness, to loving our neighbors, and to seeing everyone as our neighbor. Love of one's neighbor is fundamentally incompatible with war.

3. *The inherent worth and dignity of all persons.* When we affirm that all persons have inherent worth and dignity, we are making a claim about the nature of our existence as human beings, a theological anthropology. We are also making a moral claim that each of us, by virtue of our very humanness, is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect, and that we should treat others the same way. While the anthropological aspect of this affirmation is basically a claim about humans as individuals, its moral dimension means that it is also a claim about human relationships. Our inherent worth and dignity means that all human beings have a right to a meaningful and fulfilling life. This includes not only spiritual well-being, but also the right to physical safety and to economic and social well-being. War inherently devalues human worth, restricting the possibilities for human fulfillment and denying the right to life itself.

4. *Human freedom.* Freedom has always been a core value in Unitarian Universalist theology. Freedom is grounded in the inherent worth and dignity of every person and expressed in our striving for human fulfillment and liberation. We believe that human beings are free

moral agents who have the capacity to make choices, and that we are accountable for the choices we make. Our freedom is not unlimited; it is always limited by our biological, historical, and cultural circumstances. Human freedom is also ambiguous; it can be used creatively or destructively, for good or for evil. As human beings, we have the capacity to act with profound love and compassion toward others. Yet we also have the capacity to see others as enemies to be destroyed, to inflict torture, and even to plan and carry out policies of genocide. These possibilities are expressed not only in our individual choices and actions, but also in the institutions and social structures we create. Yet human beings have the moral capacity to make different choices and to create different institutions. War is the product of human choices. It inevitably restricts human agency and limits the possibilities for human freedom.

5. *The non-duality of evil.* For Unitarian Universalists, evil is not a supernatural force locked in a cosmic struggle against the forces of good. We reject as false the theological dualism that sharply separates good and evil, assigning individuals or nations into one or the other category. This is the theology of the holy war. It can blind us to the potential for evil within ourselves and within our nation, as well as to the inherent worth and dignity of those whom our nation labels as enemies. We are aware that structures of systemic evil such as violence and war tend to perpetuate themselves and therefore come to seem normal or inevitable. We affirm the moral obligation to respond to the reality of evil in the world, but we reject the assumption that war is the most effective response to evil.

6. *Justice.* Justice is a relational theological concept that is concerned with the right ordering of human relationships, including social and political relationships. Unitarian Universalists recognize that human liberation cannot happen in isolation. Our affirmation of human freedom and the worth of persons implies an obligation to create just communities and

social structures that enable all people to achieve human dignity and fulfillment. Just communities are based on respect for human rights, non-coercive institutions, shared power, and inclusiveness. War is a coercive social institution that signals the breakdown of rightly ordered social relations; it is inherently unjust.

7. *Cooperative power.* Our approach to war and peace will be affected by our theological understanding of power. Several dimensions of power are important here. First, power is relational; it is always created and expressed in complex networks of human social relationships. Second, power is ambiguous. It can be exercised for good or evil; it can create or destroy, liberate or oppress. Third, power is distributed unevenly in society. People may acquire power, or be subjected to power, simply by virtue of their location within certain social structures. Systemic economic and social inequalities reflect these structural power imbalances; by the same token, our highly militarized society both depends on and perpetuates particular distributions of power. War is an expression of the destructive power of domination and violence. Preventing war and creating nonviolent alternatives require a different understanding of power, one Sharon Welch calls “cooperative power,” the creative power of cooperation and mutuality. Yet power’s ambiguous nature means that a theology of power must be grounded in deeper religious values such as love and justice that can guide its use.

8. *The mutuality of justice and peace.* Any meaningful denominational Statement on Peacemaking should be grounded in a theology of peace, but this is something we do not now have. We should be asking questions such as: What does peace look like? What are its conditions? At the very least, we can say that peace is an attribute of relationship. It is not a stagnant state, some kind of final harmony that appears when all dissonance is resolved in a final cadence. Peace is a process. It emerges as our relationships become more loving and more

mutually enhancing, and as our social and political institutions become more cooperative and more just. We therefore affirm the mutuality of justice and peace.

