

Sermon-Faith in a Bowl of Soup

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For All Faiths Unitarian

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Faith like a bowl of soup is nourishing to the body and soul...today we explore the recipe of a most delicious bowl of faith soup.

“Soup is cuisine's kindest course. It breathes reassurance; it steams consolation; after a weary day it promotes sociability, as the five o'clock cup of tea or the cocktail hour.” — Louis P. De Gouy

Every Sunday we gather here in this sanctuary, this space and become one inside. Here there are no hierarchies, no clubs that click and others that clack, instead we come

together in safety in this place, that somehow manages to hold us all safely consistently week after week.

I am sure these walls, doors and windows have heard and seen a lot over the years just imagine what they have witnessed. They know how we what we do, they know what holds us together, what glue, what substance, what keeps us safe in place. And why we continue return.

Today we will explore Faith in a Bowl of Soup. What is in our bowl and what happens in our bowl...our bowl of faith? Our quest is to determine... 2 things: Could it be the contents of the bowl, the actual bowl or both.

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We UU's have a bowl, a bowl of faith we call Principles and Sources, which is under reconstruction, but remains as important ingredients of our faith.

This year at the General Assembly, our annual gathering of UU's, the delegates voted to move forward with the proposed Article Two study amendments to our UUA bylaws. Which I believe are foundational to our faith.

And as a UU congregation we too are held together by the same foundations. Think of it like this, our UUA faith here, held together in a Bowl called All Faiths and we are the main ingredients.

A few months ago we UU's had a get together, we call it GA, or General Assembly an annual gathering of Unitarian

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Universalists where we conduct business of the Association, explore the theological underpinnings of our faith, and lean fully into our mission and purpose. [The 62nd General Assembly took place June 21 - 25, 2023 online and in-person in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.](#)

And there we undertook an immense challenge to revisit proposed changes and amendments to Article II, purposes and covenant, as part of the Unitarian Universalist Association: Bylaws and Rules, basically how the UUA will operate as a non profit religious organization.

It is imperative that we understand the UUA does not represent itself as a religious denomination in the

traditional sense; instead the UUA is an association of congregations with no one organization able to speak authoritatively for the whole.

We the congregations have authority over the larger body, through our participation in the annual GA. As a result of this relationship between congregations and the Association, UUist, congregations have a congregationalist polity of governance.

Meaning although any changes to Article Two will affect us all, we **remain a Decentralized association**. This is the process by which the activities of an organization,

particularly those regarding planning and decision-making, are distributed or delegated away from a central, authoritative location or group and given to smaller factions within it.

It is more popularly known as **Congregationalist polity**, or **congregational polity**, or simply **congregationalism**, which is a system of **ecclesiastical polity** in which every local **church (congregation)** is **independent**, **ecclesiastically sovereign**, or "**autonomous**". The first articulation in writing is the **Cambridge Platform** of 1648 in **New England**. The platform explained and defended the practice of **congregational polity** in New England and also endorsed the majority of

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the [Westminster Confession of Faith](#). It sounds confusing but we are more familiar than we think. Here is an example of Major [Protestant](#) Christian traditions that employ congregationalism: [Quakers](#), the [Baptist](#) churches, [Congregational Methodist Church](#), UUism and others.

In short we here at All Faiths Congregation are autonomous and can govern ourselves as we see fit. With that in mind we choose to lean into our UU association and adhere to their guidance. Why? Because we have a voice within the association and our opinions matter and in true democratic function we share our desires by the votes of our delegates.

One lone voice is small but put us all together we make a mighty noise, so sings the group Rising Appalachia

But what about the soup???

The UUA is like a gigantic pot holding UU congregations, and we are a smaller bowl holding UU's here in Fort Myers, Fl. And like a bowl of soup we are nourishing ourselves and those we are connected to and share our lives with. How do we do it?

Amendments and changes to article II are crucial to the continuance and growth of our faith. For many years we have held tight to the UUA principles and sources. They have guided us and assisted us in how to be together as UU. And we have been happy swimming around in our bowl of faith soup, filled with P & S.

Today, we will return to the proposed amendments and or changes to UUA bylaws brought to us through the article II Study Commission, in light of a bowl of soup.

Let's talk soup...the American etiquette expert Judith Martin also known as Miss Manners, elaborates on soup.

Quote,

"Do you have a kinder, more adaptable friend in the food world than soup? Who soothes you when you are ill? Who refuses to leave you when you are impoverished and stretches its resources to give a hearty sustenance and

cheer? Who warms you in the winter and cools you in the summer? Yet who also is capable of doing honor to your

richest table and impressing your most demanding

guests? Soup does its loyal best, no matter what

undignified conditions are imposed upon it. You don't

catch steak hanging around when you're poor and sick, do

you?" End Quote.

