



Palo Alto Church Working to Save Shishmaref, Alaska

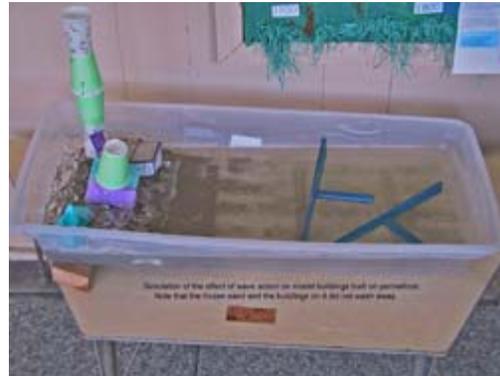
By Ben Hammett, UU Church of Palo Alto

At the Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto (UUCPA) the Green Sanctuary Committee's Action Plan Item # 8 is *Environmental Justice --The Impact of global warming on low-income people*. Under the leadership of committee member Ben Hammett, members of the congregation have been implementing their Plan by speaking out for Congress to provide financial aid to move the Alaskan village of Shishmaref. The community is built on a sand bar island that is eroding away due to the effects of Global Warming – including melting of the permafrost, shore ice and pack ice that have protected the land for over 4,000 years.

Ben has engaged members of the UUCPA congregation and reached out to community organizations like Acterra (the Palo Alto umbrella environmental organization), students at DeAnza College, and the UU Pacific Central District to participate in completing a petition to Senator Feinstein urging action to provide the \$180 million needed to move the 600 residents of the village to the Alaskan mainland.

Rev. Darcey Laine, Minister of Religious Education at UUCPA, worked with the Green Sanctuary Committee to extend the story of the village to the children of the congregation, thus meeting objectives in another area of the the Green Sanctuary Action Plan, Children's Environmental Education. The children learn social justice action in a program called Cool Deeds Days. For one of those Days, the story of Shishmaref became a very graphic demonstration of the impact of global warming on native populations.

Rev. Laine, Ben and volunteer parents provided information about the native Inupiat culture, the geology of the island, the effects of past storms, and the attempts



Simulation of Shishmaref after a winter storm with significant wave action. Houses on permafrost survived.

by the Army Corps of Engineers to build Hesco Basket sea walls. Then they led a hands-on demonstration by working with the children to build a simulation of the erosion effects of a winter storm on the island in Alaska.

With cereal boxes, colored paper, strawberry baskets, garden cloth, sand and water, they built three scenarios and tested the effects of waves. The children reported that houses built on permafrost or behind Hesco Baskets survived the storms, whereas those built on thawed sand toppled over or even washed into the "sea". (However, rising sea levels due to glaciers melting will eventually top the baskets.)

Following the action of adults in the congregation, the children wrote letters to California Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, requesting that they work with Congress to provide financial aid to move the villages to the Seward Peninsula mainland. In one younger child's letter, a drawing showed a house calling out "save me". The older kids were still so involved in letter writing that they did not appear for a while at *the Family Chapel* meeting. The minister proudly explained to the parents that they were still busy writing their Senators.

Hearing about the enthusiasm with which the children carried out the exercise, Deborah Williams, LLD, of Anchorage, and Previous Special Assistant to Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, when she was in charge of all Federal lands in Alaska, plans to use the demonstration with Alaskan school age children. For further information, Ms. Williams has a very comprehensive and frequently updated website focusing on the effects of global warming on Alaskan natives and environment, but also including general developments in the scientific knowledge and political and social progress in meeting this very serious global crisis. www.alaskaconservationsolutions.com ♦

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Leaning into the Light

“One must live in the middle of contradiction, because if all contradictions were eliminated at once life would collapse. There are simply no answers to some of the great pressing problems. You continue to live them out, making your life a worthy expression of leaning into the light.”
- Barry Lopez

This year, UU Ministry for Earth has experienced a greater visibility and level of activity than ever before. Presently, 120 UU congregations are either certified Green Sanctuaries, or official candidates. In the last 12 months, we have sold over 360 Green Sanctuary Manuals to interested UUs and others, and the need for our worship and religious education resources has jumped as well. We don't even know for sure how many congregations are working on Green Sanctuary applications at this point, but we hear informally about dozens.

