

## **UUA Presidential Candidate on Climate Justice**

More than 100 UU organizations and individuals signed onto a request of the three candidates for UUA president that they respond to nine questions about climate change and their vision for responding to this ethical, spiritual and pragmatic crisis. All three responded and their statements are organized by question. The next UUA President will be elected by the delegates at the General Assembly in June 2017. Information about each candidates qualifications may be found on the UUA website: <http://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/elections/president>

### ***1. What do you see as the root causes of the climate crisis?***

#### ***Response by Rev. Alison B. Miller, Candidate for UUA President***

The root causes of the climate crisis from a scientific perspective are our reliance on fossil fuels for energy, our practice of overconsumption, and the consequences of overpopulation. These human behaviors contribute to the increase in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in our air and an encroachment on natural habitats that nourish myriad species of life. All of this has led us to where we are today – in the middle of a climate crisis and an ecological crisis.

The deeper question is: what are the root causes of human behaviors which threaten the existence of all life on Earth? While there are some people who are climate change deniers, and I have even met some Unitarian Universalists who fall in this category, there is growing consensus that we must forge a new path and quickly to avert disaster. It is important that we continue to educate the rising generations in schools and try to educate the deniers about how our behavior is connected to advancing a healthier planet or a sicker one.

However, education is far from the only barrier. We can see that people who are educated about the relationship between the choices that people, corporations, and governments make and the wellbeing of our planet, still do not choose to change their behaviors, or do so in a far too gradual manner. People are choosing to ignore what they are no longer ignorant about.

Privilege, greed, fear, and the illusion of our separateness are some of the root causes that we must address to meet the current situation with a sense of urgency and a moral imperative. Climate justice is intertwined with our commitments to equity and anti-oppression. Gender, race, class, poverty, and country all intersect in ways that disadvantage certain populations in grave, harsh and daily ways, while other populations don't personally experience changes in climate as affecting their daily lives (yet).

Climate justice, environmental justice, and ecological justice will not be solved in the ways that we have traditionally tried to solve social problems. We have traditionally looked to fix the situation by increasing the standard of living for more people, which so far has been implemented in ways that lead to more people relying on fossil fuels, practicing overconsumption, and increasing the human population. We must shift towards an ethic of sustainability and an ethic of generational equity. We must live with a present and embodied sense of the promise we owe future generations who will inhabit this planet.

E.O. Wilson writes, “The great challenge of the twenty-first century is to raise people everywhere to a decent standard of living while preserving as much of the rest of life as possible.” Moving to a “decent” standard of living looks like some people being willing to give up some of the resources they are consuming, while for others it looks like gaining access to precious, life-giving resources. We must work to restore balance in our relationship with the Earth and her inhabitants; the future of life on Earth interdepends on all of us.

***Response by Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, Candidate for UUA President***

Climate Justice works at the intersections of environmental degradation and the racial, social, and economic inequities it perpetuates. Ultimately, the goal of climate justice is to dismantle the paradigm of dominance that has led to the violence perpetuated on people with black and brown bodies, displacement of indigenous peoples, the denial of health care for women, the disempowerment of immigrant communities and the use of Earth as supply source and sewer.

Climate change is often characterized as a crisis of modern culture, generated by a broken economic system, unfixable by a fractured political system that will ultimately be solved through scientific magic and human ingenuity. But, because the crisis is rooted in systems of dominance, the real hope rests in our faith and commitment to our shared Principles.

***Response from Rev. Jeanne Pupke, Candidate for UUA President***

What is at the heart of the climate crisis is fossil fuel use. It continues unabated. Most of the energy we use up in this world still comes from the burning of fossil fuels. I can see the coal trucks and coal trains travel everyday through Virginia as coal is being sent out and across the ocean. It is a horrible, horrible injury to the earth that we allow to continue.

We have to look toward alternative sources of energy to change that over-dependency, in fact, to eliminate it. We have solar and wind possibilities, geothermal and others, but because they are presently expensive upfront and seem unfamiliar, we don't engage with them.

