



ACCOTINK UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

Care in community. Grow in spirit. Act for justice.

AUUC Statements of Conscience

- Statement of Conscience: Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform, May 18, 2014
- Statement of Conscience: Gun-Related Violence, March 21, 2013
- Statement of Conscience: Immigration as a Moral Issue, April 17, 2011
- Statement of Conscience Regarding Marriage, April 22, 2006
- Fair Wage Resolution, December 11, 2005

What are Statements of Conscience?

Statements of conscience are a Unitarian Universalist tradition. As an expression of our faith and values, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) takes positions on relevant social justice issues. UUA's positions are discerned via the social witness process, as shepherded by the Commission on Social Witness. Grounded in these social witness statements, the UUA will sign on to letters and amicus briefs, in coalition with other faith and social justice organizations, magnifying our impact in the larger world. Statements of conscience are part of a long process of determining where we wish to stand as a community while honoring democratic principles and recognizing that not all of us will agree on all points.

Similarly, AUUC, normally led by our Social Justice Committee, will develop a statement about where the congregation stands on a social justice issue. AUUC feels it is important to express where we stand, for the benefit of our visitors and newcomers who may not know us well, for the benefit of our children who may be exposed to a variety of views on these topics and not know exactly where the church stands, and because these statements express a commitment to action. When our congregation adopts a statement of conscience, our minister can write to newspapers about these issues and call on other denominations to support reasonable action. Our members can also advocate these issues to our legislators on Capitol Hill and in Richmond, speaking for AUUC.

**STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE:
CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SENTENCING REFORM**

WHEREAS Unitarian Universalist Principles “affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person” and “justice, equity and compassion in human relations,” and

WHEREAS the United States represents 5% of the world’s population but houses 25% of the world’s prisoners, with over 2.2 million in our federal and state prisons and jails, and

WHEREAS “tough on crime” and “War on Drugs” policies have produced excessively long sentences for certain non-violent offenses and been applied unevenly, thus more severely impacting minority communities, and

WHEREAS a significant percentage of U.S. prisoners are incarcerated for non-violent drug-related offenses, and this population is primarily made up of racial and ethnic minorities, and

WHEREAS prisons cost taxpayers \$60 billion per year but do little to prepare prisoners to successfully reenter society, and

WHEREAS former prisoners are often prevented from being able to rebuild their lives upon release due to exclusion from affordable housing, educational, and other government assistance programs, discriminatory hiring practices, and lack of voting rights,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT Congress and the Virginia General Assembly enact legislation to place primary emphasis on community alternatives for non-violent offenders, rather than incarceration, and

THAT these community alternatives emphasize redemptive, rehabilitative and restorative justice, and

THAT the savings from having to operate far fewer prison facilities be used for education, vocational training, drug addiction treatment, mental health services, rehabilitative services, and affordable housing, and

THAT former prisoners be provided transition support and restoration of voting and other civil rights upon release.

In summary, the Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church calls upon federal and state legislators to promote changes in law which establish effective community alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenses, end the mass incarceration brought about by the “War on Drugs”, utilize drug courts that prescribe treatment rather than imprisonment, disallow mandatory minimum sentencing for drug possession, provide fair and equitable sentencing, and restore civil rights for released prisoners.

Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church (AUUC)

Statement of Conscience:

GUN-RELATED VIOLENCE

Whereas Unitarian Universalist Principles “affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person”, and

Whereas we are deeply concerned that gun-related violence is endemic in our society, and

Whereas more than 50 children and youth die every week in the United States of America due to gun-related violence, and more children and teens died from guns (5,740) in two years (2008 and 2009) than U.S. service personnel were killed in action in 10 years of fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq combined (5,013),¹ and

Whereas the 14 December 2012 mass shooting of first grade children in Newtown, CT, shocked the world, and

Whereas in 1972, 1976, 1991, 2000, and 2004 the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association passed resolutions on gun violence that increasingly called for more congregational involvement in actions to reduce gun-related violence.

Therefore, be it resolved that AUUC work through reflection, education, and advocacy, both within our own congregation and with other faith and secular communities, to reduce gun violence in our nation.

Be it further resolved that AUUC call on federal and/or state legislators to enact laws that:

1. Require background checks for all gun sales,
2. Reinstate and strengthen the ban on assault weapons and ban the sale of large-capacity ammunition magazines,
3. Increase access to and improve mental health services for people struggling with mental illness and for victims of gun violence, particularly youth and their families,
4. Remove restrictions on and increase funding for research into gun-related violence, causes, and prevention by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, or other such agencies,
5. Improve enforcement of existing gun-related laws.