This is great good news, and a challenge on several levels. In order to serve congregations and members, we need to support the journey- spiritual, educational, and administrative - of the burgeoning numbers of folks working hard to participate in the healing of the Earth. This includes those just getting started on the journey, as well as those farther down the road of the process. The Green Sanctuary certification program provides a good framework for congregations starting the journey, but how do we support ongoing spiritual inquiry and advocacy for those folks who are farther along?

The UU Ministry for Earth board is presently in a process of discernment of how to support the deepening and expanding of faith-based environmental advocacy within our denomination. What are the cutting-edge issues that need to be lifted up? We ponder how to support our members and congregations who “lean into the light” of the work, and to truly fulfill our mission: **To create a world in which all people make reverence, gratitude, and care for the living earth central to their lives.**

Surely, global warming is a central issue of concern, and we are working with congregations to provide resources for action. We are also in the midst of planning a national environmental justice conference to explore the connections between environment, race, and class. Right now, the issue of environmental justice has come to the forefront as a core area of focus for effective and broad-based social change. Paul Hawken, in his inspiring and illuminating new book *Blessed Unrest*, sees this intersection of environment and social justice as key to the healing of the world. He states, “No culture has ever honored its environment but disgraced its people, and conversely, no government can say it cares for its citizens while allowing the environment to be trashed”.

In the coming months, UU Ministry for Earth will be offering new resources for the ongoing journey of spirit-based environmental justice and advocacy. Look for new trainings, resources, and partnerships to support your congregation's work. We also will continue to work with the leadership of the UUA and other UU organizations to strengthen the web of the work, and to deeply integrate Earth spirituality and advocacy within the faith. We know that there are thousands of UUs dedicated to this work, and who are part of a vast grassroots network of healing and change. Thank you for your creativity, your spirited action, and your support. ♦

Barbara Ford, Chair, UUMFE

Green Wedding Celebration

by Nancy King Smith, Member of Board, UUMFE

There's no question that weddings can have huge footprints, both ecological and financial. Fortunately, as concern over the environment grows, newlyweds who want to make positive difference are turning towards greening their weddings.

Since our places of worship are often the focus of celebrations, both for members and for those drawn to non-creedal ceremonies, we have an opportunity as UU's to promote greening of wedding celebrations in our churches and to encourage environmentally thoughtful choices by the bride and groom.

My daughter and her now-husband had the opportunity to work with our own Minister for the Earth, Rev. Katherine Jesch, in planning their wedding in Portland last September. There were lots of touches that made it fit their environmental ethic in a way that was enjoyable for all. The invitations were designed on their own computer and printed on recycled paper with postcard replies rather than envelopes. The bride purchased her elegant gown at the Portland Brides' for Breast Cancer show where once-used gowns are donated then sold at reasonable prices with the proceeds going to breast cancer research. The ceremony and reception sites were selected with public transportation in mind and information was included in the invitation. From the light rail guests could walk or take a shuttle bus to the outdoor site for the ceremony, a lovely meadow in a local regional park. As a ritual in their ceremony, the couple chose to plant a tree in a pot, which they are keeping on their balcony until they have a home where they can plant it in their yard. The reading that accompanied the ritual highlighted the interconnectedness of the trees to other life in a forest - a metaphor for their connections in the community. The reception included a beautiful and delicious vegan buffet prepared by a local caterer (and a luscious vegan cake made by a talented relative) using mostly local ingredients.

There are increasing numbers of resources through books, magazines and the web to help. One of the best sites is:

<http://www.treehugger.com/files/2007/04/how-to-green-your-wedding.php>

From Earth and justice-friendly gold in their rings to eco-honeymoons, it is filled with things couples wishing to minimize their ecological footprints will want



Rev. Katherine Jesch with Haley Smith and Harrison Green-Fishback at their wedding celebration in Portland, Oregon

to consider as they plan a personal, creative, and sustainable celebration.

Other excellent resources are:

Websites

<http://www.thegreenguide.com/doc/114/party>

<http://www.greeneleganceweddings.com>

Books

Organic Weddings by Michelle Kozin

Green Weddings That Don't Cost the Earth,
by Carol Reed-Jones.

