

My partner and I are 20+ year Unitarian Universalists and have been members of the same Fellowship for all of that time. There have been recent major changes over the past few years in the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), and unfortunately our Fellowship's Board and Minister have swallowed the UUA's new direction hook, line, and sinker. We find this very disturbing and we wrote this letter to our minister and the Board of Trustees in early 2023. We had no response from anyone. When we contacted the minister a couple of months later, we were given the time-worn excuse of "too busy." The board never responded. This is the letter we sent.

March 13, 2023

Dear Rev. XXXXX and Board members,

We are writing as 20+ year members and devoted supporters of [Church Name] and Unitarian Universalism. [Church Name] was the first spiritual home for both of us and has meant a great deal to us over the years. We see changes occurring at both the UUA and [Church Name] that are not to our liking, that seem to be morphing our beloved liberal religious home into something quite different, and we are troubled—hence this letter. Many of these changes are represented in the proposed drastic alterations to Article II of the UUA bylaws where our beloved Principles and Sources are found, alterations that we strongly object to.

We see the UUA and [Church Name] changing from a liberal religion into a social justice organization with a strong focus on racial equity issues. We also see Unitarian Universalism, as represented by the UUA, changing from a bottom-up structure (congregational polity) in which the UUA exists to serve the congregations, to more of a top-down structure where the UUA sets policy, works toward ideological conformity, erodes the democratic process, and practices censorship. Some of the specific matters of concern to us are:

- Racial justice is an extremely important issue in our society, and we strongly support efforts to improve things. The new UU focus on racial justice was explicitly defined in the UUA Board's charge to the Article II study commission. This is problematic for us. Despite the importance of racial justice, why focus on it? We do not think it is right to set it apart from the many other pressing issues that we face, such as climate change, poverty, women's rights, and voting rights. Also, there are many worthy organizations that have been formed for the specific purpose of promoting racial justice. As individuals, we can (and we do) support them with time and money. We should not convert UU and [Church Name] to a largely single-issue organization while destroying a beautiful liberal religion that many love and that is unique and irreplaceable in many ways.

- The focus on racial justice also means that other spiritually important areas are given short shrift. One thing that first attracted us to [Church Name] was the wide-ranging topics of sermons and other aspects of congregational life. We would hear sermons about Buddhism, end-of-life issues, morality, theology, personal identity, comparative religion, and so on. These have been sorely lacking at [Church Name] for many years.
- The erosion of the democratic process within the UUA as evidenced by (1) The reduction by 50% of the UUA Board membership, (2) The change in the UUA Board from partial district representation to a totally at-large process, (3) The upcoming unopposed “election” of Rev. Sophia Betancourt as UUA President in direct contradiction of UUA Bylaws, and (4) The strict and non-appealable application of those very Bylaws to prevent Rev. Todd Eloff from running as a petition candidate.
- Censorship by the UUA and the accompanying “group think” as shown by (among other things) (1) The abolishing of letters to the editor in UU World magazine. These letters could have easily and at no cost been continued on the web site. We see no way to interpret this move other than as a deliberate attempt to stifle the opinions of rank-and-file UUs. (2) The vile response to Rev. Todd Eklof’s book *The Gadfly Papers* at GA, when his book was banned and confiscated (stolen) and he was banished from the meeting—by people who had not even read the book. This is one of the most shameful episodes in the history of the UUA.

In the interest of brevity, we will stop here. We love [Church Name] and fervently hope that our concerns will be taken seriously—concerns that are shared by many other [Church Name] members with whom we have spoken (you will be hearing from some of them). Specifically, we respectfully suggest the following:

- That [Church Name] consider efforts to move back toward its UU roots, as embodied by the current Seven Principles and Six Sources, and return to being the liberal religion that attracted us and so many others in the first place. To include the Seven and Six in our own bylaws, regardless of what the UUA does, would be a great move in that direction.
- That [Church Name] use its influence to object to and hopefully reverse the anti-democratic tendencies and censorship occurring within the UUA as well as the overly strong focus on racial justice issues.
- That [Church Name] use its General Assembly votes to oppose the “election” of Rev. Betancourt as UUA President due to the anti-democratic nature of the process and the violation of UUA bylaws.
- That [Church Name] use its General Assembly votes to oppose the adoption of the proposed Article II.

Thank you for reading our letter. We would welcome your response and a chance to discuss these matters.