There is one more theological principle I did not put in the handout, but it is worth mentioning. I would call this *humility and open-mindedness*. We must remember that one of Unitarian Universalism's deepest theological commitments is a principled open-mindedness that makes us suspicious of all claims of finality, including our own. There is a profound humility inherent in this non-dogmatic openness. This openness need not prevent us from taking strong stands, but we must always remain open to the possibility that we are wrong, or that circumstances we cannot now foresee may call for a very different position at some point in the future.

### *C. Pacifism and Just War*

There is one more contextual point. The Draft contains a paragraph on Pacifism and Just War. I agree that it might be wise to say something about this, in part because the Study Action question was framed in these terms, but also because disagreements over these approaches have divided us in the past. However, I don't think it is helpful to include a kind of mini-lesson on the commonalities and ambiguities of the two traditions, as the Draft seems to do. I suppose I need to accept some of the blame for this, since I went on at length about these points in my articles. But in the Statement itself, I would prefer that we avoid articulating our position in terms of either of these approaches. So, as part of naming the context of our Statement, we might say something along these lines:

Both the pacifist and just war traditions provide a basis for prophetic critique and nonviolent witness against war. Yet our responsibility goes beyond critique; if war is unacceptable or acceptable only as a last resort, we need to support nonviolent alternatives and measures to prevent war. Moreover, pacifist and just war ideals are applied inconsistently in practice and are easily misinterpreted or

manipulated. Accordingly, our positions are not stated in either of these traditional forms.

### III. WHERE WE STAND

In my framework, Part 3 is the heart of the Statement. This is where we give our answer to the central question of our entire study process: “Should the Unitarian Universalist Association 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 nonviolent means?” I suspect we are unlikely to give a flat Yes or No answer to this question. After all, it is almost an article of faith among religious liberals to avoid this kind of certainty. On the other hand, I believe our recent history and the theological principles I have sketched out point us toward the Yes end of the spectrum. I think this is reflected in the Draft, and it is also the position I have adopted in the handout. Your position may be different, of course, but I hope my suggestions about organization and language clarity will still be helpful to you.

As I emphasized earlier, whatever our positions, we need to state them in the clearest possible language. For me, this means we should use simple, declarative sentences that have a subject-verb-object structure, and perhaps a helpful subordinate clause in appropriate places. The subject is always “we,” and the verbs should be active. We should say “we support, we affirm, we reject, we oppose,” and so on. We should not use the passive voice, which always invites ambiguity.

Here is an example of the kind of ambiguity I want to avoid, taken from the Draft (lines 68-71): “Just Peacemaking honors the affirmations common to both the pacifist and just war traditions and calls us to understand peace as normative and violence as aberrant. ... The former just war criteria become Just Peacemaking guidelines.” This statement clearly supports the

concept of Just Peacemaking, but it is not clear at all whether it is stating a positive commitment or simply offering a background explanation. And if it is a positive commitment, does it adopt the just war criteria but rename them, or does it reject them in favor of something else? If so, what? For myself, I think we are much better off with a statement that says bluntly “We reject the just war approach as inconsistent with our theological principles and the world situation today, and we adopt the following Just Peacemaking criteria in its place.” Or, for that matter, “We affirm the just war model as our guideline for evaluating the morality of war,” if that is our choice. Subject – active verb – object.

For similar reasons, I would not use the phrase “we are called...” in this section of the Statement. I like the notion of *call* as a religious concept, and it is perfectly appropriate in other contexts, such as the section on Calls to Action. But here, it is potentially ambiguous and even a bit weak. Saying “we are called to stand on the side of peace,” for example, doesn’t really tell us much about where we actually stand. Saying “we reject war as an instrument of foreign policy” is cleaner and stronger.

In the handout, I have named a series of specific positions we might take as a denomination. While these reflect my own views, I think they capture the basic tenor of the Draft, and I believe we are in general agreement on most of these points – though I’m sure you will let me know if I’m wrong about this. This is not meant to be a complete substitute Draft, but rather to illustrate some possibilities we can treat as discussion points. You may want to suggest others. For clarity, I have put them in a numbered list rather than in paragraph form.

