

Board Policy on Taking Positions on Social Justice Issues

The reason for All Souls to take clear positions on issues is simple: we are called by our Unitarian Universalist values to act for justice, and we have more power and influence when we act as an institution. There are times when signing on to actions or positions as a church can make a real difference to both policymakers and partner organizations.

It is the policy of All Souls Church to follow the [social justice statements](#) approved by the Unitarian Universalist Association's General Assembly. In the Unitarian Universalist Association's governance system, known as Congregational Polity, statements approved by the General Assembly are not binding on individual congregations. All Souls is choosing to use the General Assembly statements as guidance because these statements have been through a process of development, review, and approval by delegates from hundreds of congregations. It would be incredibly complicated, time-consuming, and inefficient for All Souls to try, on its own, to create a separate set of policies for our single congregation.

These statements express broad principles related to public policies. At the Association level, staff of the UUA take these broad principles and apply them to specific pieces of legislation or action. This happens at All Souls as well: the staff leading the All Souls' Social Justice Ministry use the General Assembly statements to arrive at positions on specific policies (such as legislation) and actions (such as sponsoring a demonstration).

All Souls staff will determine a policy position with consideration of the following questions/criteria:

- Consistency with Unitarian Universalist values and existing General Assembly statements
- Alignment with the positions expressed by Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC)-led groups
- Alignment with the positions expressed by ongoing organizational partners of All Souls, such as the Washington Interfaith Network

The All Souls staff will consult the Board about a policy position in either of these two cases:

- There is no relevant General Assembly statement, or the existing statements are ambiguous or conflicting; AND it is critical to our relationships in the community, and to being an accountable partner, that we take a clear position.
- The position "could expose the church to significant financial and/or legal risk or obligation," as described in the [All Souls Policy Governance Framework](#) [Part IV: Board Monitoring of Executive Team Performance, Section B. Monitoring of Executive Limitations, Part 3: Communications, Page 19].

In these cases, the staff shall present to the Board a proposal with a recommendation that provides context and potential ramifications of taking/not taking particular positions.

The positions taken by All Souls Church represent the church overall. They do not represent the views of every individual congregant. In communications about the church's position, staff will not use language that claims or suggests that the position represents the views of all members.

Approved August 26, 2020