

A Faithful Response to #MeToo

2018 Resolution The Unitarian Church in Westport Annual Meeting

PREAMBLE

In recent months, we have seen, felt and heard the power of women claiming their voices and speaking their truth as part of the #MeToo Movement. The courageous acts of women from all backgrounds telling their stories and breaking the silence that protects abusive behavior led Time magazine to name as its person of the year in 2017 the voices that launched the #MeToo Movement. Echoes of the #MeToo Movement also reverberated within the walls of The Unitarian Church in Westport. Women who had suffered (or endured) sexual harassment and abuse were sitting in our pews, our meeting spaces, and in our church offices. Gender, age, race, ethnicity, education, socio-economic and marital status or cultural privilege have not protected us. Our religious heritages – Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist – compel us to address the important, widespread, and complex social issues of sexual abuse and interpersonal violence that profoundly affect all people by diminishing human dignity and free choice.

WHEREAS the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has taken positions on relevant issues of social justice as an expression of our faith and values and since 1961 has passed 89 resolutions and statements of conscience on sexual justice issues that have largely been in response to public events. These statements present a remarkable commitment to sexual justice; and

WHEREAS sexual harassment, abuse and violence against women is not new. What is new is the #MeToo Movement and this moment of women claiming their voices and their agency from those who have hurt them; and

WHEREAS the courage of women in our congregation who have come forward in the #MeToo worship services and in TUCWomen's gatherings forcefully remind us of the untold harm that can be caused by sexual misconduct;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED: That the Unitarian Church in Westport, CT, endorses prophetic preaching and public advocacy on #MeToo issues. This includes support for programs of healing and pastoral support for women and girls who have been injured and seek safe and caring circles; and educational programs for all ages and all gender identities that directly address the issues of sexual harassment, abuse and violence in the home, workplaces, the congregation and in the larger community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Congregation calls on the Board of Trustees of TUCW and its Senior Minister to institute a comprehensive review of all policies and practices using the lens of #MeToo issues and make all such policies and practices available and accessible in both printed and electronic (website) form. The Congregation further directs the Board and Senior Minister to share this Resolution with other UU congregations, the UUA and those in other denominations, and to diligently examine any systems of power and patriarchy within this congregation in governance, ministry and administration; and

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED: That the Congregation requests the President of the Board and the Senior Minister to report annually on progress in implementing this Resolution until the Annual Meeting in 2023.