One of the things I would love to do as President of the UUA is to explore the possibility of creating a B-corporation, that makes simple and easy solarizing of our churches, moving on to other churches, and our UU homes, and doing this affordably. This B-corporation, in addition to addressing the climate crisis, could employ our young Unitarian Universalists in work that is socially redeeming and valuable.

These are things we can do but they require innovative thinking. That's what I would bring to the Presidency – the kind of conversation with folks where we could really think through revolutionary ways of engaging ourselves in healing the earth.

## ***2. What foreseeable impacts of global climate disruption are you most concerned about? Why?***

### ***Response by Rev. Alison B. Miller, Candidate for UUA President***

Water is the source of life. Our bodies are about 60% water, and the surface of our planet is about 70% water. No living organism on Earth can survive without water. Today, many people around the globe struggle to find clean drinking water and many animals are swimming in polluted waters. Scarcity of potable and habitable water leads to famine, death, disease, and war, and disproportionately impacts indigenous people, people of color, and poor people. Water is our most precious human right, and it is being treated like a commodity that should be auctioned off to the highest bidder.

Water is also a force of disaster and destruction. Floods, tsunamis, and hurricanes all come to mind. Just as water gives rise to life, in certain forms water can end life too. Once again, we have seen in disasters, like hurricane Katrina, a wake-up call to the ways that these disasters hit vulnerable populations the hardest – although, natural disasters are a great leveler – they do not choose between rich and poor, privileged or oppressed. The effects of global climate change and the ensuing disasters will touch everyone.

Water has so captivated religious peoples the world over that many of our rituals and stories center around the healing, life-giving properties of water and the devastation it can also bring. As Unitarian Universalists, many of us welcome our children in a Service of Dedication where we dip a rose or our fingertips in water and bless them with this sacred element of life.

I feel called to pay attention and to act at the intersection between environmental justice and racial justice. One way that took shape for me in the last year was responding to the call of Chief Arvol Looking Horse and showing up at Standing Rock to resist the Dakota Access Pipeline. This movement is about indigenous rights, about racial justice, and about promoting water as a sacred human right. One of the threats to clean water in our country are the pipelines which crisscross our country to pump fossil fuels from one place to another. Pipelines have leaked wreaking havoc on water and wildlife, and expanding the infrastructure that supports the use of fossil fuels doesn't make sense. If we want to support the potential for healthy life on this planet, we must invest in and shift to renewable, clean energy sources.

### ***Response by Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, Candidate for UUA President***

We have found ourselves in a moment of great urgency. Communities of color, indigenous communities and communities in the southern hemisphere are already bearing tremendous costs with limited access to basic needs like food, water, clean air and land. We need action on multiple fronts and partnership is critical to our effectiveness.

Global migration and displacement continues to be an issue of critical importance to me personally. My work on immigration justice led me to see that the reality of human migration is a global and generational issue because of climate disruption (rising waters, droughts, floods, famine) and political instability that results. We see this in Syria where a civil war erupted after five years of serious drought resulting in the present humanitarian, refugee and migrant crisis.

*Response from Rev. Jeanne Pupke, Candidate for UUA President*

The population, as a whole, is going to be affected. It's true that we will lose precipitation in arable land; we'll see the shifting of our growing zones; we'll experience the loss of habitat. And, we're also going to see seashore mansions be undermined and washed away. Everyone will be affected. So perhaps this is an opportunity for us to understand our mutual human endeavor in healing the injury we've created. Can we come together?

The big concern for me will always be for the poor, who are less able to cope with the changes. A millionaire has insurance on their home. Someone in a desert edge community who's been trying to grow some succulent will not have that insurance.

How do we prevent global disruption in climate from being another injustice visited on the poor? That's a question for our faith.

### ***3. How do you relate global climate disruption to the other great moral, spiritual and religious issues of our time?***

#### ***Response by Rev. Alison B. Miller, Candidate for UUA President***

Just as mounting nuclear powers have the capacity to eliminate life on Earth as we know it, global climate disruption poses the same threat. Nuclear weapons create a sense of urgency because we know that their impact is swift and immediate. While the impacts of global climate disruption may not be felt immediately, the consequences are just as deadly. The trajectory we have been on of using up the resources of Mother Earth as quickly as we can buy them is already yielding harmful effects – rising temperatures, rising seas, climate change, extinctions of species, and a disproportioned burden on the poor and oppressed. Global climate disruption is one of the greatest moral, spiritual and religious issues that we have ever faced.

