

# Pathways to Growth

In the very distant past, people attended the only church in their community. The choice was to attend or not, not which religion to be affiliated with. The changes over the centuries and through the generations have altered this, and now there are multiple paths to a religious community. People still seek out the church around the corner, but they also seek out interest groups, support groups, websites, recommendations of friends and families, and many other routes to congregational involvement. Young people find Unitarian Universalism through youth or young adult groups, those of differing religious identities find UUism through covenant groups, activists find UUism through involvement in social justice programs, etc. Our camps and conference centers, our involvement in the community, our willingness to welcome and embrace a diversity of people mean that people find our religious movement through non-traditional routes.

Numerous people who are not legal members of congregations consistently report themselves to be UUs through polling, survey, and census data. Many who identify as UUs and are not involved in our congregations are involved in some of the extra-congregational organizations within the Unitarian Universalist movement. And many who are involved find themselves more comfortably at home within these extra-congregational organizations. The extra-congregational routes to involvement provide opportunities to expand and share Unitarian Universalism and to strengthen individual commitment to Unitarian Universalism. No longer is affiliation

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with a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association the only way that people identify themselves as Unitarian Universalists or live out UU loyalty and commitment (if it ever was!). Nor are UU congregations the only way in which our tradition is supported and lived out in the greater community.

Yet as a congregationally based Association, it has sometimes been difficult to understand the way in which extra-congregational affiliation fits within our system of congregational polity, and sometimes even the mere presence of these extra-congregational organizations creates tensions. Questions arise about competing loyalties to the congregation and to the extra-congregational organization, who is welcome in the congregation, how the corporate body reacts to the presence of extra-congregational groups within its sphere, who controls the agenda of the congregation, and how responsive the congregation is to a diversity of needs and concerns. The seeming polarities created by the existence of people who are more closely tied to extra-congregational associations can end up being agents of creative change. Extra-congregational organizations provide some people with a UU context, a greater sense of belonging that they have not found within our congregations, and a deepening of their already strong congregational identity.

## What Are Extra-congregational Organizations?

By extra-congregational organizations, we refer to the official and unofficial UU-related, non-congregational bodies. Non-congregational organizations include several different types of organizations. They include groups at the cluster and district level, but more relevant to this report are the Associate Member and Independent Affiliate organizations. The UUA bylaws make provisions for both Associate<sup>1</sup> and Independent Affiliate<sup>2</sup> organizations. Some of these Associate and Independent Affiliate organizations are membership-based organizations, and several have groups either in local congregations, at the district level, or both. The list of organizations that are, and are not, either Associate or Independent Affiliate organizations fluctuates, based primarily on whether or not the groups have filed the requested information with the UUA and been subsequently approved by the UUA's Board of Trustees. For purposes of this report, these are referred to as unofficial organizations, with no slight intended but rather in reference to their affiliation with the UUA as an institution at this particular time.

Some of these Associate, Independent Affiliate, and unofficial organizations require affiliation with a UU congregation for membership (most notably the professional organizations), but most of these organizations do not. It is almost impossible to say whether or not the majority of the Associate and Affiliate groups' members see their participation in these groups as an aug-

mentation to their congregational involvement or whether it is an alternative to congregational life. Rather, individuals may seek out these organizations as entry points or end points of association with Unitarian Universalism. Associate, Independent Affiliate, and unofficial groups provide an introduction to our values and to the things UUs care about and provide a way for easing out of the movement when Sunday morning activities no longer serve a purpose.

For many others, however, these organizations are an outgrowth and continuation of their UU involvement. They are a way to focus on a particular topic (such as with social justice-based organizations) or to obtain support around a particular identity (DRUUMM, Latino/a UU Networking Association, Interweave, as examples). These groups offer places to interact with others who have similar opinions or identities, especially for those of us who are in the minority in our local congregations.

For others, participation in these organizations is their only UU participation, and for some of these, the fact that the organization is UU-related and/or identified is insignificant—it is the program or people that draws them, not the religious label. This can be especially true for those involved in camps and conferences and in our youth and young adult movements.