1. We believe war is incompatible with the religious and moral values of Unitarian Universalism. We reject war as an instrument of national foreign policy.

This offers a basic answer to the main Study/Action question and establishes a reference point for the other statements.

2. We reject the false dualism between military force and passive nonviolence. We also reject the false dualism that sees war as either just or unjust; war is never just. In place of these false dualisms, we affirm a moral responsibility to prevent war and to develop nonviolent means of responding to conflict. We hold that this responsibility is shared by the world community of nations.

The statement points to the inadequacies of the traditional approaches, and commits us to a third way. By claiming that the world community of nations shares this responsibility, we are in effect calling upon our own government to get on with this important work. This language also provides the basis for future resolutions supporting or criticizing various specific programs as they emerge.

3. We support a multi-layered approach that includes the following elements: (a) *peacekeeping* – early intervention to prevent war, stop genocide, and monitor ceasefires; (b) *peacemaking* – mediating between hostile parties, negotiating equitable and sustainable peace agreements, and addressing the need for post-conflict rebuilding and reconciliation; and (c) *peacebuilding* – creating institutions and structures that address the roots of conflict, including economic exploitation, political marginalization, and lack of judicial accountability for those who commit war crimes and crimes against humanity. We commit ourselves to taking action directed toward these ends.

This fleshes out the responsibility we name in point no. 2. I have adopted the three-part terminology now widely used by scholars and activists to describe these alternatives, though there are other ways to do this. One question this raises is whether using the term “Peacemaking” as the title for our Statement of Conscience is potentially confusing, since this term is now often used in this narrower sense. But other scholars also use “Peacemaking” in a broader sense to encompass a wide range of alternative strategies, so this may not be worth worrying about.

By the way, it’s worth noting that we already follow this basic approach, though we have never formally identified it in these terms. Over the past several years, the UUA has resolutions or statements of immediate witness supporting the use of peacekeeping forces, advocating the

creation of institutional peace structures, addressing the underlying economic and social injustices that lead to war, and supporting various forms of non-violent conflict resolution.

4. We support the emerging model of *just policing*, which seeks to fulfill the peacekeeping responsibility by applying the concept of community policing to the international context. We urge the United States and the world community of nations to develop the institutions and structures necessary to implement this approach.

This fleshes out the peacekeeping element of point no. 3 by identifying a specific approach that merits serious consideration. I'm reluctant to spell this out in any more detail in the Statement, but you probably know that Just Policing is an approach to Peacekeeping that minimizes the use of lethal force by moving away from militaristic models. There is currently a proposal for a United Nations Emergency Peacekeeping Service (UN EPS) that, as I understand it, basically follows this approach. I don't think this Statement is the place to take a position on specific proposals, though we might want to consider a specific resolution at some later date.

We can take numbers 5 and 6 together; in fact, these might be put in a single point.

5. In light of the growing international consensus that the international community has a *responsibility to protect* persons from genocide and other crimes against humanity, we support limited armed intervention, following the just policing model and only when authorized by multilateral authority, as a last resort in extreme cases for the purpose of preventing or stopping genocide or other crimes against humanity.

6. We oppose the use of humanitarian intervention as a pretext for aggression or hegemonic expansion.

As I noted earlier, I think the denomination as a whole supports the use of force in certain situations involving humanitarian intervention. I have suggested one way we might say this, using the language of "responsibility to protect," which seems to be the emerging framework for speaking about this issue. I have also stated it in a fairly restrictive way. A lot more might be said about the specific criteria – how bad does the situation have to be before this responsibility is triggered, what kinds of force might legitimately be used, and so on. But again, I think the

Statement of Conscience should stick to basic principles. These sorts of details might be addressed in a supplemental Statement or resolution of some kind.

7. We oppose the practice of preventive war, the militarization of U.S. foreign policy, and the use of military force for purposes of neocolonial domination.

