ENVISION UUCC
imagining our future

Values, Mission, and Ends

A Report from the Board of Trustees to the Congregation and Staff of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia

April 2023

INTRODUCTION

UUCC's Governance Process Document states that at least every 7 years, "the Board, together with the Executive Team, and through extensive consultation with and involvement of the congregation, leads the effort to develop meaningful covenant, vision, and mission statements for UUCC."

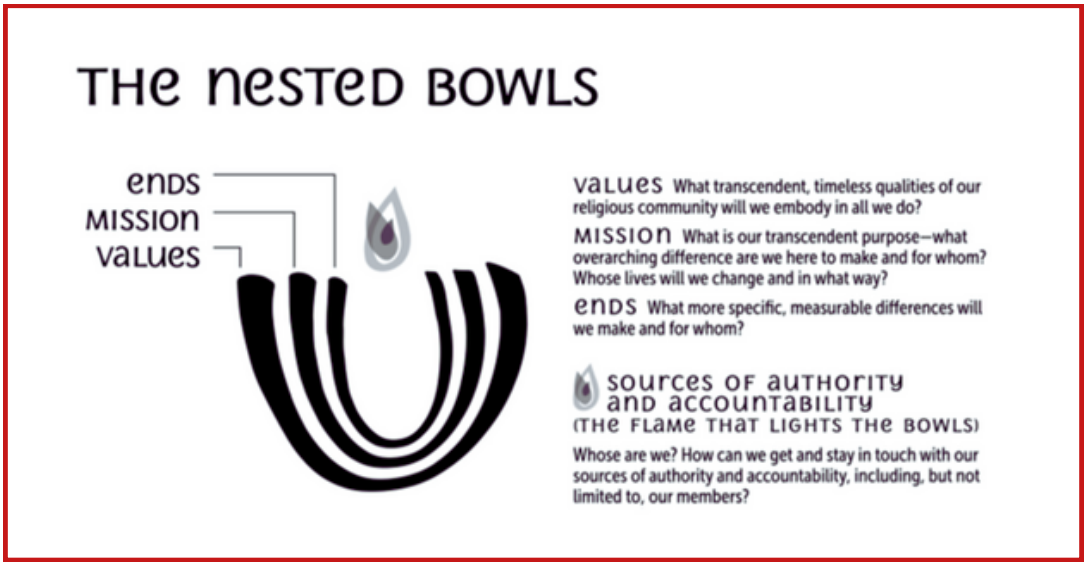
Our last effort to review our mission and ends statements occurred in 2017, but it did not involve a congregation-wide discernment process. Prior to that, the mission and ends statements were last reviewed in the early teens. Therefore, in accordance with our governance processes, in late 2022, we undertook to update these foundational documents. (Our congregational covenant is not being updated at this time. We felt it would be appropriate to hold off on that while the UUA undertakes its review of Article II of its bylaws, which includes the 7 Principles. Concurrent with the Values, Mission, and Ends (VME) work, another Board Committee is charged with developing a Covenant of Right Relations for our congregation.)

To engage in this process, the Board convened the Values, Mission and Ends Shepherding Committee (referred to in this report as the "VME Committee"), comprised of Lindsay Thompson, Jerry Rescigno, John Guy, Becky Reese, Caela Berry, and Greg Seidman. Their work included researching and recommending a facilitator to guide the process, providing extensive logistical support throughout the process, and communicating with the congregation.

Throughout this process, the Board has had the guidance and assistance of a congregational consultant, Laura Park of Unity Consulting, a company that specializes in values, mission, and ends discernment processes for Unitarian Universalist congregations. Ms. Park herself is a lifelong UU, and her assistance in this effort has been invaluable.

PROCESS

Nested Bowls. The Board utilized Unity Consulting's Nested Bowls model to design our process. The Nested Bowls model holds that core, fundamental congregational values are what drive a congregation, serve as the foundation for its mission, and inform its ends.