One of the largest spiritual hurdles around global climate disruption is facing the truth that we have passed the point of no return for certain parts of our biosphere. Our behavior has led to the extinction of certain species – animal and plant – which are gone forever. Our behavior can also lead to restoring wildlife populations and habitats that can still be recovered. We have also passed the number of 350 parts per million carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is a threshold number for life as we know it to remain intact. We are now about 400 parts per million (ppm). All of us – individuals, families, corporations, and governments – will have to stop acting out of a place of immediate gratification and develop an ethic of generational equity that seeks to put future as-of-yet unborn people first.

We must shift from valuing ease, consumption, and profits to valuing sustainability and a habitable, healthy planet. What does it mean to have money to hand down to our grandchildren, if they don't have access to a healthy, habitable planet? It is meaningless.

Global climate disruption is not just about the future. It is about looking at the here-and-now, and how we still struggle to build a world where the human rights of all are protected. It's not just about imagining the worth of unborn generations, it's about realizing and committing to "the inherent worth and dignity" of everyone who is alive today. Climate justice is not an isolated as moral issue; it is interconnected with our pressing commitment to anti-racism and ending poverty. We are living in a country where children in Flynt, Michigan were knowingly put in harm's way and exposed to dangerous lead levels in their drinking water. If we say we want to be on the side of the oppressed and the vulnerable, then we cannot fulfill these aspirations without a substantive commitment to the wellbeing of planet Earth.

#### ***Response by Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, Candidate for UUA President***

Building on my answer to question #1, we need an intersectional understanding and approach to climate justice. Global climate disruption is a direct result of the paradigm of dominance that also perpetuates racial, social and economic inequities as well as systemic violence against women, indigenous communities, people of color and the poor.

In this time, when our world has literally never been more connected through media, internet and social media, the rise of nationalism is an indication of the way that both domination and fear

continue to undermine our capacity as humanity to embrace compassion, reverence and generosity.

Given the opportunity that our interconnection can provide to collectively address responsive action to the global climate crisis, the fact that individuals and nations are responding through a lens of scarcity, fear and the building of walls is a reflection of the moral bankruptcy at the heart of the ethic of domination and competition.

As a religious faith, we must respond by combatting ideologies and pedagogies that reinforce domination while nurturing theologies and practices that encourage collaboration and compassion.

***Response from Rev. Jeanne Pupke, Candidate for UUA President***

We have a lot of injustices loose in our world. The furies came out of the box and Penelope regretted ever having opened them. But the last one that came out was hope.

I think there's a possibility for us to deepen our consciousness, raise our consciousness, in a way that will allow us to understand our deep relationality, our deep interdependence, and remove the illusion that we're separate. It is the important issue that we fail to notice because we are still too engaged with individual preference and consumerism. We fail to see our connectedness to one another, to all beings, and to the earth.

#### ***4. What moral imperatives should guide Unitarian Universalist climate action?***

##### ***Response by Rev. Alison B. Miller, Candidate for UUA President***

Our 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> principle weave together powerfully as an ethic to guide our actions around climate justice. In our Seventh Principle, we covenant to affirm and promote “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” Unitarian Universalism recognizes that human beings are not above nature, rather we are a link in the chain of life that includes former and future generations of human life and all six kingdoms of life (animal, plant, fungi, protists, archaeobacteria and eubacteria). In addition, we must protect the land, the water, and the air, which all sustain life.

In our First Principle, we covenant to affirm and promote “the inherent worth and dignity of every person.” In 2017, the way this is practiced in our faith is to be guided by the populations most disproportionately impacted by an ethical issue. When we support a climate justice agenda determined by the movement for black lives, or when we support the rights of indigenous peoples, we are leaning into the work of our first principle. We need to listen, learn from, and center the experiences and wisdom of indigenous peoples, people of color, the poor and the oppressed as we engage in the spiritual resistance to the plunder of our earth and the plight of those who pay the highest price.