This continues the cautionary theme of point no. 6, but it speaks to some issues that are especially relevant for the United States. We have affirmed these ideas in previous UUA resolutions, but I think they are worth including in a more general Statement of Conscience.

8. Our theological principles affirm the right of individual conscience, and our historical practices demonstrate that a range of individual callings, including military service and conscientious objection, are fully compatible with Unitarian Universalism. For persons within our movement who choose 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 Unitarian Universalist principles.

This one is a bit different from the others, and it related directly to the point I made in my preliminary observations. But this is critical, and I think it is important that we state this as a specific commitment and not simply as part of our historical background. It also speaks directly to the pastoral function I mentioned earlier.

#### IV. CALLS TO ACTION

The final section on Calls to Action names a series of activities we should be undertaking in order to carry out the specific commitments we have made in the Statement of Conscience. In this section, we are speaking primarily to ourselves at three basic levels: to the UUA as an association, to our congregations, and to each of us as individuals. I have not suggested any particular language here. I think the Draft calls to action are basically fine, and I think using covenantal language to describe these is appropriate. My only cautionary note is that our calls to action should follow from the history and the theological principles we name in Part II, and also

from the specific stances we take in Part III. But I think the calls to action stated in the Draft do this.

So, with this, I will end my formal presentation. Thank you for your patience, and I look forward to the responses and to your comments and questions.

# 3 Peacemaking

## 4 A Draft Unitarian Universalist Statement of Conscience

5 This Statement of Conscience (SOC) responds to a multi-year  
6 study/action process in which the Unitarian Universalist Association of  
7 Congregations agreed to reflect on the following question: Should the  
8 Unitarian Universalist Association reject the use of any and all kinds of  
9 violence and war to resolve disputes between peoples and nations and  
10 adopt a principle of seeking just peace through nonviolent means?

11 We direct this Statement of Conscience primarily to the religious  
12 leaders, member congregations, individual members, and friends of  
13 the Unitarian Universalist Association. We offer it as a guide for  
14 advocacy and public witness, and as a pastoral resource for persons  
15 struggling with critical life decisions.

## 16 Historical and Theological Context

17 This Statement of Conscience is grounded in the following Unitarian  
18 Universalist historical practices and theological principles.

### 19 A. Historical Practices

20 Throughout our history, some Unitarian Universalists have been  
21 pacifists who unconditionally opposed all wars, while others have  
22 opposed or supported specific wars on a selective basis. Many  
23 Unitarian Universalists have served honorably in the military.

24 In the 19th century, a substantial number of Unitarians and  
25 Universalists opposed the Mexican War but supported the Union in the  
26 Civil War. In the 20th century both denominations passed resolutions  
27 supporting both World Wars, though not without dissent. Since the  
28 1961 formation of the Unitarian Universalist Association, we adopted  
29 resolutions opposing the Vietnam War, and many Unitarian  
30 Universalists have supported the use of military force for humanitarian  
31 purposes.

32 Our past practice has been to discern the appropriate response in

33 particular circumstances. In this Statement of Conscience, we reject  
34 war as inconsistent with our theological principles and religious values,  
35 with the exceptions of self-defense and the use of force for  
36 humanitarian purposes.

## 37 **B. Theological Principles**

38 *The fundamental unity and interdependence of all existence.* The  
39 interdependence we have long affirmed has become the daily reality of  
40 our globalized world. Our interdependence makes it both possible and  
41 necessary that we see the peoples of the world as one community in  
42 which there is no Other to war against.

43 *The transforming power of love.* We affirm the reality of love as a  
44 dynamic relational power within and among us. This power moves us  
45 to create relationships of compassion, respect, mutuality and  
46 forgiveness; to love our neighbor; and to recognize everyone as our  
47 neighbor. Love of our neighbor is fundamentally incompatible with  
48 war.

49 *The inherent worth and dignity of all persons.* All human beings have  
50 the right to a meaningful and fulfilling life, including physical safety  
51 and economic and social well-being. War devalues human worth,  
52 restricting the possibilities for human fulfillment and denying the right  
53 to life itself.