The nature of these involvements creates tensions, simply by the fact that for some individuals, their affiliation with the extra-congregational organization pulls them away from congregational life, while for other individuals, it strengthens their congregational ties. In some congregations, the struggle over congregational identity is heightened by the presence of these organizations and there is seen to be competition for the right to define the congregation, while in other congregations, the presence of diverse groups strengthens the desire for diversity.

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## Extra-congregational Organizations' Experiences

To gain greater understanding of the role of extra-congregational organizations within the UUA, and to understand the tensions better, the Commission met with representatives from several extra-congregational organizations during the 1999 General Assembly. Knowing we could not meet with all the existing organizations, we chose a subset that we believed would give us a broader understanding of membership questions and issues. Clearly, all those in the focus groups were also actively involved in congregational and the Association's life, or they would not have been at the General Assembly. As well, many were ministers and thus had a high degree of connection and commitment to the congregational base of the UUA. However, in speaking with the Commissioners, they spoke not only of their personal experience but of the experience of other members of their groups who were not connected with congregational life.<sup>3</sup>

## Theological/Religious Extra-congregational Organizations

For those involved in the various theological/religious extra-congregational organizations, this extra-congregational association strongly supports their involvement in local congregations and, in some cases, provides them with a vehicle for continued association with Unitarian Universalism outside of the congregational structure. Currently, there are five theological/religious extra-congregational organizations associated with Unitarian Universalism: Covenant of UU Pagans (CUUPS), Friends of Religious Humanism (FRH), UU Buddhist Fellowship (UUBF), UU Christian Fellowship (UUCF), and UUs for Jewish Awareness (UUJA).

UUCF and FRH differ from the other three theological extra-congregational organizations in that either in the past or currently the theological approach they advocate was or is the dominant theology of Unitarianism, Universalism, and/or Unitarian Universalism. Both Unitarianism and Universalism originated as part of the Christian tradition, and it was not until the middle of the twentieth century, with the rise of the Humanist movement, that individuals, let alone congregations, began to seriously question Christianity as a shared theological understanding. By the end of the twentieth century, a large proportion of our congregations was primarily Humanist in outlook.

On the other hand, the theological orientations represented in CUUPS, UUBF, and UUJA have not had that level of popular support and understanding in our congregations. Although CUUPS boasts the largest membership of any of these groups, only 1 percent of our congregational membership is involved in CUUPS. A survey done by CUUPS in the late 1990s found that 85 to 90 percent of its members were currently either members or pledging friends of UU congregations. This survey represents only those who were official members of the continental body, and there are many people who, while they may claim CUUPS membership, are members of local chapters and may not be otherwise affiliated with the continental body or with Unitarian Universalism. Despite its relative newness in the pagan world (organized in 1985), it is one of the larger pagan organizations in the United States. For a chapter to be accepted into the organization, it must have at least three officers who are both members of a UU society and members of CUUPS.

UUJA is comprised primarily of individuals who grew up either culturally or religiously as Jews and who have made their religious homes since that time in UU congregations. Many within this group are (or were) in interfaith marriages and sought a theological middle ground that would honor both traditions. UUBF, the newest of these groups, has only twenty local groups meeting throughout the continent. In order to be identified as a UU Buddhist practice group, UUBF requires the groups to have strong affiliation with a local congregation.

For UU Christians, the existence of UUCF offers support and resources for Christians within our congregations. Although the predominant worship style

in UU congregations follows the Reform Christian format (readings, hymns, sermon, with the sermon as the focal point of the service), many UU Christians do not feel affirmed in the worship. For them, Jesus and a liberal interpretation of the Christian Bible are important parts of their individual theologies, and they find that, depending on their local congregation, this is rarely supported. (This is not true in the New England congregations that have retained much of their association with Christianity but it is held to be so by those UU Christians outside of predominantly Christian congregations.) As one member of the focus group stated, “I wouldn’t be a UU anymore if it wasn’t for UUCF. By maintaining a Christian presence in the UUA it makes it possible for me to be a Christian and a UU. Christians are marginalized in the UUA.” Another participant stated that he is involved in “a pluralistic church” and that he “stays somewhat closeted about his Christian theology.” UUCF allows him to express his “theological nature even if it is truncated” in his local congregation. The spirit of the teachings of Jesus is there, but as a minister, he “dechristianizes” the language.

