

## ***Board Unanimously Votes Amendments to UURMaPA's Purpose***

On March 16, 2023, the Board of UURMaPA voted unanimously to amend the Purpose of UURMaPA as described in our organization's by-laws. This vote came at the end of a year of study of whether UURMaPA should have a covenant or alternatively a change in our Purpose.

The first phase of this process was a discussion about whether our purpose would be well-served by including a covenant as part of UURMaPA membership. That discussion led the Board into a deeper dive about why we have never been a formal membership organization with boundaries that include affirmation and enforcement of a covenant. We found enough ambivalence about a covenant last year that the Board proposed a different approach. Recognizing that our governance philosophy has been to trust an empowered Board, and that our by-laws do not include annual meetings or votes, the Board put forward, instead of a covenant, a proposal for amendments to the Purpose of UURMaPA. The Board invited feedback in writing to this proposal following the Fall Conference in late October, after which any next steps or a final Board vote would be considered.

Seven UURMaPA members sent written responses. Three of these were broad reflections on the changing ministry that did not speak directly to the Purpose statement. Two responses were critical of the proposed changes and recommended simplifying or abandoning the proposed changes. One response focused on the phrase "anti-oppressive attitudes" in the last sentence, describing it as "vague" and "subjective". This person hoped that the statement could be "more succinct and less ambiguous". The Board considered these reflections and did not find them persuasive.

One response that we did find persuasive came from Rev. Scot Giles, who encouraged us to include a reference to the guidelines and codes of conduct of the UU Society for Community Ministers, alongside that of the UUMA, since we have members who prefer to affiliate with UUSCM rather than the UUMA. We thank Scot for this suggestion. After review of the comments and discussion about our options, the following proposed amendments to the Purpose along with the Giles suggestion was moved, seconded and passed by a unanimous vote:

“In faithfulness to the Unitarian Universalist tradition and to the guidelines and code of conduct of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association and the Unitarian Universalist Society for Community Ministries, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers and Partners Association embody in our lives and our conduct with each other the values that we proclaim on behalf of our faith. Our purpose is to be an inclusive multicultural community that serves the interests and enhances the well-being of retired Unitarian Universalist ministers and their life partners through informational communication, periodic membership gatherings, and other supportive programs and activities. As a Unitarian Universalist organization of professionals and partners, we recognize that fulfilling our purpose calls us to cultivate anti-oppressive attitudes and practices consistent with our shared values, thereby promoting our collective well-being.”

The Board sees this as an appropriate step and a conclusion to this stage of the ongoing conversation among us about what UURMaPA means to us, and how we can continue to thrive as an inclusive organization welcoming future generations of retirees. In her written response, Marilyn Sewall wrote: “So much these days is mere ‘virtue signaling,’ and I hope we do not become a part of this phenomenon, which is simply empty rhetoric.” The Board has taken Rev. Sewall’s challenge very seriously, and we encourage UURMaPA members to do the same. We see the Purpose change as one small step among many steps to be taken to enhance the quality of our relationships and the courage of our conversations.