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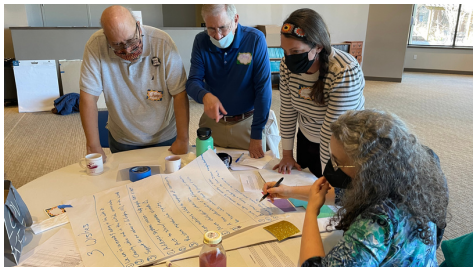
Powerful Question. The first step in the Nested Bowls process was for the Board to articulate a "powerful question" to present to the congregation, a question designed to inspire our congregation to think long and hard about who we are as a religious community. With guidance from Ms. Park, the Board generated a large list of candidate questions, and through much discussion and wordsmithing, reached this final result:

> ***Living our faith tradition and moving toward Beloved Community, what are we called to do and be as UUCC?***

Congregational Conversations. The next step was to get input from the congregation. Everyone at UUCC was invited and strongly encouraged to participate in small-group conversations. In preparation, Ms. Park trained 17 volunteers from the congregation as facilitators. These volunteers were Caela Barry, Dina Boogaard, Rich Dean, John Harris, Jen Hayashi, Susan Jameson, Megan Lopes, Zachary Nelson, Kathy Parker, Michael Phillips, Jerry Rescigno, Ken Rock, Dori Schatell, Scotty Scott, Gail Thompson, Regina Verow, and Richard Yocum. The job of the facilitators was to ensure that each conversation was very intentionally led; they were given specific language to use and instructed on the best ways to elicit the most genuine responses from conversation participants. The conversations were held in February and early March in multiple settings and multiple timeslots to enable as much participation as possible. Approximately 150 congregants participated actively in these discernment conversations, greatly exceeding the initial goal of 20% of our congregational membership.

These conversations had three main sections. The first part of the discussion was to determine our core values – what qualities we feel are the essential elements of being UUCC. In the second part of the conversation, each participant was asked to imagine the future (and they were asked to think big – highest pie-in-the-sky aspirations, and with a magic wand waved that meant that whatever we wanted, we could achieve). If we as a congregation are truly living our faith tradition and moving toward Beloved Community, what would UUCC look like 10 years from now? In the last part of the session, participants were given a piece of easel paper and some crafting supplies, and asked to create a "magazine cover" to show off this UUCC of the future where all of our wishes have come true.

The values, wishes, and magazine covers were all carefully collected, to serve as the basis of the Board's work.



Facilitators training - February 4, 2023

Board Retreat. On March 24 and 25, the Board met for a total of about 10 hours for a retreat that was facilitated by Ms. Park. (Members of the VME Committee were invited to the Friday night meeting, at which discussion but no decision-making occurred. The Executive Team, Rev. Paige Getty and Executive Director Valerie Hsu, attended the entire retreat and offered extremely helpful perspectives, but did not participate in the decision-making process.) Ms. Park has been doing this for many years, and she is extremely adept at pulling on threads ("What does that mean to you?" "Tell us more about that." "Give us some examples so we can better understand the context."). With her expert guidance, we examined the data – every single piece of data, including the magazine covers. We organized it all into topic areas, debated meanings of many, many words, and ultimately came to a consensus on what core values were being expressed. We then used these core values to craft a mission statement, and finally to create new ends.

Board retreat - March 24-25, 2023

Draft Values

The people of UUCC share these core values:

Awe and wonder
Compassion
Growth and transformation
Interdependence and interconnection

Draft Mission

UUCC embodies love in action. We:

Nurture spirits
Build community
Act for justice

Draft Ends

The people of UUCC:

1. Grow in spiritual depth, connect to awe and wonder, and nurture one another in the art of being human.
2. Deepen our Unitarian Universalist identity, teach it to our children, and share it with the world.
3. Strengthen relationships and cultivate an ever-wider circle of participation and leadership at UUCC.
4. Build a diverse, multicultural Beloved Community where BIPOC*, LGBTQ+**, and other marginalized communities find respite from racism and other oppressions.
5. Care for one another in times of joy, sorrow, transition, and need.
6. Foster engagement and strengthen relationships within the Owen Brown Interfaith Center, Owen Brown community, and Howard County community.
7. Engage intersectional justice work as a faith practice led by and in relationship with people and organizations who are most affected.
    a. Dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves, our institutions, and the broader community.
    b. Mitigate the increasing impacts of climate change and environmental injustice.
    c. Reduce the effects of poverty including food insecurity and housing insecurity.

**BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, People of Color*
*** LGBTQ+ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning + other sexualities and non-binary genders*

An organization's ends describe a desired outcome, and a beneficiary of that outcome. Ends need to be measured to be effective, and the measurability of these ends was extensively considered. Ms. Park offered us some guidance on how we might measure moving forward, suggesting that we send out an annual survey, asking the same questions over a span of years, so we can compare apples to apples, allowing us to see year over year what progress we are making on each end.

However, it is the nature of a faith community that some of our ends are intangible, and we ultimately concluded that it was more important that our ends reflect what we actually aspire to, rather than making measurability the primary objective. In the words of John Carver, "the right end measured imperfectly trumps the wrong end measured perfectly every time."

