



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION OF PUERTO RICO
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POSITION OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION OF PUERTO RICO REGARDING VACCINE EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Puerto Rico (UUPR) is a church whose covenant consists of seven principles, among them

1st principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

4th principle: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

7th principle: Respect the interdependent web of all existence of which we are part.

As a church member of the Unitarian Universalist Association, we share the religious history of our Unitarian Universalist tradition. One of the sources of our faith is:

- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.

Current COVID-19 pandemic has been a new experience for many of us who have not seen anything similar in our lifetimes. It has forced us to move from our current presential assemblies to the virtual world. It has affected our jobs, our families, and in some cases even our own health. We have often watched friends and loved ones get very ill or die. Some who have survived are still struggling with their recovery.

Yet, we have also witnessed how different forces at a global scale have worked together to make the world better, and how the advances of science have made possible, in such a short period of time, vaccines which have been shown to be effective against the SARS-CoV-2. It has been amply demonstrated that it protects us better from getting ill, having its worst symptoms, or even death.

Ironically, even when the vaccine is provided for free, as time goes on, some people refuse to vaccinate, mostly because they have been misinformed. Because of this, the SARS-CoV-2 virus continues to mutate, and now we need to deal with its delta variant,

which has already spread in many countries of the world, and in many cases has become vaccine tolerant.

Recently, given the upward trend of new cases of COVID-19 in Puerto Rico, governor Pedro Pierluisi has required that public employees should be vaccinated, but provided an exception to those who can show medical **or religious reasons not to vaccinate**. People can provide **a certificate for vaccine exemption** that are either medical **or religious**.

Given these facts, the UUPR Leadership Team makes the following statements:

- **Promoting vaccination is consistent with our first principle, because it values the welfare of every human life.**
- **Consistent with our fourth principle, we recognize that vaccinating is an act of personal responsibility for oneself and others.**
- **Vaccinating is act of compassion for those who, due to medical or other reasons, are not able to. We need to reach the level of herd immunity to protect them.**
- **Vaccinating is also an act of compassion because extending the current situation would also prolong people's suffering.**
- **Currently, vaccinating is the only current way we can recover fully our human ties and interactions the way we used to have.**
- **For all of these reasons, we affirm that there is no UU doctrinal or religious belief to justify a religious exemption to vaccination for our members.**
- **The UUA COVID-19 Gathering guidance reminds us that: "Recognition that we are part of an interdependent web and, as such, our risk-taking and our protective actions affect far more than just ourselves." (<https://www.uua.org/safe/pandemics/gathering-guidance>). Following on from this, we encourage members to vaccinate against COVID-19.**