54 *Human freedom.* Most human beings are free moral agents with the  
55 capacity to make choices and are accountable for these choices.  
56 Human freedom may be used creatively or destructively. These  
57 possibilities are expressed not only in our individual choices and  
58 actions, but also in the institutions and social structures we create.  
59 War is the product of human choices, restricting human agency and  
60 limiting the possibilities for human freedom.

61 *Rejection of moral dualism.* We reject as false the sharp separation of  
62 good and evil, assigning individuals and nations into one or the other  
63 category. Moral dualism can blind us to the potential for evil within  
64 ourselves and within our nation and to the inherent worth and dignity  
65 of those whom our nation labels as enemies. We affirm the reality of  
66 evil in the world but reject the assumption that war is the most  
67 effective response to evil.

69 *Cooperative power.* Power is created and expressed in complex  
70 networks of human relationships. Power can be used to create or  
71 destroy, to liberate or oppress. War is an expression of destructive  
72 power. Preventing war and creating nonviolent alternatives require the  
73 use of cooperative power—power with, not power over. Cooperative  
74 power is grounded in a commitment to mutual persuasion over  
75 coercion.

76 *Justice and peace.* Justice concerns the fair ordering of human  
77 relationships, including social and political relationships. War signals  
78 the breakdown of fairly ordered human relations; it is inherently  
79 unjust. Peace is an attribute of relationship; it is a process, not a  
80 stagnant state. Peace emerges as our social and political institutions  
81 become more cooperative and more just. Lasting peace rests on just  
82 relationships.

83 *Humility and open-mindedness.* We affirm an open-mindedness that  
84 makes us suspicious of all claims of finality, including our own.  
85 Humility, inherent in this open-mindedness, doesn't prevent us from  
86 taking strong stands; but we must always remain open to the  
87 possibility that we are wrong or that future circumstances may call for  
88 a different position.

## 89 **Where We Stand**

90 *Pacifism and Just War.* We reject war as an instrument of national  
91 foreign policy, except for self-defense and humanitarian purposes.  
92 Both the pacifist and just war traditions provide a basis for prophetic  
93 critique and nonviolent witness against war. Yet pacifist and just war  
94 approaches are applied inconsistently and are readily manipulated. We  
95 affirm and promote nonviolent measures to prevent war, while  
96 considering the right of conscience that calls some of us to choose  
97 conscientious objection and some of us to choose military service.

98 *Moral responsibility.* We affirm a moral responsibility to prevent war  
99 and to foster and advocate nonviolent means of responding to conflict.  
100 We hold that this responsibility is shared by the world community of  
101 nations.

102 *Peace work.* We support a multi-layered approach to the work of peace  
103 that includes: (a) peacekeeping—early intervention to prevent

105 war, stop genocide, and monitor ceasefires; (b) peacemaking—  
106 mediating between hostile parties, negotiating equitable and  
107 sustainable peace agreements, and post-conflict rebuilding and  
108 reconciliation; and (c) peacebuilding—creating institutions and  
109 structures that address the roots of conflict, including economic  
110 exploitation, political marginalization, and lack of judicial  
111 accountability.

112 *Just policing.* We support the emerging model of just policing, which  
113 seeks to fulfill the peacekeeping responsibility by applying the concept  
114 of community policing to the international context.

115 *Humanitarian intervention.* We affirm the responsibility of the  
116 international community to protect persons from genocide and other  
117 crimes against humanity through limited armed intervention, but only  
118 when authorized by the United Nations.

119 *Foreign policy and practice.* We oppose the militarization of U.S.  
120 foreign policy and the practice of preventive war.

121 *Right of individual conscience.* We affirm the right of individual  
122 conscience. We advocate a range of individual choices, including  
123 military service and conscientious objection, as fully compatible with  
124 Unitarian Universalism. For those among us who make a formal  
125 commitment as conscientious objectors, we will offer documented  
126 certification, honor their commitment to nonviolence, and offer  
127 pastoral support. For those among us who make a formal commitment  
128 to military service, we will honor their commitment, welcome them  
129 home, and offer pastoral support.