NEXT STEPS

We will hold drop-in gatherings in late April and May, where congregants can discuss the results of our work and ask questions; at the annual meeting on June 4, 2023, the congregation will vote on adoption of the values and mission. After hearing congregational feedback at the drop-in sessions, and after the vote on the values and mission at the annual meeting, the Board will discuss adoption of the congregational ends.

SPECIAL NOTE FROM THE BOARD

We took this responsibility very seriously. Every member of the Board has a deep, profound love for UUCC, and we know this is an important time in the history of our congregation. Our values, mission, and ends inform who we are as a religious community, and what difference we want UUCC to make within each individual, among the congregation, and in the world beyond. This was sacred work to us, and we worked very hard to create a roadmap for the future that will nourish us, challenge us, and inspire us. We want to express our immense gratitude to Ms. Park, the VME Committee, and the conversation facilitators – this work could not have been done without their dedicated, deft, and thoughtful efforts. If you see one of these folks, please thank them. Thank you also to all in the congregation who attended a VME workshop session. You played an important role in this process.

UUCC BOARD OF TRUSTEES, 2022-2023

Jenny Afkinich	*president*
Melissa Affolter	*first vice-president*
Laurie Coltri	*second vice-president*
Kevin Mercer	*treasurer*
Jim Johnston	*secretary*
Sarah Basehart	*at-large*
Chris Crandell	*at-large*

Appendix

Workshop sessions raw data

VALUES

(Value our) Interdependence	Community Building = Building Community	Growth	Self-reflection
Acceptance	Compassion	Growth	Sense of peace/reverance
Accountability to self and others	Compassion	Harmony	Shared experience
All people are holy — we accept people as they are	Compassion	Honesty	Shared humanity
Aspiration	Connection	Inclusiveness	Spiritual practice
Aspiring	Connection	Independence within community	Spiritual transformation
Awareness of good	Connection	Integrity	Strength of Connections
Awe	Connection	Integrity	Take leaps of faith, be open to awe
Awe	Connection & community	Interconnectedness	Transcendent beauty
Awe	Connection to wider realm	Interconnectedness of the universe	Transcendent insight
Awe and wonder	Connection/Community/ Belonging	Interconnection	Trust
Awe of who children become	Connections to nature	Listening for understanding	Unconditional love
Best Love	Connectivity (more than Connection)	Mindfulness	Unity
Caring	Creativity	Music	Welcome home to all
Caring	Curiosity	Nature	Welcoming
Celebrating potential	Empower community — act to back others up	Openess to Discovery	Willingness to Serve
Co-creation	Empowerment	Openness	Witnessing
Commitment	Engaged compassion (empathy)	Questioning	Wonder
Communion	Establishing a peaceful environment	Questioning	Wonder
Community	Exploration	Radical acceptance	Wonder
Community	Family	Resilience	Wonder
Community	Freedom	Responsibilities to the larger world	Wonder / awe
Community	Generosity of spirit	Reverance/Awe	
Community	Gratitude / appreciation	Reverence of our differences	
Community & connectedness	Growth	Seeking community and contributing to a greater purpose	

WISHES

"My liberation is bound up with yours" — transcending transactional/ charitable relationships	Affordable housing for all	Broaden the options for how we authentically express our values in the world - not just one way.
"See" the humanity in others without judgment	All feel accepted	Build a supportive community for each other / The whole community cares for each other like extended family / Connect to nearly all members — draw in those not in the larger group
11:00 service instead of 10:00	All members are quick to apologize and slow to disengage when there is conflict — no one is driven away by something spoken carelessly or thoughtlessly	Built-in trampoline in the parking lot or play area
A place where there is support for everyone	An artist community — make art together with people both in and outside of UUCC	Bus/driver to take congregation to locations
A process for when we disagree so that disagreement does not escalate into the kind of conflict that drives members away.	An atheistic community	Care for ourselves to become strong
A true understanding of the differences of interaction between white members/friends and people of color.	An end to war and interpersonal violence	Catalogue of members meeting each other. Info about people Experiences and gifts of members Cloud-based way to know more about each other so you can ask members/friends to do things; anyone with a need can search for people with certain skills
Accept political differences like we accept religious differences	Antiracism program across lifespan on OWL model	Charity within and in the outside community
Act to help	Assistance to the other-abled	Combine efforts with other congregations to work at the local level and beyond on food and medical security
Act to slow/reverse climate change	Balance individual spiritual needs and social justice outreach	Communal farm/retreat center
Active engagement in antiracism by at least 50% of congregation, with absence of resistance by the rest.	Be an example of what the world could be by the community we create	Community co-creating purpose and activities
Actively demonstrate our values in the greater community through protests and demonstrations	Be bolder — more people will know about us	Community garden with food not just for UUCC
Actively engage in social justice in large numbers	Be more of a truly welcoming community so that we can be a more diverse (race, age, economic status, disability, etc) congregation	Community is a warm and loving space
Additional staff to bolster content	Being very clear to people that if they have some focus on what brought them here, they should take initiative	Compassion for self so each can have compassion for others
Address systemic racism — help people see and ACT	Better concrete goal setting @ 3-5 years	Compassionate caring support for individuals
Adults more interested/invested in youth	Better way to stay up to date on committees and groups. Maybe listed on website/communicating where they are.	Confront white supremacy culture