In addition to encouraging the bride and groom to be environmentally conscious in their decisions, UU churches have the opportunity to offer services that make it easy. Loaning or giving a book to a couple renting the church for a wedding might provide motivation. Congregations can develop checklists for events that have policies on recycling and composting, encourage use of washable, reusable items, suggest sources for local foods and items and offer guides to using public transportation. UUMFE is interested in knowing what your congregation might be doing to help reduce event impact—send your ideas along!♦

Autumn Reflections

I am hopeful that we will make enough of a difference that the world we leave for future generations will be what we are dreaming.

*By Rev. Katherine Jesch,
Director of Environmental Ministry and
Green Sanctuary Program Coordinator*

While looking for something else in my files recently, I came across my report on the Green Sanctuary Program from General Assembly in June 2001. We called it a “milestone year” for the program which had been launched in October 2000 when David Cockrell completed the second edition of the Green Sanctuary Manual. (The first edition was produced in 1991 as a concept with lots of great ideas but no implementation strategy.) When the Manual was complete David wanted to move on to other things, so I had volunteered for the task coordinating the program as soon as I graduated from seminary in May. I became the first (part time) staff person for the group a few months later. The report said we had distributed over 200 of the Manuals that year – the equivalent of a Best Seller we thought!

It was a hip-pocket / D.I.Y / make-it-up-as-you-go type of operation as we got the program launched. None of us had any idea of how to run such a program. Our mailing list was small and many addresses were obsolete. We had no relationships in the UUA, so we had no way to reach out to congregations, and we had no budget for a publicity campaign. A few people knew about the Green Sanctuary idea, but turning it into a *program* was new. We had about half a dozen congregations who applied to become candidates, but no one had yet completed the program for accreditation.

We’re in a very different milestone year in 2007, a mere six years later. We’ve accredited 61 congregations now, and the candidates are signing up in droves! In 2006, UUA Moderator Gini

Courter gave us unprecedented visibility when she allowed the first “public” presentation of Green Sanctuary certificates to a record number of 19 congregations on the plenary stage. That Assembly also saw the adoption of the Statement of Conscience on Global Warming passed overwhelmingly by the delegates. We’ve seen the results of that publicity this year. GS Manuals have been flying off the shelf at twice the previous year’s rate, and applications for candidacy seem to be multiplying almost as rapidly! From GA 2005 to GA 2006, we received 16 candidate applications; from 2006 to 2007 we received 34. In the first three months of the 2007-2008 year, we’ve already reviewed 20!

In 2001, I felt like I was climbing a mountain, trying to figure out how to make this program work. In 2007, I feel like a thousand-meter sprinter, hoping that next month maybe I’ll have a chance to catch up with my email! (If you don’t get a response from me, it means your message probably got buried under the mountain so please accept my apologies and write again!)

I spent most of Summer 2007 doing a major re-write of the Green Sanctuary Manual. The last revision was in 2003 and it has become abundantly clear that a very different type of information is needed. The new version more clearly lays out the conceptual framework for the program, and offers more guidance for involving congregation members, conducting a congregational assessment, and deciding what to include in an action plan. A new section we’ve added (now that we have so many accredited Green Sanctuaries) is how to live the legacy and maintain your accreditation. I’ll be contacting accredited congregations this fall to see how they’ve continued their commitments and how we can help them keep up the good work. Back orders for Fourth Edition were shipped during the first week of October.

More than 10% of the UU Congregations in the United States and Canada are either Green Sanctuaries or official candidates to become Green Sanctuaries.

In previous editions, GS committees have looked to the Manual for resources, references, and ideas for work on specific issues. You'll find in this new edition that we've removed the issue-related materials, but we will be updating and migrating that material to our website this fall as we expand and enrich its contents. Our plan is to make it accessible to everyone, not just the few people who happen to have a Manual on their book shelf.

We've also decided to "modernize" the format of this Manual; it will be distributed on CD with application forms and other materials you can download and edit. We are now asking for applications to be submitted by e-mail to make it easier to distribute to the review committees. Let me know if electronic submission creates a problem for you, but I think most will find that it simplifies and speeds up the process.