##### ***Response by Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, Candidate for UUA President***

As Unitarian Universalists our moral imperative is to respond to life, to creation, and to one another with reverence, gratitude and humility.

Additionally, collaboration is critical in this work. We cannot do this work alone. Our effectiveness depends on an intersectional approach that centers the voices and strategies of front-line communities.

##### ***Response from Rev. Jeanne Pupke, Candidate for UUA President***

For us, we cannot forget that though we’re a well-educated group, though we’re a thoughtful group, we are still a part of the communities of this world and we are going to be a part of those affected by the change in climate. I see in my own back yard – plants that used to thrive just ten years ago are showing signs of stress as global temperatures rise. Anyone who’s seen the temperature chart knows how radically things are being altered. I believe that our moral imperatives are not to leave the table, not to forget our common humanity, not to fail to understand the sacrifice and impact people are being expected to bear, and at the same time, to identify with the poor, the most affected, and to confront those who try to suggest that science isn’t science, that truth isn’t truth. We can stand with those most impacted and we must. Above all, we must come to see we are called to unite and respond.

## ***5. How do you respond to global climate disruption in your current life and ministries?***

### ***Response by Rev. Alison B. Miller, Candidate for UUA President***

I serve as the Senior Minister of the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship, one of our earliest Green Sanctuary congregations with many people committed to a journey of advocacy and life-changes that support the health and wellbeing of our Earth. I am also married to a middle school science teacher who chose this career to help shape the ethic of the rising generations to use what they learn in science and technology to make wiser choices that impact the future of our Earth home. While I already had a commitment to grow and develop as an advocate for the environment and in my own personal choices, these people and their stories of dedication and the difference it makes inspires me to want to do even more.

As a minister in a congregation, I am deeply aware of the importance of weaving our commitment to work for environmental justice throughout our congregational life. I partner with our Green Earth Ministry to ensure that the wellbeing of our environment and climate justice are a focus over time in our worship services, religious education programs, committee life, justice work, annual budget, and a priority for our capital building projects. As a faith, justice, and advocacy leader in the state of New Jersey, I serve on the UU Legislative Ministry's Board, where we have an environmental focus to promote renewable energy and conservation, to prevent fracking for natural gas in the Delaware Valley, and to reinstate New Jersey in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. As an interfaith leader, I join in movements of global climate justice by responding "Yes!" to show up to witness, to protect, and to resist, which is why I traveled to North Dakota to stand with Standing Rock.

As an individual and as a family, we are committed to deepening our practice of consuming less, reducing waste, reusing, and recycling. Over the last decade, we have significantly altered our habits around the foods we buy and eat. When we shop for groceries, we buy locally grown and raised foods, try to eat more often lower on the food chain, and support organic farms and businesses that are ethical in their treatment of workers and animals.

### ***Response by Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, Candidate for UUA President***

My ministry in Arizona has fundamentally reshaped and deepened my commitment to global climate justice. The realities of drought and fire across the Southwest have made climate disruption personal and real. My relationships with indigenous leaders within and beyond the congregation have shown me the beauty of always beginning with gratitude - gratitude for life, for the earth.

This has changed my prayer life. I begin my daily spiritual practice in mindful attention to the earth. I bring this wisdom into my public prayers, always beginning in gratitude, always mindful of the relationship to the earth and the fundamental interdependence of all life. I have always thought this intellectually, but my time in the desert southwest has helped me know this deep in my spirit.

This has made me bold in preaching regularly to the realities of global climate change and the

spiritual and moral shifts we need to make to change our own personal orientation to one of reverence for all life.

***Response from Rev. Jeanne Pupke, Candidate for UUA President***

I struggle sometimes to know how to respond. Unitarian Universalists want to see me in California. Do I fly? What if I tell them that I want to do a video call and they say, “No, you have to be here”? People ask how we are working in our church to lighten our footprint and still hold expectations that are first-world privileged. This is not realistic. Young people want to know if this is a church they can trust. So we have to deal with all of the questions of our own consciousness and limitations and the balance of relationality and how we live together.

