

8th Principle Survey: Updated Summary of Congregational Feedback

October 26, 2021

(initial report, submitted to UCV Board Oct. 19, 2021)

Submitted by Cheryl Amundsen and Derrick O'Keefe

Introduction

A congregational survey about the proposed 8th Principle was developed and approved by the Board and sent by email to all UCV members with email addresses on file (~280). Derrick O'Keefe, the UCV Membership Outreach Coordinator, was responsible for distributing the survey and collecting the results. The final cut-off date for responses was Oct. 18. Derrick worked with Cheryl Amundsen, UCV member and Professor Emerita at Simon Fraser University, to analyze the results and prepare the survey summary reports. The first summary report was presented to the board on Oct. 19, 2021.

Overall findings

There was broad support for the intention of the proposed 8th Principle that racism and other oppressions require action. This was true for nearly every respondent, whether they responded "Yes", "No" or "Undecided" to Question 1 (Do you support the proposed 8th Principle?). Despite real differences about whether or not respondents supported the 8th Principle as proposed, there is a strong consensus on the need to take action against racism and other oppressions.

At the same time, about half of respondents expressed one or more concerns about, or objections to, 1) the wording of the proposal not being consistent in tone with existing principles, 2) that the proposed principle was inconsistent with or redundant with the existing seven principles, 3) that the process was problematic and potentially divisive, and 4) that the fallout from the decision poses risks to our faith community going forward.

The Analysis Process

Derrick reviewed the 100 submissions against the membership list, and after eliminating two duplicate responses, there were 98 valid responses (about one-third of the membership). The tabulation of tick box responses to the survey questions is shown in Analysis 1 (see p. 2). Derrick and Cheryl cross-checked these response counts to ensure their accuracy.

Derrick then anonymized the data, exported it as an Excel spreadsheet, and sent it to Cheryl. She divided the responses into three groups according to their response ("Yes" "No" "Undecided") to survey Question 1: Do you support the proposed 8th Principle.

Cheryl copied into a Word document each group's comments for each survey question. Thus, one document listed all the comments to all the survey questions that came from respondents who answered YES to Q1, another listed all the comments to all the survey

questions that came from respondents who answered NO to Q1, and a third listed all the comments to all the survey questions that came from respondents who answered UNDECIDED to Q1. Derrick and Cheryl read all the comments together to verify that they agreed on the main themes represented by each comment. Analysis 2: Thematic categorization of comments presents this analysis (see pp. 3-4).

Analysis 1 and Analysis 2 comprised the first report sent to the Board, necessarily limited because the report was due to the Board one day after the survey submission deadline.

To better understand the concerns expressed by all three groups of survey respondents, Cheryl undertook a further analysis (Analysis 3, see p. 5). Comments made by each individual were separated out and categorized as either “positive/supportive” or “concerns”. Cheryl read all of the concerns and separated out concerns directly related to the proposed 8th Principle or to the process in which the congregation engaged, resulting in three categories of concerns about: 1) the wording of the proposal, 2) the inconsistency or redundancy of the proposal with existing seven principles, 3) the process. Concerns were only counted once per person. So if someone stated three concerns about wording for example, it was only counted once.

Ideally any analysis like this should be conducted by more than one person. For this reason, an Excel sheet with all comments is included with this report so that congregants can read them and form their own conclusions.

Analysis 1: Tally of Responses to Question 1: Do you support the proposed 8th Principle?

A total of 98 responses were received, including 6 responses from youth members.

Question 1: Do you support the proposed 8th Principle?

Total: 98 (67 Yes including 5 youth, 20 No including 1 youth, and 11 Undecided)

Question 2: Do you have any concerns with the proposed 8th Principle, or fears if it passes?

Total: 98 (39 Yes, 59 No)

Question 3: Do you have any comments about, or suggested amendments to the proposed 8th Principle?

Total 98: (39 Yes, 59 No)

Question 4: Any other comments or questions about the proposed 8th Principle and this ongoing process?

Total 98: (47 Yes, 51 No)

Analysis 2: Thematic categorization of comments (Note that in front of some themes is a number 1 or 2. This indicates that only one or two comments fell under this theme. If there is no number, this indicates that more than two comments fell under this theme.)

Table 1. Key themes of comments made by those responding “YES” on Question 1.