A major portion of my workload has always been direct consultation with congregations who are doing Earth ministry. I work with churches and fellowships without regard to their status in the Green Sanctuary Program, so don't hesitate to contact me about the work you're doing or wish to do. I'm also available for various programs, leading worship, facilitating workshops, and GS program consultation. I'm happy to work with you in a telephone conference format to address a specific challenge for your program, or I can lead all-day workshops on a variety of topics. I encourage collaboration with neighboring congregations for most of these programs, and I prefer to arrange more than one event during my visit (such as a worship service and a workshop or presentation), making it possible to spread the financial cost as well as the environmental costs of the travel. Contact me to find out what costs will be associated with my participation in your program.

I'm looking forward to another banner year with UU Ministry for Earth and the Green Sanctuary Program. As we see all the wonderful efforts across the continent, I am hopeful that we will make enough of a difference that the world we leave for future generations will be what we are dreaming.

With hope for the future,

Katherine ◆

Education + Justice = Green Sanctuary Congregation "Lights Up" Farming Community



The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Visalia, CA is donating a thousand light bulbs to the rural low-income community of London in Tulare County. Nearly half of the northern Tulare County farmworker community is below the poverty line according to the U.S. Census.

Congregation President April Hill reports, "We wanted to make an effort that would address two concerns at once. Our denomination believes that global warming is *the* moral issue of our time. At the same time, poverty has yet to be eradicated in our country, state, and especially here in Tulare County. We found a way to address both issues simultaneously by providing two compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) to each household in the community of London."

By providing the bulbs, the congregation realized that they could help low-income families learn that they could save more money in the long run by investing in the higher-cost bulbs. To facilitate this educational component, they provided English/Spanish information sheets from their local utility company on the cost benefits of using CFLs.

The Visalia congregation's "Green Sanctuary" committee chair, Harold Wood, comments, "Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs (CFLs) use up to 75% less energy than conventional bulbs. CFLs save \$60 a year in energy costs if you replace five regular incandescent light bulbs! We wanted to provide these cost-saving devices to a low-income community, both to help reduce their energy bills, while helping to reduce global warming emissions."◆

When it comes to Climate Change, “The Play’s the Thing!”

By Doug Stewart, UU Congregation of Santa Fe, NM

Polls indicate that while films such as “The Great Warming” and “An Inconvenient Truth” are making major contributions to public awareness about the climate change crisis, they do not appear to be sufficiently changing people’s habits, attitudes, and beliefs. To achieve true understanding of vital situations there is no real substitute for direct personal involvement, and, as a playwright, I believe there is nothing quite so powerful as a live theatre experience.



For that reason I’ve now written three plays with global warming/climate change themes with the intention of leaving audiences with an enjoyable dramatic outing, a much higher awareness of how our fossil fuel emissions are effecting precipitous changes in the world’s climate, and strengthened motivations to take mitigating action. A big order, it’s true, but that’s what theatre challenges are all about.

The first play, “Mother Earth”, is a court trial that can be easily adjusted for length and cast size depending upon how many witnesses Mother Earth chooses to have testify. Mother Earth has brought World’s People into the International Court of Last Resort, charging them with grievous personal harm and limiting her inherent civil rights to a fruitful existence, in what is now known as “Perhaps the most important trial in the history of civilization.” There are up to 10 witnesses available for her to call, including “Ms. Melting Glacier,” “Dri Drought,” “Coral Reef,” “Peat Boggs,” and “Hurricane Katrina.” The audience functions as the jury and must determine if Mother Earth has proven her case.

The play premiered as the center piece of the 2006 Earth Day services at First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque and has since been performed by congregations nationwide and by denominations ranging from Catholic to Quaker. Audience comments have also been very gratifying: *“[It is] difficult to mix humor with disaster. This play managed to do it.”* *“It is important to develop multiple approaches to the problem, and this play does that by developing an alternative rhetoric.”*

“Quiet Spring” and “Final Exam” are short plays – 12 minutes or so – with just two main characters each. “Quiet Spring,” features an elderly couple a number of years from now. The husband – according to his wife – has become sufficiently afflicted with hallucinating that on his cell phone he discusses global warming with the late Rachel Carson. The play initiated the 2006 National Catholic World Life Conference.