In my own life, I find it difficult to know if it was worth the extra money that I spent to get a car that shuts off when it idles or if the money was better spent elsewhere. I don't know the answer to this and I live with the ambiguity. In my life and ministry, there is something comforting about thinking we have moved in a direction of having a smaller footprint on this earth while recognizing there is so very much more to be done. These are tough questions and it's an absolute imperative that we examine them in our communities.

**6. As UUA President, what specific actions and policies would you implement to address the climate crisis? How would you increase institutional support from the UUA for its congregations and their members to work towards climate justice, environmental justice, and a sustainable way of life?**

***Response by Rev. Alison B. Miller, Candidate for UUA President***

As UUA President, I would implement a plan to further reduce the carbon footprint of our Association's operations. We have a LEED Platinum headquarters, now let us continue to be green in our activities in that building and in all the spaces where our work happens. Our budget should reflect costs for green choices around renewable energy, green products (cleaning, paper, etc.), meeting/conference planning that aligns with principles of food justice and reducing the use of fossil fuels, and more.

As UUA President, I would deploy staff resources to promoting our goals of climate justice, ecological justice, and environmental justice in the world. I plan to continue to promote our practice of shareholder advocacy to encourage corporate responsibility around climate justice. I plan to support our climate justice campaign, Commit2Respond, which my congregation has participated in since the beginning. I see opportunities for us to develop the campaign further towards the intention of including leaders in other faith traditions. Where I serve in Morristown, interfaith congregations are interconnected through Green Faith in NJ, and we inspire one another to continue along a path of responsible consumption, reducing fossil fuels, and promoting the health and wellbeing of our Earth. We can create an interfaith advisory council to empower leaders from other faiths to help us to shape the campaign in ways that speak across faith traditions.

The UUA plays an important role in denomination-wide communications and setting the ethical standards that congregations follow. The UUA can incentivize congregations to initiate new climate justice conscious operations through small grants awarded to support green building design features, reducing fossil fuel usage, responsible consumption, and collaborate community projects in the town/city in which they live. This will also assist the UUA in collecting and sharing the stories of how congregations/communities/affiliates are becoming increasingly climate conscious. These models alongside of updating Green Sanctuary Standards offer the inspiration and the challenge for others to become greener in their choices.

Currently, we have statewide advocacy networks in 22 states in varying states of maturity. Many of these organizations are involved in community organizing, public witness, and advocacy for climate justice. The challenge is that climate justice is a global issue, and we are only covering a portion of the United States. It is a priority in my planning for the future of the UUA to partner with UUs and congregations in all five regions to expand our advocacy efforts and reach. We also need to strengthen our voice in Washington, DC. Our voice and faith values are critically important part of the resistance to policies of the new US administration, which is openly hostile to environmental protections.

***Response by Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, Candidate for UUA President***

We need action on multiple fronts and partnership is critical to our effectiveness. If elected President of the UUA, there are three things I'd like to help the UUA do more effectively.

First is to support Unitarian Universalists in our intersectional approaches to climate change, racial justice, immigrant and refugee justice, ending mass detention/incarceration, and economic inequality. These issues are not separate. Intersectional approaches will be critical in achieving lasting change.

Second is to amplify the efforts of frontline communities in their campaigns to resist the continued pollution and degradation of their homelands and natural resources. By supporting congregations and UU organizers in this work, we can enter long term relationships with those most immediately effected by climate and environmental injustice and have those partnerships shape and inform our effort. As UUA President, I am committed to putting more resources to organizing. This is an urgent time where we are called to be bolder, braver and better organized and we need resources to meet this moment.

***Response from Rev. Jeanne Pupke, Candidate for UUA President***

The President of the UUA is not going to be one of the great influencers of the debate on the earth, its healing, and the climate disruption we're experiencing. The President cannot assume to turn the debate but can raise the issues and encourage action.