Similar stories are told by those who are Humanist. Many Humanists have an abiding sense that the movement is losing its way in the recent swing toward the inclusion of more spiritual, religious language in programming at both the local and the continental levels. Gatherings of FRH at recent General Assemblies have spent time considering the nature of the shift in theological language. Many feel that they are in the process of losing their religious homes. They believe that Unitarian Universalism is moving away from its place in the theological/religious world and becoming very much like other liberal Christian communities. FRH strives to keep a Humanist stance alive and accepted within our UU congregations.

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UUCF and FRH are united in their belief that congregational life should reflect their particular theological outlook, at least part of the time. Members of both organizations expect to hear language that reflects their theologies in services and in the music and readings. While the atheist Humanists bewail the addition of spirituality and “god-talk,” the Christians appreciate the inclusion but often long for explicitly Christian language and readings. There is an inherent tension in these requests: For Humanists and Christians alike, the ideal worship community would offer language that evokes their imagery and beliefs, without need of translation. However, it is a logical impossibility to use the language of both groups within the same service. One either uses language that includes Jesus or does not; there is no middle ground except for long-term balance.

Members of CUUPS long for imagery that evokes the goddess and earth-centered spirituality. Pagan UUs seek out CUUPS on a continental and local level in order to find worship that is most meaningful to them. Although many of our congregations now celebrate some of the neo-pagan festivals and holy days (most notably the solstices and equinoxes), very few, if any, congregations

are focused primarily around goddess and earth-centered spirituality, despite the addition of the sixth Source to the UUA's Statement of Principles.<sup>4</sup> CUUPS provides an outlet and place of worship for many who identify with the neo-pagan movement.

UU Buddhists do not, by and large, expect the worship services of their local congregations to be primarily Buddhist in orientation. For Western Buddhists, there is no established community of worshippers, and so those who seek religious community must find it outside of their Buddhism. As one Buddhist says, "Unitarian Universalism is culturally Christian (the metaphoric framework is Christian), carries rationalist and nineteenth-century humanist values (the liberal impulses in Christianity), and it also honors my Buddhism. It challenges and questions me. I feel that Buddhism is not marginalized, but at the center of lived UUism."

Jewish UUs do not expect worship to be predominantly Jewish in nature, but they prefer that the worship not be exclusively Christian either. Many find it difficult to associate with something called a *church* and would prefer other names such as *congregation*, *fellowship*, or *society*. As well, many culturally Jewish UUs find support for the celebration of Jewish holidays and holy days, such as Pesach, Hanukkah, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur in their UU congregations, especially in cities with a larger proportion of Jews. This acknowledgement, along with the blending of various religious approaches for those who are in interfaith marriages, is an important part of their involvement within a UU congregation.

Reactions to the existence of these groups within congregations varies widely. Some congregations provide support for these extra-congregational organizations and find that the variety of theological services provided by these organizations supplements what occurs on Sunday mornings. Other congregations prohibit, by custom or directive, the activities of these groups and the diversity of worship style they bring to our movement. We heard of several congregations that do not allow CUUPS chapters to use their buildings or hold their worship services in the congregational buildings, in some cases even when the members of the chapter are members of the local congregation.

## Extra-congregational Organizations Based on Ethnic and/or Racial Identity

Although the UUA is and has been firmly committed to civil rights for persons of color and those of differing ethnic backgrounds, there have often been strong disagreements about what this means within the Association and how best to achieve and practice an openness to non-European Americans.<sup>5</sup> Since the early to mid-1990s, the Association has taken on the goal of becoming an anti-racist organization that strives to be open to people of various racial and ethnic diversities.

