

GENERAL

The voice of Unitarian Universalism is grounded in our history of fighting for our principles. Some struggles have made it to the public arena and been moments that have shaped our nation's history. Our UUCM vision is to serve as an ever brightening beacon of peace and justice for both our congregation and the community at large. We have an obligation to challenge one another on issues of conscience and to speak out publicly when the need arises while continuing to illuminate and affirm our diversity as well as our common ground.

The objective of this process is to empower UUCM members and Committees who speak on issues outside the UUCM and provide them with clear guidelines as to how to proceed. It is the responsibility of the Council and Committees to inform the Congregation when taking action and it is the responsibility of the Congregation to respond either in support of the action or to voice a differing opinion. We want to ensure that everyone within our Congregation has an opportunity to provide input into UUCM decisions when appropriate. This process balances enough debate to ensure that issues are understood and consensus is reached, but not so much discussion that we don't have the energy left to pursue important issues. Consensus does not necessarily mean that everyone agrees on the issue, but rather that we trust and respect one another enough to say that we can live with the results.

Our UU Principles are the guide in our interactions with each other and the external community as described in the attached Checklist. We need to listen to others, respect our differences, and be kind to each other.

There are six different types of individuals or groups within UUCM who could be involved in speaking to the external community on issues:

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| 1. Individual | 4. Council |
| 2. Committee | 5. Minister |
| 3. Entire Congregation (UUCM) | 6. Delegate to non-UUCM group |

Under what conditions can these different players speak to the outside community and what constraints are put upon them?

1. Individuals may speak for themselves and say whatever they want, identifying themselves as a UU or a member of the UUCM without constraints. Individuals should always be clear that they are not speaking for the Church.
2. Committees may speak for themselves and say whatever the Committee decides, constrained by the attached Process. They may say they speak for the specific Committee of the UUCM. The Committee should use the attached Checklist of questions to ask themselves before they pursue an issue. Critical to this is open communication with the Council and the Congregation about what the Committee is doing. This empowers the Committee to take action as they deem appropriate.
3. Individuals or groups within UUCM may speak for the UUCM only when the attached Process is followed.

4. The Council (or its designee) may speak without a Congregational vote after following the attached Process and Checklist. Every issue does not have to go to the Congregation for a vote. Critical to this is open communication with the Congregation about what the Council is doing.
5. Ministers (per contract) may speak on any issue. They speak as the Minister of the UUCM, but not for the UUCM.
6. Delegates to an outside group or to the UUA or District may speak and vote their conscience unless they have been appointed by the Council or a Committee with the condition that they vote in accordance with the Council or Committee decision.

When conflict is not resolved or when someone or some group thinks they are not being heard, there are several resources within the church that are available: the Council, the President or a member of the Council, the Committee on Church Relations (CCR), the Minister, and, as a last resort, five (5) people may call for a vote of the congregation per the UUCM By-Laws.

As always, UUCM members and friends are expected to minister to one another. We will speak together of our shared values. We will embrace, listen to, and hear dissent without marginalizing dissenters; consider the sensitivities of those in the community and work to diminish surprise; work through conflict and continue caring for the community and individuals despite disagreement; persist in important endeavors without losing faith in a community that expresses doubt; ask individuals who disagree to persist in being heard until they feel they have had a fair hearing, without turning to anger; and love each other despite our disagreement.

PROCESS FOR POSITIONS THAT WILL BE COMMUNICATED TO THE OUTSIDE COMMUNITY

When necessary, this process can be expedited for quick reaction issues by calling special Council or Congregational Meetings and sending out special mailings. It is the responsibility of the Council to act with speed when approached with an important issue.

1. An issue is identified by a Committee (Council, group, or individual) within the church.
2. The Committee holds discussions internally.
3. If necessary more information is gathered.
4. The Committee reviews the attached Checklist (the issue may be one that is identified for concern).
5. The Committee decides that the issue is worth pursuing. They develop initial plans, decide whether they want to use the UUCM name, decide the extent of community involvement that is anticipated, and who will lead the effort.
6. The Committee notifies the Council that the Committee will be supporting this issue and discusses any concerns, the initial plans, if the issue will involve using the UUCM name, the extent of community involvement that is anticipated, and who will take the lead.
7. The Council provides feedback on the issue including whether informational meetings would be beneficial and how many, whether a Congregational vote or a Council vote is necessary if the issue will involve using the UUCM name, and other things to support the Committee.
8. The Committee informs the Congregation using any and all communication methods as appropriate (discuss issue, initial plans, if the issue will involve using the UUCM name or if it is a Committee-supported issue, extent of community involvement that is anticipated, who will take the lead, and invites the Congregation to informational gatherings or to participate in the activities planned).
9. The Committee proceeds with the work as planned on this issue working it as a Committee supported event externally (keeping the Council and the Congregation informed of what is going on concerning this issue).
10. If controversy arises or if the Checklist indicates this might be an issue of concern or if this is an issue involving use of the UUCM name or if the Committee wishes, one or more gatherings will be held, facilitated by the CCR or a member of the Council (or other neutral party), where everyone has an opportunity to be heard.
11. If this is an issue involving the use of the UUCM name -
 - a. If consensus is reached or for any other reason the Council decides that a Congregational vote is not needed -
 - The Council votes (2/3 of those voting are required to carry).
 - b. If consensus is not reached or the Council thinks that a vote of the Congregation is necessary -

