

Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington (UUCA) Racial Justice Task Force Charge

Approved by Board of Trustees August 23, 2022

UUCA is a collective that is focused on broadening its internal culture while extending a full, open, WELCOME to the local Arlington, VA community. Why? It is our wish to foster a community that better reflects the diverse people and cultures which physically surround us. Our history includes taking a variety of steps to move the congregation and its members deeper into the Beloved Community. The hard work and accomplishments of these efforts most recently resulted in the congregational adoption of the 8th Principle as a core value of the church. Another step has been engaging with the UUA Widening the Circle of Concern report. This text is the result of a multi-year effort to assess the experiences of Unitarian Universalist BIPOC members and recommend ways to address harms and exclusionary practices caused by systemic white supremacy and its accompanying cultural oppressions.

In the spring of 2022, UUCA members and friends participated in three sessions to discuss and explore ways that the report's recommendations might be advanced in the congregation. These sessions were enthusiastically received, and a number of creative ideas were generated. In the wake of those meetings, an additional gathering was held to bring past and present concerned individuals together - to hear insights and ideas from Rev. Carol Thomas Cissel (gained during her first year of ministry at UUCA). At that meeting, the group agreed that a specific body, a Task Force, was needed to create a pathway for our congregation to move forward by taking actions that will make our values of racial justice and radical welcome more evident.

This body - the UUCA Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF) - is charged with developing recommendations for building, "...a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that will accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions..." as called for in the 8th principle. In doing so we hope to shift the dominant white culture and eliminate practices that inhibit the participation and inclusion of BIPOC people in our congregation. The RJTF will work in collaboration with the Minister of Social Justice and Community Development and other staff as needed, to propose and initiate actions that will demonstrate and express UU values of welcome and cultural competency.

Authority

UUCA Bylaws ARTICLE V: Board of Directors (hereinafter Trustees)

1. *Authority. The Board of Trustees shall have general supervision and direction of the affairs of the Church.*

UUCA Policy: Global Delegation Policy: *“The UUCA Board hereby delegates its authority to supervise and direct the work and resources of the Church, except as limited by other policies, to the Senior Minister as Head of Staff.”*

The RJTF has the authority to gather facts, develop options, and advise the MSJCD or make recommendations on matters related to developing a welcoming culture. The Minister for Social Justice and Community Development reports to UUCA’s Sr. Minister /Head of Staff. Under that supervision, the MSJCD has the authority to make decisions about the viability and practicality of the ideas suggested by the RJTF. The RJTF will operate until the Board determines that its services are no longer needed. The Board Governance Committee will review this charge in consultation with the MSJCD and the RJTF after this task force has operated for one year.

Scope of Work

The RJTF will focus on establishing goals, developing ideas, testing strategies, and implementing steps generated from several sources: UUCA’s acceptance of the UUA 8th principle, the UUA Widening the Circle of Concern Report, and viable suggestions from other carefully considered resources. All recommendations will be aligned with the mission and values of UUCA. The following RJTF activities will be done under its scope of work:

- The RJTF will research and review UUA racial justice resources and those from other organizations engaged in racial justice work in the community.
- The RJTF will review the practices being employed by other congregations and organizations to identify best practices.
- The RJTF force will visit other churches and religious institutions in the DMV to experience and learn from practices used in more diverse congregations.
- The RJTF will seek input from the congregation on the ideas and recommendations made and gather additional ideas for consideration.
- The RJTF will identify changes, to policies or practices, that would move UUCA toward a more anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural orientation; and seek Board approval of any major policies that signify significant changes or additions to ministry and church activities. The RJTF will then bring these identified changes

to the appropriate body—staff, minister, or (through the Senior Minister) to the Board.

- The Minister of Social Justice and Community Development will have the authority to change and/or establish new forms of UUCA communications, including but not limited to, changes to the website and social media accounts, providing images/artwork/educational materials to the congregation and addressing the gap in volunteers to craft a more inclusive welcome for friends, visitors and members. The RJTF will be advisory to this process. The RJTF and the MSJCD will keep the Board informed of their actions via regular contact through the Senior Minister following their monthly meetings.
- The MSJCD will provide the RJTF with regular updates on the implementation of its recommendations. The RJTF will evaluate these updates. The RJTF will stay in close contact with the congregation by conducting listening sessions and using surveys to gauge the effectiveness of those recommendations.
- The RJTF will meet two to three times a year with the Board to update it on the Task Force's activities and to build relationships.
- It will also provide a brief written Annual Report that will be appended to the Senior Minister's Annual Report to the Congregation.

Membership

The RJTF will consist of five to seven members (two Board members, the Minister of Social Justice and Community Development, and two to four members of the UUCA congregation). New team members are selected by consensus of the RJMT via an annual application process open to all. Additional individuals and/or staff may be invited to participate in meetings based on specific expertise or information needed. Members serve for two church years, with terms staggered for continuity.

Meetings

The RJTF will meet monthly to develop ideas, assess impact, and revise changes made. Recommendations will be updated as necessary to reflect changing circumstances. Additional meetings may be scheduled to include other parties in deliberations and to present information to key stakeholder groups.