However, as the journey has not always been easy, members of various racial and ethnic minorities have created Affiliate organizations to provide support and counsel in the process of the UUA's transformation. The most recent of these organizations are UU Network on Indigenous Affairs (UUNIA), Diverse Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM), and Latino/a UU Networking Association (LUUNA). African American UU Ministers (AAUUM) helped found DRUUMM, and it no longer exists as a separate organization.

DRUUMM and LUUNA (and formerly AAUUM) provide safe and supportive places for persons of color and differing ethnic groups within our Association. Members of the focus group explained their involvement in these organizations this way:

- “AAUUM provided a place for African Americans to meet, share concerns that only applied to them. It also was a safe place where I could say things that might not be understood elsewhere. That helped me stay with the UUA. It filled gaps that the congregation did not meet.”
- “On a personal level, the congregation has been important to me . . . the sense of community. At the level of LUUNA, it supplements the involvement at the congregational level. It's a way of working on important projects; it's fun and comradeship. There's probably not a UU church that has a half-dozen Latinos in the country.”
- “As an Indian person whose ancestors have been oppressed and exploited by organized religion, joining a church was probably the last thing I wanted to do. A professor said the UUA is ‘not that bad,’ not really much of a church at all, good people, inclusive, it'll work. . . . I found UUNIA at General Assembly, ‘thank God.’ It's very much a reason why I have stayed through thick and thin. It's hard for me to sit in our congregations. I feel so completely invisible, calling myself a member is problematic. . . . There is a home for me with these groups [UUNIA], but not in a congregation. I cannot be fully who I am in a congregation.”

For most, their involvement in UUNIA, AAUUM, DRUUMM, and LUUNA are important parts of their involvement in Unitarian Universalism, and for many these organizations are their primary loyalty and community of nurture and support. For some, their participation in Affiliate organizations is the only thing that keeps them in Unitarian Universalism, for through these groups they link up with others who share their identity and are committed to ensuring that the UUA becomes (and then remains) an anti-racist organization.

These groups have served almost as political action groups within the UUA to push for equality of all, regardless of racial or ethnic definition. AAUUM began both to offer support to African American ministers, as well as to lobby

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with the Department of Ministry for those ministers who experienced difficulty getting into Fellowship and into congregations once in Fellowship. DRUUMM has worked within the UU Ministers' Association to make sure that issues of concern to ministers from various minorities are raised and dealt with and to help further the UUMA in its goal of becoming anti-racist. LUUNA has worked to ensure that material is available in Spanish for individuals who may be interested in Unitarian Universalism.

The majority of the members of these organizations are also involved in local congregational life, though the degree of individual involvement varies greatly (as it does for individuals who are not members of extra-congregational associations). However, many still feel marginal or invisible in their congregations. Frequently, these individuals are also expected to bear the burden of explaining themselves and justifying their existence within the congregation to other congregational members.

The tensions felt in congregational life for members of these groups are similar to tensions arising from differing theological orientations, primarily the questions of who gets to define the culture of the congregation and the amount of diversity in style of worship and other programmatic areas of congregational life. Again, some congregations have found the presence of these groups supportive of their efforts to provide greater racial/cultural diversity, whereas others believe the existence of these groups provides unfair political pressure on the congregations.

## **Extra-congregational Organizations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender**

Interweave (formerly Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns) was originally created in 1971, and was revived in the early 1980s. It works alongside the UUA's Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Concerns (OBGLTC) to promote the support and inclusion of bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender UUs within our congregations and in society as a whole. It was through the work of Interweave and OBGLTC that the curriculum *The Welcoming Congregation*<sup>6</sup> and designation of Welcoming Congregation were created. Although early on this group was essential in forming a welcoming atmosphere within our congregations and ministry, by now the cultural and social changes in our congregations (with help from Interweave) and society at large have greatly changed for the better. As of July 27, 2000, 257 of our 1,032 congregations have received Welcoming Congregation status, and 200 to 300 more are in process.

