

Wildflower Input to the National Peacemaking Statement of Conscience

The Wildflower Unitarian Universalist Congregation of South Austin submits the following input for the draft Peacemaking Statement of Conscience.

A) International and Inter-Community Peacemaking

- 1) Much is now understood about what leads to war, genocide and other inter-community violence, and how they can be prevented by building a culture of peace. Ingredients of a culture of peace include education for both men and women; healthy economies in terms employment levels and wages; open democratic process; and leadership that emphasizes peaceful approaches. What is needed is the political will to make building a global culture of peace a top national and international priority.
- 2) We believe that military action by the United States should be used only as a last resort. There should be well-defined nonviolent steps taken to avoid military action.
- 3) We honor and respect our people in uniform who have courageously risked their lives in service of our country, in the past and in the present. Our peacemaking efforts are directed toward decision makers, without devaluing the sacrifices of those who implement the decision to use military force.
- 4) We support a strengthening of the United Nations and other international organizations to develop strong peacemaking and peacekeeping programs.
- 5) We call for our educational system to address ways to prevent war and violence at all levels, with curricula at all ages.
- 6) We commit ourselves as a denomination to speak powerfully for building national and international institutions and programs that proactively build a global culture of peace and manage conflict. These include effective and sustainable economic development programs that bring an end to extreme poverty, support for universal education, a system of international law, support for the extension of democratic process through training and technical assistance, among others.
- 7) We call for the creation of an ongoing Working Group, called the 'Sixth Principle Program' or other similar name, within the UUA that would consist of a group of volunteers with experience in peacemaking in a variety of contexts. The Group, with some staff assistance from UUA, would continue to work to educate and build consensus among UU congregations about ways to build a culture of peace at all levels, including both locally and internationally.
- 8) We call for the establishment of a bipartisan national U.S. Peace Commission or U.S. Department of Peace, or other institutionalized body to provide national leadership and greater clarity on ways to build a culture of peace within U.S. society and internationally.

B) Environment and Peacemaking

- 1) We understand our interconnectedness with the web of all life, and recognize that we ultimately must live in harmony with it rather than seek to dominate it.
- 2) We recognize that doing violence to the environment and other species, through domination and exploitation for short-term gain, causes suffering for many humans and other species and in the long run leads to negative consequences for the survival of all. This will be especially true as population grows and resources become more scarce. There is an urgent need to identify economic development models, along with appropriate scientific and technological tools, that serve sustainability and a healthy global environment.
- 3) We challenge ourselves to seek peace with all life by understanding and evaluating how our actions have consequences for life on earth and adapting our individual and collective actions accordingly. We recognize that peacemaking includes humane treatment of and respect for the well-being of non-human animals, both domestic and wild.

C) Societal Peacemaking

- 1) Systemic violence is harm to individuals or groups that is accomplished through social institutions and accompanied by oppressive social attitudes of racism, classism, heterosexism, etc. Systemic violence is often supported unconsciously by many who benefit from it or are unaware of its impact (as both men and women were often unconscious of sexism before the 60's, for example)
- 2) The unconscious assumption of privilege is one of the dynamics that sustains systemic violence. Coming to understand the nature of privilege and oppression is an important aspect of living our First Principle, 'Respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person.'
- 3) We work with other organizations toward ending oppression/systemic violence and building a just and peaceful society, as an important expression of our commitment to the Seven Principles.
- 4) We seek to build a clearer understanding of the changes needed to end oppression/systemic violence, to move from domination to earth community, and commit to advocating for the policy and cultural changes needed.

D) Congregational Peacemaking

- 1) We are committed to having our congregations be a model of clear, honest, respectful communication, and peaceful handling of differences. We establish guidelines for how we treat each other and establish trust and harmony in our church community, through written behavioral covenants or other approaches
- 2) We seek to build in our congregations a sense of deep connection, trust, mutual understanding, that empowers us to extend that quality of peaceful relationship to others in the wider community.
- 3) We emphasize the importance of congregants being in right relationship with each other (meaning relating in a fair and mutually respectful way). We maintain an ongoing focus on this through mechanisms such as establishing right relationship teams or resource teams of individuals trained in conflict resolution, providing continuing education on communication and conflict resolution approaches for congregants, establishing clear procedures for resolving conflicts.
- 4) We use decision-making processes that ensure that all perspectives are heard and respected.

E) Interpersonal Peacemaking

- 1) We seek to communicate in a way that always sees the 'inherent worth and dignity' of the other, no matter how much we disagree with them. We recognize the importance of deep listening, listening caringly without judgment, seeking to have empathy for the others' needs and feelings.
- 2) We are committed to identifying and learning effective approaches to resolving conflict and building greater trust and understanding.

F) Inward Peacemaking

- 1) Peacemaking starts from within, in building our own inner harmony, self-acceptance, compassionate understanding of our own needs and feelings. Developing peace within ourselves requires some form of intentional practice of taking time to go within, to know ourselves, and to develop a sense of centeredness around our own deepest values. We seek as a community to support each other in taking time to build inward peace, and to educate ourselves and each other about effective approaches to inward peacemaking.