WISHES CONTINUED (PAGE 2)

Connections within the local community	Everyone feels welcomed and valued	Have more opportunities to discuss/explore spirituality
Continuing to create opportunities for natural social connections	Expand "Beloved Community" to include fauna, flora, the earth and universe	Healing among congregants
Contribute to the local community	Expand community outreach (provide services/unique skills)	Help all members grow into their best spiritual selves
Creating a community of caring inside and outside the church	Facilitate connectivity within UUCC	Help kids become responsible citizens thru OWL and YRUU
Demonstrate honest willingness to one another's growth without judging	Feed Owen Brown	Include elders in general congregation (transportation & other requirements)
Diverse congregation	Financial stability with open debate of new ideas; model future planning	Increase connection between the Board of Trustees/Exec Team and the congregation
Diversity and connection within UUCC	Focus on engagement with local communities outside of the congregation	Increase in funding for hands-on social justice work (local, regional, national, international)
Do more for our members — have a mechanism for knowing what needs to be met	Foster integration between all UU congregations in Maryland.	Increase personal connections — to retain members and stop attrition / Increase congregational socialization — be more friendly
Each UUCC member feel welcome, connected, and at home	Free coaching on IDI so individuals can move to Beloved Community	Increase public advocacy and speaking out on issue that matter to UU's Offer to furnish spokespeople to the media.
Effective altruism — humanistic approach to charity work	Fun Feast — bring them back for connection and getting to know each other	Increase social action — especially environmental action / save our planet / cure dreaded diseases
Embrace broader — be more inclusive and diverse	Gather more of our energy in community working to address the climate crisis	Increased compassion for others — more awareness of needs/pastoral care, honor and recognize the journey people are traveling. If we increase our compassion within, it will flower outwardly
Endorse the Covenant of Right Relations (CRR)	Get past the "crap" and move forward	Increased connection to this neighborhood
Engage in social justice action	Get reparations right on a large scale — be a model for other congregations and communities (and keep learning)	Individual spiritual lives built up thru activities
Engagement in some activity beyond Sunday service	Greater peace for all in our community	Individually and collectively make the world better in tangible ways
Engagement of congregants in the community / More visibility in the community — let ourselves be known as an activist congregation / UUCC as a leader in building community within Owen Brown, HoCo, justice and climate work	Hands on projects in prisons; having to do with drugs or alcohol	Initiatives to change Howard County; Us instead of us v. them for housing, school segregation, economic/cultural/linguistic divides
Equal, judgement-free treatment for all (race, disability, age . . .)	Have more fun!	Inspire others to do the same

WISHES CONTINUED (PAGE 3)

Interaction with other faith communities	More activities like the Warm Welcome Shelter; year round shelter in our building	More money on more regular basis and overall better understanding of $ needs
Internal Beloved Community - all feel they are protected, valued and supported / Engagement of congregants with each other (meals and other social events)	More activities related to support o community	More music
International sister church exchange program	More child/adult interaction	More opportunity for meaningful interactions
Learning	More camaraderie with other congregations in OBIC	More outreach to community about what is available here — not just services
Living our values with integrity	More connection with the community	More participation/involvement from youth in YRUU
Love expressed for our planet and humanity	More dedicated leaders and staff	More people attending service trips
Love expressed toward our members	More discussion about how we can impact the greater community	More personal spiritual renewal to add to current "faith in action" [likely exist but could seek out]
Love expressed toward our surrounding community	More diverse/variety of opportunities to contribute without a large time commitment	More potlucks!
Love for all things and people	More efficiency in YRUU projects	More recognition of other faith traditions (reflect other faith's major holidays and include people from other faith's in services and celebrations)
Meaningful after-school program/sanctuary for neighborhood students	More emphasis on helping people outside of the US	More resources/members/money to be a force for justice balanced with a sense of sanctuary for ourselves.
Ministry focused on spirituality	More engagement with the outside community / events	More small group spiritual exploration groups
Mission trip — project focused; support Native Americans, the Hispanic community, etc.	More events which promote community	More social justice work
Model for Green Sanctuary/working with other groups	More fun events for everyone Joyful Gathering Committee — Please join! Vegetarian potlucks open to the community	More young people within UUCC
More acceptance of difference and acceptance of different points of view with compassion.	More group learning / educational opportunities	More youth in services
More accessibility — especially drivers for those who cannot	More info & understanding to prepare for membership — engage more people on understanding and volunteer	More youth input in RE programming
More action from all for good	More kid/teen/adult interaction	More youth presence

