

Response to *The Gadfly Papers* from the UUCE Board of Trustees, 2019/20 Church Year

On behalf of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Eugene, we, the Board of Trustees, have been prompted to answer the call of love.

On June 21, 2019, UU Rev. Todd Eklof asked members of his Spokane, WA congregation to distribute *The Gadfly Papers*, a collection of his essays, at the UUA General Assembly. The repercussions of this event in the UU community are too large for us to ignore.

After carefully examining Eklof's work, we have concluded that we cannot reconcile our faith, morals or principles with *The Gadfly Papers*, and must vehemently disagree that this work has any worthwhile place in Unitarian Universalist thought.

Among our objections to *The Gadfly Papers* are what we believe to be misrepresentation of easily verifiable facts about recent events in the UU community, claims that historically oppressed minorities are putting their own interests above everyone else's, assuming the worst intentions in others while insisting that the historically privileged be judged only by their good intentions, and dishonest appeals to logic and reason meant to discredit the emotions and experiences of marginalized populations while absolving the historically privileged of any responsibility for self-examination.

By doing this, *The Gadfly Papers* violates the first and second principles of Unitarian Universalism. These essays deny the inherent worth and dignity of every person by dismissing and demonizing the voices of marginalized people, and argues against seeking justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

We also find that *The Gadfly Papers* grossly misunderstands the history of Unitarianism and Universalism and violates our third and fourth principles in doing so. By arguing that the intention of Unitarian Universalism is to create a single world religion for all people, the book denies not only the validity of any other faith whatsoever, but in so doing denies the encouragement of spiritual growth of individuals in a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. Further, we find Eklof's consideration of the dissolution of the UUA and calls for a denominational split among Unitarian Universalism to be tremendously irresponsible.

UUCE's bylaws, approved and upheld by our congregation, state that we covenant to affirm and promote the full participation of all persons in all our activities and endeavors—including membership, programming, hiring practices, and the calling of religious professionals—without stereotype based on race, color, gender, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, national origin, or political affiliation. As such, we have concluded that *The Gadfly Papers* violates our bylaws by dismissing and belittling the experiences of UUs of color, trans and non-binary UUs, and UUs with disabilities.

UUCE is working to continue our progress in accordance with our principles, with goals that include radical hospitality on all levels including leadership, and the continuation of our anti-

racism work and education. We are building our capacity to counter white fragility and white supremacy culture; those of us who are white are committed to listening to, and being guided by, the voices of Black and Indigenous UUs, and those of color, both within UUCE and across the country. UUCE must be a place where our congregants and visitors who face daily oppression and marginalization can be safe and thrive.

We are gay, bi, trans, non-binary, hetero and cis UUs. We are UUs of color, UUs with disabilities, UUs with a wide range of backgrounds and identities, and we are a welcoming congregation. As such, we oppose *The Gadfly Papers* and the movement led by Reverend Eklof to divide Unitarian Universalism and our congregations.

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