The President can influence the spiritual questions, like how important it is that we connect our social justice movement with our spiritual roots and our heritage to ask ourselves, "What must we now do?" How do we move from having 300 some odd congregations that are Green Sanctuaries to having twice that many? How do we change the requirements for Green Sanctuaries to reflect new understandings and developments in the environment? How do we refresh those commitments when new knowledge becomes available? And how to we create innovative ways to interact in the earth that affirm sustainability in the long run, in our housing, in our transportation, our spiritual relationship to nature? How can we avoid becoming a world in which personal, individual choices dominate everything to the pain of the earth?

We can do better with a common and shared understanding that we uphold as a spiritual teaching. We need to have those discussions; we need to ferment those learnings; and we need to live them in the public square as well. The President can influence how often and how deeply we engage the issues and must do so as one of the focused priorities of the faith.

**7. As UUA President, how would you expand and support the UUA's work with other faiths and non-governmental organizations to take collective actions towards shifting to a low carbon future, advancing the human rights of impacted populations, and growing the climate justice movement?**

***Response by Rev. Alison B. Miller, Candidate for UUA President***

Our Commit2Respond initiative launched a couple of years ago with the intention of involving people of other faiths. However, looking at the list of endorsing groups, it is currently mostly Unitarian Universalists who are involved. As I wrote above, Commit2Respond could be an organizing umbrella for climate justice leaders that reaches beyond UUs, but we would need to recruit leaders from other faiths at the leadership level and at the grassroots level of the campaign to help us attract new participants and shape the campaign in ways that speak across religious traditions. I would suggest we move strongly in that direction, or decide to brand it more strongly UU and actively seek to partner with climate justice organizations of other faiths.

The UU-United Nations Office has five program areas, including Climate Justice. The UU-UNO is now part of the International Office of the UUA rather than a separate entity. It is important to evaluate this newer part of our UUA system, how effective our voice is at the United Nations, and what we could do to strengthen partnerships with other non-governmental organizations and faith based groups working to further climate justice and the sustainable development goals. It will require steady advocacy to ensure governments and businesses in our country and around the world implement the recommendations to support healthy water, air, land, and life. We have a seat at the UN table, and we should use that positioning to do our part to achieve these goals.

The UUSC is one of the strongest human rights organizations in our UU universe. I plan to continue the development of the UUA-UUSC partnership in initiatives that hold governments, corporations, and socioeconomic elites accountable. The UUSC, through projects of the College of Social Justice, also provide UUs with opportunities to serve and make a difference in areas with populations who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate disruption. To put our values into action, we must engage with meaningful projects in global advocacy, service projects, and targeted fundraising to support grassroots efforts to support populations who find themselves on the margins, such as LGBTQ identified people who might otherwise be on the outside of humanitarian aid in certain countries.

***Response by Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, Candidate for UUA President***

We must build power through strong organizing strategies and partnership to compel change at the highest levels of the economy and government. The larger environmental analysis is done, but corporate, capital and moneyed interests are working against our need for climate and environmental justice. Strong partnerships within Unitarian Universalism, across faith communities and with front-line communities must be the foundation of our efforts to build a powerful, compelling moral voice to push urgent and effective climate justice action.

Our internal collaborative efforts (as demonstrated by the nine UU organizations partnering on

Commit2Respond) and our outside partnerships are key to our future success.

***Response from Rev. Jeanne Pupke, Candidate for UUA President***

Climate injury happens because we've forgotten the common "we." It's that simple. The extent to which someone can consume fossil fuels at a very, very high rate while others barely do at all, and only for subsistence, shows us the kind of thinking that has led us this way. It says "if I can afford this, I will consume it" and takes no notice of the effect created. The use of fossil fuels without regard to their effect has devastated all of us.