WISHES CONTINUED (PAGE 4)

Networking/connecting with other churches/communities	Re-engaging with social justice work on the national level	So many interest groups that everyone can do something if they want, and you can't possibly know everyone.
Odd Jobs will grow and there will be a fulltime team doing them	Re-focus on sermon	Solvency
Open, nurturing, joyful relationships among people in the congregation	Restore reproductive rights	Spiritual development of the congregation so the CRR is internalized
Opportunities for individual spiritual growth	Retreat center	Start here and build outward: activist initiatives (family support with tangible care) in this neighborhood and beyond. Say YES to meeting needs. Intentional mutual aid + fierce care. No "them", US means all
Outreach — having a footprint in the Owen Brown neighborhood	See more involvement in our community and be known to others specifically Owen Brown - like the Halloween Party	Strategies in place for resolving conflict with mutual respect and love
Paige remains our minister	See more younger people / reaching out	Strong sense of community within the congregation
Partnerships with Boy and Girl Scouts	See people streaming through the doors; more volunteers	Support each other
Peace & justice in surrounding community	Seen by ALL as launching pad for action	Support for our values in Columbia, MD, and the world
People feel energized by what we are	Seen by ALL as safe space	Supported to individually or collectively offer value more broadly
People in the community are aware that UUCC members are supportive of LGBTQ+, racial, inclusion and environmental issues	Sense of action-based outreach as normalized for ALL congregants (e.g. Habitat; WWS, etc.) - universal congregation participation	The Auction has more events that are fun
Programs that enable spirituality beyond Sundays	Service project with a group we resonate with or to go along with a 2nd Sunday offering	The creation of an elementary, middle and high school based on UU principles
Project funding	Service trips year round and in more places	The Green roof is installed
Promote good climate within our sanctuary and neighborhood	Serving the community	The Music Ministry continues
Reach out to members who have left for a Saturday night social event	Share challenging educational exchanges and sermons	The Owen Brown Social Club for everyone living/working here. There would be food, beer, wine, gambling and lots of conversation.
Recognize needs of others	Shared mission	There are ongoing opportunities for shared activities: Food Insufficiency Initiative; Warm Welcome Shelter
Recognize opportunities to serve and build leadership skills	Shelter for oppressed	To be an engaged congregation working together

WISHES CONTINUED (PAGE 5)

To have building used more during the week	UUCC is a more effective member in the community	We have all the financial resources we need
To see UUCC reflect cultural diversity of the greater community	UUCC is a welcoming community	We have ways to connect and deepen connection
To see UUCC supporting each other in crisis and ministering to each other	UUCC seen/known as a safe place for O.B. Community/Columbia/MD	We model our UU values out in the world.
Training and support of trainers and volunteers	UUCC to be a safe place for renewal and hope	We show up every time someone in need comes to our attention
Treat each other in congregation as Beloved Community	Value and include our children's voices - take them seriously, not as amusement / let our kids lead more	We stop sorting and othering
Truly diverse community	War, WV type service work in Baltimore City	We value our impact on the world to fund it.
Truly minister to each other and don't allow factioning of the congregation; lift up instead	We are a more welcoming community	Wear our awesome and shake it in their faces
Use conflict as a means to move forward	We are in covenant and acting in line with it	Work towards honoring the inherent worth and dignity of others / We value congregants' lived experiences without them having to provide "proof"
UU School	We don't label people	Work with the community directly in action
UUCC becomes a resource/partner in the Owen Brown community	We embrace the spirit of the Covenant of Right Relations	Youth involvement in all aspects of UUCC
UUCC being a positive force in a concrete way in our surrounding community	We go to others to offer something like the Warm Welcome Shelter; don't make them come to us	

MAGAZINE COVERS

The magazine covers are viewable here:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1OyhgxyP332t1f51zpUFSxvQJ5Pc9Crf1

the
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
CONGREGATION of COLUMBIA