

OUR CALL TO ACT AS A PEOPLE OF FAITH¹

All: We must begin with ourselves.

Reader 1: Our congregations can offer safe space for open and honest discussion among congregants about the complex issues of drug use, misuse, and disorder.

Reader 2: Through acceptance of one another and the encouragement of spiritual growth, we should be able to acknowledge and address our own drug use without fear of censure or reprisal.

{Rotating readers in the circle/room}

We can recognize that drugs include not only currently illegal substances but also alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, over-the-counter pain relievers, and prescription drugs.

We can learn to distinguish among use, harmful use or misuse, and substance use disorder.

We can support one another in recognizing drug-related problems and seeking help.

We can seek to understand those among us who use drugs for relief or escape.

With compassion, we can cultivate reflection and analysis of drug policy.

In the safe space of our own congregations, we can begin to prevent destructive relationships with drugs.

We can lend necessary support to individuals and families when their loved ones need treatment for addiction problems.

We can encourage our congregations to partner with and follow the lead of groups representing individuals whose lives are most severely undermined by current drug policy—people of color and people of low income.

We can learn from health care professionals what the unique patterns of substance abuse are in our local areas.

We can go beyond our walls and bring our perspective to the interfaith community, other nonprofit organizations, and elected officials.

¹ Adapted excerpt from "Alternatives to the 'War on Drugs' 2002 Statement of Conscience Unitarian Universalist Association. <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/alternatives-war-drugs>

All: [Life, Love, and God} calls us to pursue a more just world.

Reader 1: Our faith compels us to hold our leaders accountable for their policies.

Reader 2: In calling for alternatives to the war on drugs, we are mindful of its victims.

Reader 3: Drug use should be addressed solely as a public health problem, not as a criminal justice issue. Dependence upon any illegal drugs or harmful use of legal drugs may point to deep, unmet human needs.

All: We have a moral obligation to advocate compassionate, harm-reducing policy.

All: We believe that our nations have the imagination and capability to address effectively the complex issues of the demand for drugs, both legal and illegal.

Reader 1: Recognizing the right of conscience for all who differ, we denounce the war on drugs and recommend alternative goals and policies.

All: Let neither fear nor any other barrier prevent us from advocating a more just, compassionate world.

Stigma Reducing Language

We can reduce the stigma, and help save lives, just by changing our language.

By doing so, we can reverse harmful stereotypes about addiction and improve access to care and support for people affected by this disease.

Words to Avoid	Words to Use
Addict	Person with substance use disorder
Alcoholic	Person with alcoholic use disorder
Drug problem, drug habit	Substance use disorder
Drug abuse	Drug misuse, harmful use
Drug abuser	Person with substance use disorder
Clean	Not actively using, abstinent
Dirty	Actively using
A clean drug screen	Testing negative for substance use
A dirty drug screen	Testing positive for substance use
Former/reformed addict/alcoholic	Person in recovery, person in long-term recovery
Opioid replacement, methadone maintenance	Medication assisted therapy