



A Statement to the Global Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist (U/U) Community

The Hungarian Unitarian Church (HUC) – a leader in global U/Uism and a partner with whom we have a long history and a committed relationship – is currently struggling with its institutional position on marriage equality. Earlier today, October 28, 2017, the HUC Synod issued a formal statement partially entitled “Marriage and Family” that defines marriage as a relationship restricted to a man and a woman. We sent a [collegial letter](#) to the HUC in advance of their Synod as a witness of hope and commitment but also to express our deep concern over their anticipated statement. We now are sending this message to the global U/U community. As we do so, we acknowledge that we are writing generally from a North American U/U cultural context.

We are especially concerned for the injury the Synod statement will cause to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) Unitarians in Hungary and Transylvania and their allies of all faiths and no faith. We would condemn such a statement in our own religious institutions, and we are profoundly saddened this anti-equality pronouncement has come from the HUC.

We note that there have always been – and likely always will be -- significant disagreements on many matters among global U/U groups and organizations. The HUC is, of course, self-governing, and we recognize the critically important role that tradition has played in Hungarian Unitarian history. Our relationship to the HUC is one of a sibling and a partner, not one of control or authority. In that context, we felt we would be remiss if we did not express our deep concern for the HUC’s action and our categorical support for marriage equality, a position that we believe is rooted in foundational U/U principles.

Many people in North American U/U congregations will perceive the HUC statement not only as contrary to foundational U/U principles but also as a dehumanizing attack on them personally and LGBTQ people generally. We respect and sympathize with people

who will wonder whether it is possible to remain in relationship with the HUC when there is such a clear and fundamental disagreement. We therefore urge North American U/U congregations and national organizations to respond to the HUC and individual partner churches with witness, honesty, and commitment, but also with humility. Specifically, we urge individual U/Us and congregations around the world to:

- Reflect with humility on the U/U journey of welcoming and inclusion. What has this been like for U/U individuals, congregations, and national organizations? There was a time, not very long ago, when many North American U/Us - and U/U's in many parts of the world - would have made private and public statements opposing marriage equality. In what ways has this changed? What can we learn from this reflection?
- Reflect on other justice struggles within U/U congregations and national organizations. How often have we failed? How often have we stumbled? How often has our impact been drastically different from our intent? How often have our actions not lived up to our words? What have we learned from this?
- Reflect on strategy. What has influenced the hearts and minds of U/Us in justice struggles, including the struggle for marriage equality? Can strategies of engagement with Hungarian Unitarian churches and the HUC benefit from that reflection?

We, the co-authors of this statement, intend to remain engaged with the HUC. We do not believe this is a time to walk away from people within the HUC and allies in Romania and Hungary who are courageously standing up for marriage equality. Our strategy will be to support and follow the leadership of Hungarian Unitarians who share our commitment to welcome and inclusion for all people. We intend to share engagement opportunities suggested by these leaders with U/U global partners and our member congregations. In this work we will be conscious and careful to avoid misusing power. We will be conscious and careful to avoid being paternalistic.

We want to note that severe pressure to affirm the “Marriage and Family” statement was applied to the Hungarian Unitarian Church [from outside political forces](#) and from the minority ethnically-Hungarian Christian communities in Romania. We trust our colleagues in the HUC who tell us that the HUC would not have prioritized a vote on this statement if the pressure had not been so intense.

We also believe that the theological dialogue organized for the 2018 commemoration of the 450th anniversary of the [Edict of Torda](#) provides a significant opportunity to engage in difficult conversations, including this one and related conversations about dismantling oppressive practices and policies that exist throughout global U/Uism. We invite you to participate in this dialogue as part of the Torda450 activities beginning in January 2018. More information is available at torda450.org.

We have offered to work with HUC leaders on the development of curricula and resources, including a Hungarian Unitarian -- or even internationally relevant -- understanding of the [Welcoming Congregation](#) Program. Unitarian Universalist

Association (UUA) congregations and many other churches and denominations around the world have learned that curricula supporting self-examination and dialogue about marriage equality and related LGBTQ justice and inclusion matters are key to moving forward.

We will share through social media any further developments that are communicated to us by the HUC. In the meantime, we invite you to join us in holding in our hearts and prayers our Hungarian Unitarian siblings in this difficult moment.

We have long looked to and learned from our faith partners in Hungary and Transylvania. We have been inspired by their perseverance in faith in the face of hostility and oppression. We wish to state that we love our siblings in faith. And we have expressed our deep concern over their statement in a spirit of commitment and abiding love.

In Faith and Partnership,

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