

The 8th Principle Listening Sessions Summary of Discussions

The Facing Race Stirring Committee held two listening sessions in March 2023 so people could discuss the proposed 8th Principle. Nearly 40 people participated. All had access to a set of questions ahead of time which informally framed the sessions, leading to an open and free-flowing discussion.

All comments were captured and have been summarized below into broad themes to help provide a perspective on the sessions.

Some participants suggested changes in the wording of the 8th Principle. Because of the history of where the idea and words came from, the vote on the 8th Principle will not entertain any changes in the wording. Therefore those comments have been omitted. For more information see Frequently Asked Questions: <https://wbuuc.org/8th-principle/>

Theme 1: We need to adopt the 8th Principle because it names racism explicitly.

Representative comments:

- *Calling racism out is important. It needs to be a separate Principle based on what's going on in the world.*
- *I'm grateful to be in a congregation that is willing to talk about this issue; it's about working for justice in our world.*
- *It would be affirming and moving in the right direction.*
- *This Principle is dealing with serious problems. Accept it and start talking about this in our own community.*
- *The 7 Principles are positive statements. It feels sad that we have to add this 8th Principle; it's sad, and it's real.*
- *We don't need another aspirational goal. This Principle would give us an action plan.*
- *Underlying the 8th Principle is to work off the 1st and to make it more specific- to dismantle racism within ourselves; that's the point of the 8th Principle.*

Theme 2: We don't need this principle because it's implied by the existing Principles.

Representative comments:

- *It doesn't need to be a Principle to get there.*

- *I have a concern that we're mixing up goals and principles. Everything in the 8th is included in the 1st Principle.*
- **Theme 3:** *The goals of the 8th Principle are broader than getting more BIPOC people to come to WBUUC.*

Representative comments:

- *I'm hearing that to address racism we have to get Black people into our congregations. There are many other ways we can address racism and other oppressions. When is it that my racism impacts others? We have 700 people here and if we each did something, that could have a big impact, for example by working to change governmental policies.*
- *To get more BIPOC people into the building is too narrow. This Principle means policy (e.g. housing policy); it means how you interact with others.*
- *The white dominant culture is hierarchical and imposes itself on others. In a different cultural model, we might do things differently. We might be less task oriented and more process oriented. We might change how we interact with each other, whether or not we get more BIPOC members.*

Theme 4: *If we adopt and act on the 8th Principle, there will be changes in our congregation.*

Representative comments:

- *The 8th Principle is about being uncomfortable- to face racism- that work will make our congregation more welcoming. First step is to change ourselves.*
- *If we focus on inclusion and invitation, this will involve major changes in our own culture.*
- *It's possible there would be conflict about how to put the Principle into practice.*
- *There's a risk that energy will get pulled away from other issues.*
- *We'll be uncomfortable. I come here to be with people I know and like and this would change that.*
- **Theme 5:** *If we adopt and act on the 8th Principle, we will need new skills and behaviors.*

Representative comments:

- *I'm the one white person in my house. Other family members have very different perspectives. It's easy to make people feel like they are tokens. Look to the people who are from diverse groups- who have direct knowledge.*
- *It has always embarrassed me when families of color have come to our church- people didn't interact with them. We don't have enough experience to know what to do and we back off. As a community, how do we teach ourselves to get better at that? Putting it in a Principle doesn't quite get to it. We need to take time to talk to people.*
- *We tend to go too far one way or the other. Don't see people as 'objects,' either to be avoided or fawned on.*
- *Without educating the congregation about how to manage fear, people might avoid others who we find different. We must be willing to risk saying the wrong thing rather than avoiding interaction.*

Theme 6 : There are benefits for ourselves and our congregation if we adopt the 8th Principle.

Representative comments:

- *This should help us deal with our own racism.*
- *I see it as important to help me as an individual to deal with racism in myself. We make mistakes and it's hard to recognize bias. Important to adopt this Principle.*
- *I see this as a way to welcome people, even if only on our website. This can become part of our elevator speech. With UUA's help and as a group of churches, we will educate each other.*
- *Years ago we voted to be a Welcoming Congregation. That made us a better congregation. This would be another step forward.*

Theme 7: There are the dangers to **not** adopting the 8th Principle.

Representative comments:

- *I think we become less relevant to the broader community.*
- *Given the history of where the idea and words came from, we'd be taking a chance of dismissing/insulting those who came forward with this Principle.*

- *If we don't do it, we're not looking in the mirror. It's White centered to say that it's included in the 7 Principles. The people who are affected say we need to call this out.*