

Thank you for joining me in a vision of our 8th Principle journey together.....

After we adopt the 8th Principle at First UU we will travel together toward Beloved Community. Beloved Community is based on love, mutual respect, and care. It is anti-racist and multicultural and its location is in our hearts.

We have many teachers and many ways to learn. We each have our own journey and we also travel together. Our journey will be a healing journey, a journey toward justice, a journey that will nourish our souls.

This journeying is difficult and it requires work. When I participated in the white caucus of Black Lives Matter of Greater Burlington, I learned that “the work” consists of heart work, head work, and leg work.

To prepare for this journey, we first do heart work. The importance of this should not be overlooked. We feel the roots of our beliefs and the light that guides us. We cultivate humility and patience. We will learn to see the world as it is, not as we would like it to be. We will do **lots** of listening and seek *the truth of the lived experience of others*, especially the marginalized and those who are different from us. We need to hear this truth no matter how it makes us feel.

Moving into head work and leg work, we will become willing to be accountable to those outside our familiar power group. The familiar may be comforting yet it can block us from ways which do not serve us and may harm others. We need to focus on what we are asked to do rather than what makes us comfortable. In authentic racial justice work, the white people are accountable to the people of color.

Paula Cole Jones, a primary author of the 8th Principle, offers this principle to us as an opportunity to address the broken promises of the past and to examine the pattern of racist behavior in our denomination. The UUA is an organization with predominately white membership and leadership. That means it is steeped in white supremacy culture, as is our entire nation. The white people among us may be least aware of white supremacy culture *because of our privilege which, by design,* can blind us to racist and unjust practices.

On our journey we are learning about the *white supremacy culture in which we live* as a system designed to defend wealth, power, and privilege. It is a system based on control rather than the love, mutual respect, and care of Beloved Community.

White supremacy affects all of us and supports racism and other oppressions. *In the 8th Principle we covenant to dismantle this system.*

Dismantling racism and other oppressions sounds like a gigantic task. It is...and our UU faith has prepared us for it. It is built of many small tasks, requiring commitment and practice.

We must be aware of white supremacy in order to address it; this is part of our commitment to accountability. In the 8th Principle, we *covenant to “accountably dismantle racism and other*

oppressions.” That means we must learn to be aware of aspects of white supremacy in ourselves as well as in our institutions. This is our new practice.

The term “centering” is used in racial justice work to mean a focus of attention. White supremacy is white-centered. On our 8th Principle journey, we will practice the centering of the oppressed... acknowledging the pain and harm that has occurred and making amends. For ourselves we will practice acceptance and compassion. We will continue to listen.

The centering and valuing of marginalized voices will give us new gifts and perspectives. We will *learn by being in relationship* as we learn to trust the lived experiences of others... and not need to center our own experiences. We will find ways to use our privilege to dismantle oppressive systems around us.

We will remember that when we avoid conflict in order to “get along,” we are not practicing Beloved Community. As we are told by Alex Kapitan and the Rev Mykal Slack, “...we are not called to be like-*minded* in spiritual community. We’re called to be like-*hearted*.” (from Soul Matters)

As our journey toward spiritual wholeness continues, we will not only widen our circle but open our hearts wider than we knew we could. We will increase our awareness, tolerance, and wisdom. We will realize our journey has taken us places we could never have imagined. *Everyone will be welcome at the table, invited to show up fully, bringing all their gifts.*

To provide support for our journey, the Radical Welcoming Team will offer our congregation many opportunities related to the 8th Principle. These will include groups for study and discussion, perhaps movies, circles, outreach to the community, books in the library, a resource list on the website, and resources from the UUA. We welcome your ideas and participation.

To conclude, I am grateful to be on this journey toward Beloved Community because it gives me hope for our suffering world...***and it is the right thing to do.***

Please vote to adopt the 8th Principle at our annual meeting on June 6th and join us on this journey!