130 *A culture of peace.* We advocate a culture of peace through a  
131 transformation of public policies, religious consciousness, and  
132 individual lifestyles. At the heart of this transformation is the readiness  
133 to honor the truths of multiple voices from a theology of covenant  
134 grounded in love.

## 135 **Calls to Action**

136 Peacemaking calls for action at all levels of human interaction. To be  
137 effective, our actions must be incorporated into existing structures and  
138 institutions, and new systems must be created.

140 **International Peacemaking**

141 We covenant to advocate vigorously for policies that move the United  
142 States toward collaborative leadership in building a peaceful, just, and  
143 sustainable world. These include:

144 Supporting the Unitarian Universalist-United Nations Office in  
145 advancing the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, the  
146 Earth Charter, the International Criminal Court, the United Nations  
147 Convention Against Torture, and the Universal Declaration of Human  
148 Rights;

149 Supporting the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee in ending  
150 the use of torture and addressing institutional and structural violence  
151 in all its forms;

152 Supporting interfaith groups such as the Center on Conscience and  
153 War in advocating for the right of conscientious objection, including  
154 education and resources on the availability of this option; and

155 Supporting the establishment of a national peace ministry network  
156 among Unitarian Universalists to identify resources, disseminate  
157 information, and revisit goals on peacemaking.

158

159 **Societal Peacemaking**

160 We covenant to act in the wider community in reducing the causes of  
161 institutional and structural violence. We do this through:

162 Supporting the socially responsible investment of our Association and  
163 congregational assets;

164 Supporting Association and congregational initiatives aimed at  
165 eradicating racism, classism, and all other forms of cultural and  
166 economic oppression; and

167 Supporting Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth in advocating life  
168 styles and policies that promote harmony with our natural  
169 environment.

170

171 **Congregational Peacemaking**

172 We covenant to take up peacemaking as part of our mission through  
173 worship, religious education, and social action by:

174

175 Developing Peace Teams to provide training in compassionate  
176 communication and conflict resolution and engage the congregation in  
177 multi-level action toward a culture of peace;

178 Working through congregational governing bodies to develop and  
179 honor behavioral covenants in all aspects of congregational life;

180 Working through our lifespan religious education structures to  
181 provide workshops on conflict resolution and compassionate  
182 communication, to encourage understanding and participation in social  
183 justice ventures, and to utilize Unitarian Universalist resources such as  
184 "Peacemaking in Congregations: A Guide to Learning Opportunities for  
185 All Ages;" and

186 Becoming a peacemaking resource within our communities in  
187 cooperation with other faith traditions.

188

## 189 **Interpersonal Peacemaking**

190 As individuals we covenant to:

191 Learn and practice the skills of compassionate communication;

192 Honor the behavioral covenants of our congregations; and

193 Adopt lifestyle changes that reflect reverence for the interdependent  
194 web of all existence.

195

## 196 **Inner Peacemaking**

197 We covenant to develop for ourselves and our congregations spiritual  
198 practices that cultivate inner peace. We covenant to sustain these  
199 practices as foundational to wholeness, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

200 **In reverence for all life, we covenant to practice peace by**  
201 **minimizing violence at all levels of human interaction.**

202

203 *NOTE: This revised Draft SOC drew upon the thoughtful comments of*  
204 *congregations, the ongoing input of the Peacemaking Core Team, and*  
205 *the seasoned scholarship of Rev. Paul Rasor*

206

## **Amending and Debating the Peacemaking SOC at GA**

### **Debate on Statement of Conscience at UUA General Assembly**

One hour will be allowed for debate.

The Commission on Social Witness may recommend for delegate approval by majority vote an amount of time for the Statement to be debated before amendments are in order. If no such recommendation is proposed and approved, no amendment shall be in order unless there has been at least 30 minutes of debate, if that much is needed, on the merits of the proposed UUA Statement of Conscience.

A motion to amend a proposed UUA Statement of Conscience is not in order in the Plenary Session unless it first was presented to a mini-assembly. Up to twelve minutes will be allowed for the debate of an amendment. The Commission on Social Witness will have the discretion to prioritize the amendments including their presentation at the amendment microphone in Plenary.