Soup, a healing balm we ingest, it soothes us especially

when we are not well. But soup is a balm even when we

are feeling well. Although I think there is something

magical in chicken soup. Out of all the soups I think that is

the one we have all been introduced to whether a can or

homemade it has touched most of us, if not all. Of course

there are many different kinds of soup, all depending on the ingredients.

But no matter the ingredients, without a worthy container to hold the soup, it is useless.

There are beautifully ornate soup tureens, and assortments of bowls to hold and eat our soup from. I prefer to think of the UUA as a tureen instead of a pot.

And the individual member congregations as the bowls.

Without the tureen and bowls there is nothing to hold our faith soup. We simply cannot have one without the other.

Our tureens and bowls sometimes get cracked, chipped or broken in pieces and we, as guardians, are responsible for repair or replacement when necessary. There is no doubt

that we would like to be safe in our containers all the time and hold onto

our recipes as if they are silver and gold, but we recognize the benefit of change.

Our well built containers are essential, they may not appear to be useful when they are empty, but they are made that way.

We must remember that there's more to emptiness than meets the eye.

Can one see empty. Well while we cannot dispute that the substance of the container is necessary, we also must admit that it is the empty space in the container that allows it to contain.

So here we are in our space, we call All Faiths this space that contains or holds people. There is an emptiness here that often goes unnoticed, like a space within a clay, or porcelain

vessel, and the interior area of a room, like this one. We can only use the space if it is fitted together just right.

Imagine lining one wall of this room with all the elements of the wall opposite it; do we no longer get have a room even though all the parts remain. Because without the space at the center it's no longer a room, even though all its parts are still present.

Here are two more examples: A soup tureen is not a tureen without the emptiness that the tureen encapsulates,

a house is not a house if there is no inner space for the exterior to enclose.

I like the way the late Dr. Wayne Dyer says it...Quote

"The usefulness of what is depends on what is not."

Our UUA proposed changes to Article Two depend on the container and what is inside of it. The container is the tureen or the UUA, and the proposed amendments are the seasoning and we are the main ingredients.

Here are the seasonings according to the article two proposed amendments. Love is placed at the center, citing the UUA purpose to actively engage its members in the transformation of the world through liberating LOVE by working through and revisiting often the following 6 principles: Interdependence, Equity, Transformation,

Pluralism, Generosity, and Justice. And once mixed together like any seasoning they become just about inseparable. Then we can focus on the two most important ingredients: Love and Ourselves.

Our beautiful building, greens and garden is our bowl, in it we find love, Interdependence, Equity, Transformation, Pluralism, Generosity, and Justice. We are safe not

because of the building, greens or garden but because of the love we have for one another that's why love is centered.

It is Beloved Community in Covenant together that holds us safe and it is Beloved Community that will continue to hold us safe.

Tomorrow will be the 22 anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attack on our country. Hundreds of people went to work that day and did not return home, they arrived at work, to their space assuming safety and lost their lives that day. Our entire country, even much of the world mourned with us as the towers came down and with them hundreds of people. This is a result of the loveless, the **independent** not interdependent, the inequitable, slow

to change or transformation, and those who define pluralism as evil, and move in extreme prejudice. All the

makings of a distasteful and poisonous soup. Messengers of death instead of life.

But we UU's are alive and welcoming. We welcome all faiths, it's actually the name of our congregation...you are welcome here at All Faiths and we have been so bold in our faith as to place not only the American flag, but the Rainbow and BLM flags outside for all to see. These flags are invitational, welcoming all to enter rejoice and come in like Rumi said...**Come, Come, Whoever You Are**

by Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi

Wonderer, worshiper, lover of leaving.

It doesn't matter.

Ours is not a caravan of despair.

Come, even if you have broken your vow

a thousand times

Come, yet again, come, come.

Consider with me if you will, our home our planet as a great tureen, brimming and full. She asks no questions, poses no judgment and yields without end. She pours into our bowl day after day. She is loving us to life, and we are interdependent on her, she is equitable, transformative, radically welcoming, generous and just .

In closing let us be mindful of our tureens, of our bowls, they contain much including ourselves. In the next months we will visit each of the principles in the UUA proposed article two updates and ask ourselves whether we are in the bowl or not. It is my hope that we are, if you

agree then our task is to be safe keepers of the tureen and the bowls lest they break and lose their usefulness.

Won't you join me and thousands of UU's around the world by centering Love. Knowing Love will guide us and that with love we can change the world.

And finally

May we remember the words of chef Louis P De Gouy.

“Soup is cuisine's kindest course. It breathes reassurance; it steams consolation; after a weary day it promotes sociability, as the five o'clock cup of tea or the cocktail hour.”

May your bowl be as sufficient and precious, as what is inside.

Amen and Ashe

Article Two study...[Article II Study Commission | UUA.org](https://www.uua.org/article-ii-study-commission)

JOKE:

Sooooo, a man decided to take his son to church. When it was time for the offering as the baskets were passing the little boy looked up at his father and said you don't have to pay for me, I am only 5 years old.