We need to partner with the largest "we" we can imagine, the largest group of climate warriors, the largest group of teachers and scientists. The bigger the "we," the fewer things that can keep us from taking initiative to do what we can to heal the earth. Some say it's already too late. I think it's never too late to take the right action

**8. *How should the UUA and its congregations offer ministerial support for people struggling with despair, confusion, or denial related to the global climate crisis?***

***Response by Rev. Alison B. Miller, Candidate for UUA President***

It is natural to feel a degree of despair in the face of all we have already lost in this climate, environmental, and ecological crisis, especially as we recognize that some parts of the web of life cannot be repaired. It is normal to experience confusion as we try to understand all the complexities and intricacies involved in the web of life, as well as the intended and unintended consequences of our choices on the interdependent web. In extreme cases, there are some people who are so fearful of the narrative of global climate disruption that they refuse to listen to or believe what is happening and prefer to place control out of their hands.

To those who are experiencing despair and confusion, our congregations/covenanted communities offer practices that buoy the spirit, center our hearts on what matters, challenge our assumptions, and cultivate hope. We contribute something essential to the work of justice. We co-create possibilities to be more resilient in the face of a crisis because we nourish our spirits along the journey, and we don't face challenges alone. We lean into opportunities for change together participating in concentric circles of hope and renewal – circles of Unitarian Universalists, circles of environmental justice activists, and circles of interfaith partners committed to caring for all of creation. These collective connections allow us to see the difference that each one of us can make as our actions add up to noticeable change. This is also the source of our collective power to pressure corporations and governments to make changes.

The UUA can support this work by allocating staff resources to equip congregations for holistic engagement on the issues of climate justice and by modeling what it looks like to be an institution on a path of deepening commitment to climate justice. For example, UUA can make wise choices about the energy providers, conferences, priorities for justice campaigns, and more. UUA's Beacon Press can be used to publish works that articulately frame the ethical dilemmas that we are up against in climate justice and why it is so critical to engage on a path to repair, restore, and resist. Skinner House books can be used to inspire Unitarian Universalists by sharing stories of how different congregations are successfully engaging in this work in their advocacy, public witness, community organizing, and intersectional movements for justice.

For those that remain in the camp of denial, education is the best tool once they are open enough to listen to another side. I don't see a Tapestry of Faith series on climate justice for adults. There is room for development here – possibly a series is set up for UUs to partner with other houses of worship in their community/town/city – to learn about the global, national, and local effects of the current climate crisis and the theologies/philosophies which undergird moving together on a path towards change. The series could include giving people language and tools to reach out to climate change deniers and ways to bring people on all sides of this issue together to foster productive dialogue and learning.

***Response by Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, Candidate for UUA President***

As Unitarian Universalists, we need to make room to name and honor the sorrow and collective

despair we feel.

Personally, as a religious leader, I believe we must develop a greater capacity to welcome grief rather than an avoidance or shorthand acknowledgement of it. In my own spiritual life, welcoming grief, making room to honor and name our experiences and emotions allows us to more fully embrace the reality and our capacity for agency and self-determination. Developing the spiritual capacity to welcome pain and joy, allows us to see new opportunities and to be informed by an honest assessment of our present.

In the end, hope, resiliency and courage come not from ignoring the challenges, grief or crises we face, but acknowledging it, honoring it and then remembering that we have our own gifts and ways that we can change and respond.

***Response from Rev. Jeanne Pupke, Candidate for UUA President***

It's always hardest to get people to focus on the things that take the longest to fix. We know that the injury to the earth we have perpetrated as human beings is a long standing one, and one that's ramped up in recent years. It's interesting that some of the worst damage that's been done has been since the invention of Earth Day, which tells us that it's possible for us to have a split consciousness about both consumption and sustainability.

One of the things we must understand is that the people closest to this issue, the people who have worked the hardest are now people who, perhaps, have the least hope of all. I've heard from other ministers, and I've experienced myself, that some of the people who've been working on earth justice feel defeated. Many feel it is already too late to save the planet. One of the things we can do for them is to bring forward a response that gives them and others hope, one that's not dependent on the permission of government, that does not necessitate the authority of millionaires or the capital investment of billionaires.

Let's cause a revolt.

Let's solarize our churches, our houses, let's step off the grid whenever and wherever we can. Let's make commitments that will be challenging, but, at the same time, liberating, so we can stand in solidarity with all those groups and speak to a world of sustainable energy that will not further injure the earth. Let us gather up our "we" and do what is ours to do, even when things seem dismal, because that is where we can restore hope.