### **Amendment Mini-Assemblies at UUA General Assembly**

A Mini-Assembly is an opportunity for delegates to propose amendments to resolutions on the final agenda and to the proposed Actions of Immediate Witness admitted to the final agenda. It's an opportunity to discuss the proposed amendments, and, for the Statement of Conscience, to work collaboratively with other delegates to draft amendments. Mini-Assemblies save Plenary time and permit freer debate than plenaries do. *It is not possible to offer an amendment to a social witness statement during plenary debate if it was not submitted for consideration at the appropriate mini-assembly.* All mini-assemblies are listed in the program.

After a Mini-Assembly and before voting in Plenary Session, the Commission on Social Witness may incorporate proposed amendments into a Statement of Conscience or an Action of Immediate Witness. For Statements of Conscience, the Commission on Social Witness is required to report all amendments to the GA delegates. The Commission on Social Witness can prioritize the amendments, including the order of their presentation at the amendment microphone in Plenary. If you wish to modify the Statement of Conscience, plan to attend the entire mini-assembly and work collaboratively with other delegates to suggest amendments.

### **SCHEDULE FOR PEACEMAKING SOC MINI-ASSEMBLIES AND DEBATE AT GA**

- **Two amendment mini-assemblies on the Peacemaking SOC will be held on Thursday, June 25, 2009 – one in the morning and the other in the afternoon.**
- **The debate and vote on the SOC will be in Plenary IV on Saturday morning, June 27, 2009, between 8:30 and 12:30 AM**

## Related Books and Websites

### Books

Faith Without Certainty: Liberal Theology in the 21st Century

By Paul Rasor, Published by Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, 2005, 231 pages  
ISBN 1558964843, 9781558964846

Just Policing, Not War: An Alternative Response to World Violence

By Gerald W. Schlabach

Contributor Drew Christiansen, Ivan Kauffman, John Paul Lederach, Reina C. Neufeldt, Jim Wallis

Published by Liturgical Press, 2007, 255 pages

ISBN 0814652212, 9780814652213

Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War

By Glen H. Stassen, Edition: 2, 216 pages

Published by Pilgrim Pr, 2004

ISBN 0829816569, 9780829816563

Real Peace, Real Security: The Challenges of Global Citizenship

By Sharon D. Welch, Published by Augsburg Fortress Pub, 2008, 144 pages

ISBN 0800662792, 9780800662790

Nonviolent Communication: Create Your Life, Your Relationships and Your World in Harmony with Your Values, by Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D.

Puddledancer Press, Publication Date: Fall 2003, 240pp

ISBN: 1892005034 / 9781892005038

Nonviolent Communication Companion Workbook: A Practical Guide for Individual, Group or Classroom Study, by Lucy Leu

Puddledancer Press, Publication Date: Fall 2003, 224pp

ISBN: 1892005042 / 9781892005045

Speak Peace in a World of Conflict: What You Say Next Will Change Your World

Marshall B. Rosenberg

Puddle Dancer Press; Publication Date: 10/20/05; 198 pp

ISBN: 9781892005175

The Ribbon: A Celebration of Life

By: Marianne Philbin,

Lark Books Introduction by: Terkel Studs.

Publisher: Olympic Marketing Corp (08/01/1985) 158 pp

ISBN: 0937274240 ISBN13: 9780937274248

(Out of print. Used copies plentiful on the internet.)

### Websites

#### **Further information on Study/Action Issues**

Unitarian Universalist Association, Study /Action Issues and Process

<http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/issuesprocess/index.shtml>

SOC on Peacemaking: [http://www.uua.org/documents/csw/peacemaking/0903\\_draft\\_soc.pdf](http://www.uua.org/documents/csw/peacemaking/0903_draft_soc.pdf)

#### **Further information on nonviolent communication**

The Center for Nonviolent Communication

[www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)

#### **Further information on the Ribbon Project**

[www.theribboninternational.org/](http://www.theribboninternational.org/)

*Prep for Peacemaking: Preparing for GA 2009*

*UU Metro NY District Annual Meeting, May 1-2, 2009*