¹ “Protect Children, Not Guns 2012,” Children’s Defense Fund, at URL: <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/protect-children-not-guns-2012.html>

Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church

Statement of Conscience on Immigration as a Moral Issue

Revised and accepted 17 April 2011

Whereas the United States has a responsibility to control immigration as one aspect of its obligation to provide security to its citizens and foster economic well-being,

Whereas there are millions of undocumented immigrants residing within U.S. borders without a path to citizenship due to the lack of a comprehensive immigration system,

Whereas families are torn apart through immigration processing backlogs, detentions and deportations,

Whereas the current situation (e.g., inconsistent law enforcement, backlog in processing, porous borders, inadequate penalties for employers who hire undocumented workers, poor treatment of detainees, extended detention) caused by the lack of a comprehensive immigration policy weakens respect for and the effectiveness of both U.S. laws and political institutions,

Whereas the Unitarian Universalist principles state that we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and we promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations, and

Whereas the Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church supports humane policies for immigrants, recognizes the value of immigrant workers to our economy, and recognizes the right of the U.S. to provide security to its citizens by controlling its borders,

The Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church calls on Congress to enact immediate, just, and comprehensive immigration reform which includes the following:

- 1) immigration control that provides security while minimizing the impact to the lives, resources, and traditions of the existing legal U.S. residents,
- 2) a path to earn citizenship for the undocumented who are already within our borders that emphasizes the responsibility of immigrants to comply with U.S. laws and contribute to the greater U. S. culture,
- 3) an accessible and timely process to obtain residency (both permanent and temporary) as well as citizenship for new immigrants,
- 4) equitable treatment and wages for all workers to include immigrant workers,
- 5) fair treatment and due process of law for immigrant detainees, and
- 6) access to medical care, education, and public safety for all.

In addition, we call on the Virginia General Assembly to enact laws to ensure the fair and humane treatment of all immigrants regardless of status to include complete legal review of criminal cases in which immigrant defendants were denied effective legal counsel regardless of the timeliness of their petitions following conviction.

We oppose any attempt to criminalize, demonize, or exploit undocumented immigrants and the people who give them humanitarian aid.

Statement of Conscience Regarding Marriage

by Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church (AUUC)

April 22, 2006

As Unitarian Universalists, we covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and justice, equality, and compassion in human relations. On this basis, AUUC advocates Virginia establishing the right of same-sex couples to have equality in civil marriage.

Therefore, the AUUC congregation supports repeal of the Virginia Marriage Affirmation Act and urges Virginia to recognize all civil marriages performed by other states. AUUC opposes the passage or ratification of the proposed Virginia Marriage Amendment that would amend the Virginia Constitution to ban same-sex civil marriages and deny any benefits associated with marriage to any two people not recognized as married by the state of Virginia.

Resolution

WHEREAS, work is an expression of human dignity, and wages that do not allow a worker to escape poverty are an affront to human dignity and devalue the work that is done.

WHEREAS, the State minimum wage has not increased since 1997, and is now equivalent to 1/3 of the average hourly wage--its lowest relative value since 1949;

WHEREAS, a full time minimum wage worker earns only \$10,712 and takes home only \$9,872 after Social Security and Medicaid taxes, and this amount is well below the federal poverty rate for a family of three (\$15,219);

WHEREAS, minimum wage workers in Virginia cannot afford the basic necessities of life, including food, shelter, and medical care;

WHEREAS, in order to meet these needs, minimum wage workers must work multiple full time jobs and/or rely on local, state, federal, and private social services;

WHEREAS, public support for the needs of low-wage workers amounts to a subsidy to businesses that do not pay an adequate wage;

WHEREAS, businesses in Virginia that seek to pay workers fairly for their labor may fear competition from businesses that do not, and a Statewide increase in the minimum wage would eliminate that competition and eradicate any business advantage to paying workers poverty wages;

WHEREAS, increasing the minimum wage will increase job retention, worker morale, and productivity and will decrease absenteeism, training and recruitment costs;

WHEREAS, the majority of minimum wage workers have children, who suffer from the insecurity of low family income and the absence of parents working multiple jobs;

WHEREAS, poverty among children is higher than among any other age group and has grown as the minimum wage has not been increased and its real value has fallen;

WHEREAS, seventeen States and the District of Columbia have increased their minimum wages beyond the federal minimum wage, and those States with higher minimum wages have experienced greater economic growth than those without;

WHEREAS, when the minimum wage has been placed on State ballots, it has passed overwhelmingly and has been indexed to assure that it retains its value over time;

WHEREAS, passage of the Virginia Fair Wage Act would guarantee an increased income to more than 445,000 Virginia workers and their families;

WHEREAS, an increase in the State minimum wage would benefit Virginia communities, as low-wage workers make greater contributions through taxes and spend their increased earnings in local communities;

NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED:

That the 2006 General Assembly enact the Virginia Fair Wage Act, which would increase the minimum wage in Virginia \$1.00 in each of the next three years (2006, 2007, and 2008) and index the minimum wage to inflation thereafter.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the undersigned organization endorses and supports the proposed Virginia Fair Wage Act.

Date: 12/11/05 Printed Name and Title: Anna Cochran, Chair, Board of Trustees

Signature: Anna Cochran Name of Organization: Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church

Please return signed resolutions to Sue Capers, 311 Wolfe St., Alexandria VA 22314
FAX: 703-739-0265: Phone 703-739-9365

7/3/05