During our focus group sessions, individuals expressed that it is often through Interweave involvement that individuals first feel fully free to be themselves within a religious context. Most members of the organization are ac-

tively involved in their congregations and feel that they have been supported by the presence of Interweave. There is an understanding that Interweave and the OBGLTC have had a great impact in transforming our congregations, in a way that the anti-racism work has not yet done. Most, if not all, of our congregations have openly bisexual, gay, and lesbian members, and a large percentage of our bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender clergy are open about their sexual orientations. Whereas in the past being bisexual, gay, or lesbian made settlement in our congregations very difficult, problems in settlement have now become isolated cases. (The same cannot be said for the relatively small number of transgender ministers who have sought settlement. They still experience difficulty in the settlement process.)

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Individuals mentioned that they still have strong ties to their local congregations, but there is often a sense of “coming home” when in groups of BGLT people. Additionally, it was noted that involvement in Interweave helped individuals tie in with other movements within the Association, such as anti-racism work and other social justice issues. It has brought an awareness of the larger UU world into their lives and helps them keep perspective.

However, tensions still exist within our congregations about the involvement of BGLT people. Some congregations are hesitant to be known as the “gay church” within their communities and urge a low-key approach and lack of advertising within the gay/lesbian community, whereas other congregations warmly embrace Interweave chapters as viable components of their membership, ministry, and outreach.

Yet another area in which the UU movement has made great strides over the past thirty-five years is in the area of women’s rights and participation. The UU Women’s Federation, founded in 1963 through the consolidation of the Association of Universalist Women (organized in 1869) and the Alliance of Unitarian Women (organized in 1890), was one of the major bodies through which lobbying and support of women in Unitarian Universalism happened. The UUWF brought many women to leadership in our movement, helped to challenge the language of our governing documents, and supported women in the ministry. UUWF, alongside the Women and Religion Task Force, worked to ensure that our bylaws, and most notably our Principles, were written in language that was inclusive of all people. These organizations also provided early support for Interweave through working collaboratively with them, and they helped to support women ministers as they sought parity in settlement and remuneration with their male colleagues. Like Interweave and BGLT individuals, UUWF helped transform the face of Unitarian Universalism, especially its ministry, to be more reflective of society at large.

For many women, involvement in UUWF has provided a depth to their involvement at the local congregational level and helped them achieve a sense of wholeness in their congregational lives. This has been through the transformation of governing structures and the increased use of female imagery, as well as

the use of inclusive language. For some women, however, UU involvement is primarily through UUWF and its local and district chapters. There is still tension in some congregations over issues of inclusive language and over the various imageries used for the holy, but these tensions seem to have been greatly reduced over the past thirty years.

### Political and Economic Extra-congregational Organizations

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Whereas Unitarian Universalism clearly states that it has no theological creed, there are those who contend that we do have a political creed—that of liberal politics, most notably Democrat in the United States and New Democrat and Liberal within Canada. However, our members reflect a diversity of political beliefs. For every resolution or statement that is passed at General Assembly, there are people in the pews and pulpits who do not agree with it. Similarly, although several surveys report that the majority of Unitarian Universalists is middle-class, there are also some who are not and some who, regardless of their own class, work for economic justice and the inclusion of a broader class base within Unitarian Universalism.

Two Independent Affiliate organizations were created to address the concerns and needs of these individuals within the UU movement. As described by the 1999 UUA Directory, the main purpose of Conservative Forum for UUs (CFUU) is to ensure that UUs “are free to pursue a responsible search for religious truth and meaning in our societies and denomination, regardless of individual views on politics, economics, or social issues.”<sup>7</sup> The main purpose of UUs for a Just Economic Community (UUJEC) is “to focus our denomination’s attention and power toward effecting systemic economic change that will serve the common good” and in particular toward a “theology of relinquishment.”<sup>8</sup>

These membership-based groups are made up almost entirely of people who are members of local congregations, and these groups aim to support their members and to broaden the outlook and complexion of UU congregations. Believing that liberal religion is not restricted to those who are liberal politically, or in the economic middle class, these groups aim to transform and open up local UU congregations.