Survey Question	Key themes
Q1: Do you support the proposed 8th Principle?	-Urgency of anti-racism action -Need to support IBPOC and/or youth advocating for this -[2] Concern about the wording.
Q2: Points of agreement with proposed 8 th Principle?	- Agreement with explicit call to action and self-reflection -Hope we'll become and be perceived as a more welcoming and inclusive community
Q3: Do you have concerns or fears with the proposed 8th Principle, or fears if it passes?	-Wording is unclear or inconsistent and/or redundant with existing principles -Concern about divisiveness and/or backlash regardless of outcome of process
Q4: Do you have comments or amendments to the proposed 8th Principle?	-Wording could be more positive and aspirational in tone, matching other 7 principles -[1] Wordsmithing could bog down process
Q5: Any other comments or questions?	-A number of concerns about process, that some felt pressured and pushed to accept -[1] Redundant with existing principles, but feared backlash if it is not passed -[2] Unhappiness with CUC delegation selection process -Appreciation for process and desire to progress quickly

Table 2. Key themes of comments made by those responding “NO” on Question 1.

Survey Questions	Key themes
Q 1: Do you support the proposed 8th Principle?	-Multiple strongly worded comments: it's not a principle but a call to action and/or it's redundant with existing principles -[1] The process impugns the congregation or members as racist/white supremacist
Q2: Points of agreement with proposed 8 th Principle?	-Main objection is that it's not a principle but a call to action -[1] The process has moved away from rational processes and analysis, a cornerstone of Unitarianism

Q3: Do you have concerns or fears with the proposed 8th Principle, or fears if it passes?	-Need to include other oppressions -It's a call to action not a principle -Process was rushed and lacking transparency; process was ideologically driven -[1]"I will need to resign my membership if proposal is pushed through"
Q4: Do you have comments or amendments to the proposed 8th Principle?	-Multiple strong comments: it is not a principle but a call to action and/or it is redundant with existing principles -[2] Postpone or review the decision to give time for rewording -[1] Need to include other oppressions specific to Canadian context such as colonialism
Q5: Any other comments or questions?	-[1]"It isn't too late for listening, reformulation, and consensus to occur." -Concern about the process, including [1] urging the Board to have greater transparency

Table 3. Key themes of comments made by those responding "UNDECIDED" on Question 1.

Survey Questions	Key themes
Q 1: Do you support the proposed 8th Principle?	-[2] Should include other forms of oppression -[2] Redundant with existing principles
Q2: Points of agreement with proposed 8 th Principle?	-Need to support IBPOC and/or youth advocating for this -[2] Should include other forms of oppression
Q3: Do you have concerns or fears with the proposed 8th Principle, or fears if it passes?	-[2] Redundant with existing principles -It's a call to action, doesn't rise to the level of a principle
Q4: Do you have comments or amendments to the proposed 8th Principle?	-Several rewording suggestions offered -Recommendation to pass the principle but also, in order to foster unity, create a Task Force to review and recommend updates to language of all principles
Q5: Any other comments or questions?	-[1] Concern not to generalize that IBPOC all support the proposed 8 th Principle or to paint other groups in congregation with one brush -[1] UCV delegates on this matter need to represent range of demographics in congregation

Analysis 3: Detailed analysis of comments about concerns

In total, 50 of the 98 individuals who submitted surveys expressed one or more concerns which can be categorized into these three areas*

- Problems with the wording of the proposed 8th Principle.
- The non-fit or redundancy of the proposed principle with existing principles.
- Problems with the process followed within UCV and/or CUC

These concerns are broken down below into three groups according to how individuals responded on the first survey question: Do you support the proposed 8th Principle?

Of the 67 individuals who responded YES on Question 1: Do you support the proposed 8th Principle?

21/67 expressed one or more concerns that fell into the three areas listed above.

Number of concerns in each area:

Wording – 11

Non-fit or redundancy with existing principles – 5

Problems/issue taken with how the process was facilitated – 8

Of the 20 individuals who responded NO on Question 1: Do you support the proposed 8th Principle?

19/20 expressed one or more concerns that fell into the three areas listed above.

Number of concerns in each area:

Wording – 8

Non-fit or redundancy with existing principles – 16

Problems/issue taken with how the process was facilitated – 9

Of the 11 individuals who responded UNDECIDED on Question 1: Do you support the proposed 8th Principle?

10/11 expressed one or more concerns that fell into the three areas listed above.

Number of concerns in each area:

Wording – 6

Non-fit or redundancy with existing principles – 7

Problems/issue taken with how the process was facilitated – 4

* Note that other areas of concern were expressed but because they were not directly about the proposed 8th Principle or the process that we've engaged in, they were not included in this analysis. For example, a number of people expressed fear if the proposal did not pass and two if it did, but none offered any detail.