

# Welcome to Our Global Faith

[The video “Welcome to Our Global Faith”](#) introduces the global nature of Unitarian Universalism – what we call the “Global U/U Story” – to new members of Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations. Leaders of new member classes or orientation sessions can include it as part of their curricula. Congregations may find it useful in other contexts as well.

The following Frequently Asked Questions list is designed to supplement the short and introductory information in the video.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. **Are our faith partners around the world members of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)?**

With only a few exceptions, they are not. The global Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist movement is organized largely by national U/U “judicatories.” For example, the [Hungarian Unitarian Church](#) is the representative “judicatory” of Unitarianism in Transylvania and Hungary. The [Canadian Unitarian Council](#) has the same role in Canada. The UUA is the U/U judicatory for the United States.

There are a few important exceptions, however. The [General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches](#) is, for example, the Unitarian judicatory for the United Kingdom (UK) – however, it has a few member congregations outside of the UK. The UUA also has a few member congregations outside of its judicatory area including largely expatriate congregations in [San Miguel de Allende \(Mexico\)](#) and [Paris \(France\)](#), sixteen U/U congregations in Canada, and Unitarian churches in [Auckland \(New Zealand\)](#) and [Adelaide \(Australia\)](#). The largest UUA member congregation outside of the U.S. is the [UU Church of the Philippines](#) (approx. 2,500 members).

### 2. **How do U/U judicatories around the world cooperate with and support each other?**

The most important organization supporting our global interdependence as judicatories is the [International Council of Unitarians and Universalists](#) (ICUU). The ICUU’s mission is to: Build relationships through communication and collaboration; Develop spiritual community among member groups and their leaders; Identify and nurture prospective and emerging groups; Foster our U/U

faith for mutual inspiration, development and growth. Many judicatories also have both new and historic one-to-one relationships with each other. For example, the UUA has been in close relationship with Unitarians in the UK, Transylvania, North East India, and many other countries for more than a century. More recent relationships have been formed between the UUA and UU judicatories in Uganda and Burundi, among other places. In each of these examples, the ICUU has played and continues to play an essential role.

### 3. **What is a “Partner Church?”**

The modern “Partner Church” movement celebrated its 20th anniversary in July 2010 during a special conference in Kolozsvár, Transylvania hosted by the then-named Transylvania Unitarian Church (in 2012, the Synods of both the Transylvanian Unitarian Church and the Unitarian Church in Hungary officially reunified as the Hungarian Unitarian Church). The 20th anniversary celebration of the partner church movement recognized the uniquely transformative influence of close relationships between local UU congregations in North America and local UU congregations in other parts of the world. The original partner church relationships were developed between UU congregations in North America and Unitarian churches in Transylvania, but have since expanded into other countries, including Hungary, the Czech Republic, India, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Uganda, Nigeria, Burundi, and beyond. Partner churches create mutually supportive relationships with varying focuses agreed upon by the partners. [The UU Partner Church Council](#)—an independent organization—is the key organizer of the partner church movement for North American congregations and individuals.

### 4. **How did Unitarianism begin in India, the Philippines, or Nigeria?**

The stories of how U/Uism began in any particular context are diverse and inspiring. Many of these stories are compiled in the ICUU’s “The Garden of Unitarian Universalism” curriculum and in U/U International Engagement: Past, Present, and Future. Please contact the UUA’s International Office for other published materials.

### 5. **What is the “International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF)”?**

The IARF was founded in 1900 in Boston, Massachusetts and originally named the “International Association of Unitarian and Other Liberal Thinkers and Workers.” For many decades it was the primary organization for Unitarians and

their liberal Christian colleagues around the world to connect with each other. Later in its history, IARF became broadly interfaith with Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Muslim, Jewish, Shinto, and many other faith communities providing leadership and support to the organization. Many of the UUA's closest interfaith relationships have their origins in the IARF.

Today, the IARF holds a World Congress every four years, supports the efforts of regional IARF affiliates, organizes Human Rights Education programs, and has a representative at the United Nations Office in Geneva. The 35th World Congress took place in 2018 in Washington, DC during the [Reimagining Interfaith conference](#).

**6. What is Rissho Kosei-kai? What is the Tsubaki Grand Shrine?**

The UUA has historic and close ties with many non-UU religious movements, including with two of our closest interfaith partners in Japan: Rissho Kosei-kai and Tsubaki Grand Shrine. [Rissho Kosei-kai](#) is a lay-Buddhist movement with a strong commitment to World Peace. [Tsubaki Grand Shrine](#) is one of the most historic Shinto shrines in the world. Together, we are involved in a wide array of international interfaith activities.

**7. What is the UU Holdeen India Program (UUHIP)?**

[The Unitarian Universalist Holdeen India Program \(UUHIP\)](#), a department of the UUA's International Office, provides aid for humanitarian service ventures and social enterprises that seek to advance prosperity for all of India's people. Education programs, livelihood development initiatives, and projects promoting access to credit have all received UUHIP support.

**8. What is the Unitarian Universalist Office at the United Nations (UU@UN)?**

The [UUA Office United Nations \(UU@UN\)](#), a department of the UUA's International Office, is engaged in international advocacy work at the UN based on Unitarian Universalist (UU) values. From involvement in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to leading the faith caucus to establish the International Criminal Court, to overcoming UN apathy about sexual orientation & gender identity issues, the UU@UN has a long history of providing strong leadership in all aspects of human rights at a policy level through UN consultative status. (The UU@UN was formerly known as the UU United Nations Office or UU-UNO.)

**9. What is the UU Service Committee? The International Women's Convocation? Other UU organizations involved in international work?**

Each of these independent organizations are focused on diverse kinds of international work. They often collaborate with each other, and the UUA is in close relationship with each of them:

- The [UU Service Committee](#) advances human rights and social justice around the world, partnering with those who confront unjust power structures and mobilizing to challenge oppressive policies. It is headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- The [International Women's Convocation](#) creates a community of Unitarian Universalists, and women of other progressive faiths, dedicated to building global partnerships to enrich women's lives through action.
- Additional [UU organizations focused on international work](#).

Learn more at [UUA.org/International](https://uua.org/International)