

Why the 8th Principle Matters

Good morning! My name is Geoff Duke and today I join you as a member of the 8th Principle team. I've been a member of First UU for about 15 years.

Before I get into my comments on the 8th Principle, I want to wish a Happy Beltane and Many Blessings to all at this turning of the Wheel of the Year.

Do you remember where you were when you learned that Donald Trump had been elected President of the United States? I do; I was in the bathroom, which seems fitting. I remember so clearly the feelings of shock, of disbelief, of fear and worry for the country and the world.

His election was the culmination of decades of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric, of the frequent news of another Black person murdered by police, another mass shooting that targeted people because of the color of their skin, or how they worship, or who they love.

Fairness, justice, honesty and kindness have always been important to me. I grew up with books, TV shows, and movies where good would triumph in the end, and where the heroes would always help those in need.

And yet a large group of fellow Americans were happy to vote into office a man with a very casual relationship with honesty or integrity; a man who repeatedly said demeaning, offensive things about women, people with disabilities, and immigrants; a man who's racist and xenophobic remarks encouraged and excused violence against people in the margins and people who simply disagreed with him.

That post-election night, I joined a large group of people in this very meeting house for a vigil where we held each other and we expressed our shock, our grief, and our outrage. Something changed for me that night. I realized that it was my turn to show up for fairness; my turn to show up for justice. It was

time for me to work to protect those in my community who were sure to be targets of bigotry and violence. I wasn't sure where to start, so I joined the Racial Justice team here at First UU.

When I first learned about the proposed 8th Principle, it seemed uncontroversial to me.

It reads:

“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.”

This new principle aligns with many of the existing Seven Principles, including “The inherent worth and dignity of every person” and “Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations”. Perhaps most importantly, UU members of color are asking UU congregations and the UUA, and us, to adopt this Principle. It's important to them to show that they are loved, respected, and included. I think we should respond with love, with kindness, and with the fire of commitment.

By adopting the 8th Principle, we declare that we are working to make our congregation a place where everyone feels welcome. We commit to take action — imperfect, human action — to address white supremacy culture and other forms of oppression that keep people who are different from us, different from me, in the margins, that silence their voices.

I want First UU to adopt the 8th Principle because it's the right thing to do. I want this congregation, this Society, this meeting house, to be a safe place where all people feel welcome and loved, seen and heard. We'll make mistakes. We'll make amends. And we'll move forward toward fairness, justice, and Beloved Community.