### Camps and Conference Centers as Extra-congregational Organizations

Many find that UU camps and conference centers are their closest ties to organized Unitarian Universalism. A person active in both a UU congregation and a camp/conference center observes, “There’s something about the way a camp community is formed that answers whatever seeking is under way.” She

adds that worship in nature is more meaningful to her than worship in a closed space. She speaks for many who choose to share their energies between a congregation and a camp/conference center—or who choose to participate in the life of a camp/conference only. A more direct connection with nature, with the outdoors and those who are drawn to it, attracts people to active participation in the life of camps and conferences. They feel part of a community with shared values and concerns that outweigh the differences they experience in other aspects of their lives, including within congregations. Church as community is very important to many who become members of congregations. It is equally important to those whose primary affiliation is with a camp/conference center.

A second respondent, a recent retiree and board member of the camp that he first attended as a child, expresses another view, also shared by others. He lives in a small city with a UU congregation, but he despairs of “church politics,” citing the length of time to make and carry out decisions and the ill will that, for him, too often accompanies the process. He has no involvement with that congregation, describing himself as a “camp UU.” A committed environmentalist, he goes to the camp when few others are there, thereby experiencing very little of human community but observing the impact of people on the camp’s setting and working on policies and procedures to maintain its physical integrity. His identification combines his family’s religious tradition with his personal commitment to the UUA’s seventh Principle.

Both people independently emphasize the importance of camp experiences on the likelihood of young people’s remaining involved Unitarian Universalists. One observed that “kids need rituals and formalities, and they develop these at camp,” adding that young adults who stay with Unitarian Universalism through and after college often do so in a camp/conference context. Both remarked that, at camp, young people find a peer group and develop friendships in a unique, somewhat isolated context. They think this is especially true for young people from small and mid-size congregations who share an intense experience with similar youth and are involved in team building and empowerment perhaps for the first time. This kind of positive experience, focused expression of UU values, often provides a religious binding to Unitarian Universalism that doesn’t happen—or happen to the same degree—in a congregational context.

For a retired couple, a camp/conference center became family in their retirement. They first saw and experienced the camp during a retreat sponsored by the UU congregation in their retirement city. For them, the binding was almost instant. They sold their home, bought another close to the camp/conference center, and became deeply involved in its life. They cite the beautiful setting, welcoming and appreciation of volunteers, and the warm, caring, and visionary staff. People who come to the camp tend to have different social, religious, and political views from most of their neighbors, so their comfort level is relatively high at the camp. In addition, all ages are welcomed and involved.

Thus, people involved with this center became family, especially since the couple's children lived several thousand miles away. This couple were members of a religious community and an extended family within one institution, and they supported it with time, energy, and money.

Mobile and volatile contemporary society leaves many people with unmet needs: for a sense of belonging; for the opportunity to give their time and talent and make a noticeable difference; for a smaller, more manageable space in which to live and reflect, even if only for a week or two; for others with whom to share thoughts and feelings in an atmosphere of trust and respect. Unitarian Universalist camps and conference centers provide a setting in which many people find at least some of these needs met, often especially those who have no other UU involvement. Some members find that camps and conference centers are good places to augment that which they receive from their congregational involvement. This can present the same sorts of tensions that are created by involvement in other extra-congregational organizations. Questions of higher loyalty and depth of commitment can be raised by those in the congregation who resent the camp or conference center involvement. Yet, these camps and conferences help cement some people more firmly within our UU movement, providing them a valid place to express their religious commitment.

Nonetheless, these camp communities, worlds within the greater UU world, are as subject to the effects of first disillusionment as are traditional congregations. There can be "bad marriages" between campers/participants and camp staff just as between congregations and ministers. People may not treat one another well. Loyalties can be strained. Willingness to overcome obstacles, to take the long view, to rate membership in these affiliate UU entities as more important than the disappointment, functions precisely as it does within congregations and fellowships. Survival of the institution, or of the membership, requires care, sensitivity, goodwill, and work on everyone's part. Religious institutions are no different from others in this regard. The human factor and relationships affect deeply how Unitarian Universalists value their memberships.