SPEAKING FOR THE CHURCH POLICY

- The Council will call for a Congregational vote when it is thought that the time is right (Note: 5 people from the Congregation may call for a vote at any time).
 - The Council initiates the required notification and arranges for the meeting.
 - A Congregational vote is held (2/3 of those voting are required to carry).
- c. If the vote is successful -
- The Committee is empowered to speak on this issue to the outside community using the UUCM name taking care not to deviate significantly from the intent of the resolution or statement that was passed, but they have latitude.
- d. If the vote is not successful –
- The Committee may only speak for itself on this issue.

12. The Committee keeps the Council and the Congregation informed of what is going on concerning this issue.

CHECKLIST

Part A. Will the issue itself help us to live our UU principles? We should be able to answer “yes” to many of these questions:

- Does the issue value the inherent worth and dignity of every person?
- Does the issue support justice, equity and compassion in human relations? Are we helping someone or some group obtain justice or equality economically, politically, religiously, educationally, or socially?
- Does this issue help to stop discrimination due to religion, age, sex, sexual preference, disabilities, or national origin?
- Does this issue promote acceptance and tolerance of those who are different?
- Does this issue involve searching for the truth? Research or investigation into something that is shrouded in mystery and should be common knowledge?
- Will this follow or enhance the democratic process in our community, nation, or world?
- Does this issue promote our goal of world community with peace, justice, and liberty for all. Does this issue help end the oppression of others? Help those at war with others or ourselves? Secure justice for those oppressed, imprisoned or otherwise detained unjustly? Can we do this while supporting those who are supporting our country (i.e., support the troops while we are at war)?
- Does this issue respect the interdependent web of all existence? Does it provide good stewardship with the earth, plants, animals, and others?

Part B: During the process of pursuing this issue, will we be living our UU Principles within UUCM? We should be able to answer “yes” to all of these questions:

- Can we be considerate, listen to, and respect people who hold different views? Have we tried to walk in their shoes, see the issue from their perspective? Would we want to be treated the way we are treating them?
- If we want to use the UUCM name, can we abide by the democratic process, respect others, listen to others, and live with the outcome?
- Can we make sure that the “tyranny of the majority” is not allowed to silence anyone?
- Can we do our part to recycle, limit our use of paper, and otherwise value our environment as we pursue this issue?

Part C: There are other important questions that should be answered before going to the Council or the Congregation with an issue. If we answer “yes” to any of these questions, we should carefully consider our approach to pursuing this issue, raise this to the Council, and provide the Council with justification for pursuing this issue:

- Did we answer “no” to too many questions in Part A to make this a worthwhile issue?
- Did we answer “no” to any of the questions in Part B?
- Do we believe this will be a controversial issue within the UUCM?
- Do we believe this will be a controversial issue within the community, our government, or other important groups? Could it lead to confrontations with other groups?
- Could this lead to demonstrations against UUCM by the community?
- Do we plan or could our action lead us to take any action that might be construed as civil disobedience?
- Will we be hurting anyone in UUCM or in the community as we pursue this issue?

Part D: The group should be prepared to answer the following questions when presenting the issue to the Council or the Congregation:

- Do we wish to pursue this as a Committee action or do we wish to use the UUCM name?
- What are the plans for pursuing this issue?
 - How will we involve the Congregation?
 - How many gatherings are planned?
 - Should we be presenting both pros and cons of this issue?
 - What activities are planned?
 - Do we plan to hold any forums or speakers who will speak to the issue? How about against the issue?
 - Do we have any educational or study groups planned?
 - Do we have any letter writing planned?
 - Which activities will involve the community at large?
- How do we plan to keep the Council and the Congregation informed about this issue?
- What kinds of external communications are planned?
- Who will lead this issue (Point of Contact for Congregation, Council, etc.)?
- Do we believe a Council or Congregational vote required?
- How can we minimize impact on those who think differently?