***9. How should the UUA and its congregations offer ministerial support for members of front-line impacted communities of the global climate crisis? What steps should the UUA take to be in greater solidarity with the front-line impacted communities of the global climate crisis?***

***Response by Rev. Alison B. Miller, Candidate for UUA President***

In this past year, we saw several congregations and donors generously support their minister's travel to North Dakota to stand with Standing Rock. As UUA President, I will encourage congregations to create a fund to be able to send their minister to front-line impacted communities, so that when faith leaders are called to show up, we can say "Yes!" more often. Indigenous people around the globe have been dislocated and disproportionately impacted by the human tendency to dominate nature rather than to live harmoniously with it. Native people have much to teach us about the spiritual work of resistance and resilience. Leaders across the UUA should look to the agenda of indigenous associations near their community to see where we can be allies and co-conspirators in the work of social change movements and climate justice.

The UU Trauma Response ministry is also a valuable human asset that we can develop to be able to send trained chaplains as companions through the most challenging crises. On a national level, we can look to develop a fund to defray the cost of experienced indigenous climate justice leaders traveling around the country/globe to a place where their wisdom would be of benefit to other indigenous leaders. We know that oppressions are linked and intersectional. When I was at Standing Rock, I heard many stories of the economic challenges of Native Americans. Right here in Morristown, I also hear the same from many of our Latin American immigrants who are indigenous people from the Americas. Empowering people of color to lead is an important part of our work towards reconciliation.

The UUA needs to reflect on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which have an eye towards the benefit of all of humanity, and to figure out what are the strategies we can best employ to make them a reality by the goal date of 2030. Even as we are campaigning for these goals, we need to do so in ways that amplify the voices and experiences of people of color and indigenous people within our congregations/covenanted communities and in the world beyond. As with any non-profit institution, we need to set priorities for when we commit to respond. The UUA, can set an agenda for between now and 2030 that our focus and activities around environmental justice, ecological justice, and climate justice will be determined by the agenda set by front-line impacted communities and our commitment to anti-oppression.

***Response by Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, Candidate for UUA President***

As Unitarian Universalists and the UUA, we must create more resources for training and supporting organizing efforts in local communities to support front-line impacted communities.

We also need to support rapid response efforts that amplify local work and develop partnerships for the long haul. We modeled this in Arizona, with the UUA bringing national support to the

local work in response to SB1070. This is replicable, even as there have been other times when our response has not been as immediate or sustained.

Social media can be more successfully used to bring national attention and support to communities that are already leaders in these efforts. We also need to show up publicly, consistently, spiritually and in a sustained way with partners, building power and impact over time.

This is an urgent time. The devastations of climate change are real and the context just got a lot more difficult. Now more than ever, we are being called to show up powerfully, boldly, lovingly and effectively for justice. If elected UUA President, I will be focused on articulating the clear and compelling calling of our faith for this time and developing the resources, financial and otherwise, to meet this moment.

***Response from Rev. Jeanne Pupke, Candidate for UUA President***

Historically, we've reached out to communities that have been marginalized and who have suffered from natural disasters, many of which were caused by the increased warming of the earth. But I'll just speak to one that I know. A couple of years ago, my congregation partnered with the Unitarian Church of Norfolk, which is a church that exists under a puddle, or a lake, or sometimes a flood, depending upon the tidal tables and the weather. It became routine for me to check the tide tables before I drove to work there. That says something about the way we have habituated ourselves to climate change.

We need to pay greater attention to who is being displaced, because we're not worried about the millionaires -- we're worried about the poor folks, the poor folks whose land is being flooded with salt water, the folks who have houses that wind up under water, the people on the barrier islands who can no longer farm because of rising seas. We need to do what we've done throughout our history, as we did with freed slaves 150 years ago, and stand with them.

We must focus in on areas where we can make a difference. We can't fix the whole globe, but we can make a difference in specific places where we focus our attention, and it makes the most sense to do that in places where we have history.

We need to do that assessment, identify our focus, and begin.