### **Is Tension a Problem or an Opportunity?**

The majority of these extra-congregational organizations exist for two reasons: to support their members during their participation in local congregations and to transform the face of Unitarian Universalism. They see their role as being that of increasing and supporting the diversity in our movement and helping Unitarian Universalism live up to the promise of diversity encompassed in our non-creedal tradition committed to the inherent worth and dignity of every person. As such, they and their members must be taken seriously in any consideration of the meaning of membership within our Association and congregations.

As a movement that upholds and values diversity, it is incumbent upon congregations to provide welcome and hospitality to all those who are in agreement with our UU Principles, values, and traditions. Congregations have an affirmative responsibility to provide an atmosphere that is welcoming and encouraging of individual freedom of belief and conscience. There should be variety in the images and metaphors used; in the readings, music, and other worship components; and in the social and cultural life of the congregation.

However no one group, whether majority or minority, can expect an individual congregation to focus exclusively on its particular religious approach or identity. One aspect of the tension about diversity is a fear (sometimes well-founded) that our congregations and their resources will be taken over by groups whose missions and visions are not consistent with Unitarian Universalist traditions and values. Similarly, congregations fear that extra-congregational associations will become homes for the disillusioned, dissatisfied, angry membership that tries to undermine the overall health of congregational life without being in relationship. A balance must be strived for, despite the creative tension inherent in such a proposition. Extra-congregational associations must be deeply committed to the well-being of our institutional life as well as to the particularity of their individual foci. They must embrace the overall aims and intentions of our movement, and they have the responsibility to promote to their members responsible membership and participation in local congregations, consistent with our norm of democratic process. Extra-congregational groups should not set themselves up in adversarial positions or as power blocks to manipulate congregations, just as congregations should not use their power to block the existence of extra-congregational associations.

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Extra-congregational organizations and their local chapters should be welcome within our UU congregations, and congregations should support them in creating worship, educational, and social justice experiences that are of value to members of these organizations. Congregations should strive to educate themselves about the various needs, issues, concerns, and gifts that members of extra-congregational organizations can bring to the congregation and not rely simply upon members of these groups to do all the work to make deeper connections. If the challenge of mutual respect and responsibility is embraced by both congregations and extra-congregational associations alike, then each can serve to deepen the individual religious journeys and explorations of those involved in Unitarian Universalism and the tensions between the individual and the community can be held in a creative, not destructive, tension.

## Notes

1. An Associate organization is an organization whose purposes and programs are “auxiliary to and supportive of the principles of the Association and

which pledges itself to support the Association” (Bylaws, Section C-3.7). These organizations are limited to “major continent-wide organizations,” and a list of the current Associate organizations can be obtained from the UUA or found on the UUA’s website, [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org).

2. An Independent Affiliate organization is one whose purposes and intentions are “in sympathy with the principles of the Association” (Bylaws, Section C-3.8). Such status is for a one-year renewable term. The list of Independent Affiliates is fluid, based on whether the proper forms have been filed and approved by the UUA Board of Trustees. Some groups “disappear” for a year, and then return. A current listing of Independent Affiliates can be obtained from the UUA or found on the UUA’s website, [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org).
3. Groups invited to be part of the focus groups included UU Buddhist Fellowship, UU Christian Fellowship, Friends of Religious Humanism, Young Religious Unitarian Universalists, Continental UU Young Adult Network, Latino/a UU Networking Association, Diverse Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries, Urban Church Coalition, UUs for a Just Economic Community, Liberal Religious Educators Association, UU Ministers Association, Interweave, Council of UU Camps and Conferences, UU Women’s Federation.
4. The sixth Source, “Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature,” was added at the 1995 General Assembly.
5. Much of this history is captured in Commission on Appraisal, “Empowerment: One Denomination’s Quest for Racial Justice, 1967–1982,” available in *Unitarian Universalism and the Quest for Racial Justice* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1993) and Mark Morrison-Reed, *How Open the Door? The Experience of Afro-Americans in Unitarian Universalism* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1989).
6. UUA Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Concerns, *The Welcoming Congregation Handbook: Resources for Affirming Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and/or Transgender People*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1999)
7. Unitarian Universalist Association, *UUA Directory, 1999-2000* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1999), 401.
8. *Ibid.*, 410.