“Final Exam” takes place on the patio of the Heavenly Cafe, as Mother Earth and Saint Peter are having their morning ambrosia and discussing God’s concern with the increasingly difficult situation down on Earth and Mother Earth’s apparently active role in it. The play was performed during the Northwest Earth Institute’s national conference and the script was judged

one of the top five of 151 submissions in the 2007 short play competition at Ohio State University.

I call the style of all three plays “non-theatre theatre,” in that they are designed to be performed almost anywhere, by almost anyone. They require no special theatre equipment, the sets are simple and use easily available furniture and props, and as script-in-hand productions, they require virtually no memorization and very few rehearsals. The cast itself can be of any age that can read reasonably simple language, making it appealing to a very broad spectrum of potential performers and audiences.

The scripts are easily available to potential UU thespians, with “Mother Earth vs. World’s People” included in our UU Ministry for Earth “Global Warming Action Kit, Volume 1,” and “Final Exam” in Volume 2, both of which are available from:

<http://www.uuministryforearth.org/orderform.html>

After you perform a production, we would very much enjoy hearing about your experiences with it. We are tracking the number of performances and would love to count you in! For further information or assistance, please feel free to contact me at: stewart@rt66.com.

And break a leg! ♦

Covenant Group Considers Seventh Principle

by Judy Perry, First Parish in Framingham, MA

Six of the seven UU Principles focus on how we interact with each other and the larger human world. But the 7th Principle is about the interdependent web of ALL existence, calling us to affirm and promote the wellbeing of all living “things”/beings. As I read it, it's about the whole mystery of creation, about our place in it, about finding ourselves in an earth community of life on this planet as opposed to “using” nature.

The covenant group at First Parish in Framingham, MA explored each of the 7 UU Principles as a topic. We found The Seven Principles SGM Session Series developed by Rev. Charles Stephens and Judy Morgan of the UU Church of Washington Crossing and posted on the Small Group Ministry website very helpful for the first six principles. The website is:

(<http://www.smallgroupministry.net/public/sessions/index.html>)

The readings and questions provided for each Principle topic provoked thoughtful responses from our group. But the 7th Principle topic seemed to see the interdependent web as a people-only web, and for some others and myself the interdependent web of all existence bumps us into a much larger framework of space and time and relationship.

So I wrote a 7th Principle covenant topic for our group. We found that everyone easily had something to say: about love of a particular place and their experiences outdoors. One remembered his happiness in our town 50 years ago when there were dirt roads and woods everywhere, one remembered her “heyday” or her “heaven on earth” when she at 18 moved from Boston to Maine, lived in a log cabin in the wild woods and heard birds for the first time; another loves hiking and mountain climbing and is dreaming/planning to live deep in the woods next winter if she is not too old (in her 50's).

Another recalled her joy and freedom as a child to explore the estuaries and ponds in Maine. One 80-year-old told us about going off for a walk as a boy in Idaho to see the green side of the mountain. He lived in a smelting/mining (“dead”) town. His “walk” he said lasted two or three days. One person

People may not have used the words “love” and “joy” as they told their experiences, but you could see it in their faces and in the energy behind their words.

told of intimate encounters with south-flying Canada geese and a deer that were memorable for her. People may not have used the words “love” and “joy” as they told their experiences, but you could see it in their faces and in the energy behind their words.

The group felt we each had more to say on the topic, so we continued with it at our next meeting. In addition, because of our positive experience, I thought the larger congregation might enjoy it and offered to lead a summer worship service- as a covenant group experience. People were seated in a circle. Instead of a sermon, I explained covenant group talking and listening procedures, introduced the topic, then chose 3 of the 7th Principle topic questions to pose to them, one at a time.

We had great participation from the group, I added a story of two of my own, and many people commented that they really enjoyed this service. Two of the readings included with the topic as developed are actually music from the CD “Hymnody of Earth”, consisting of poems by Wendell Berry set to music by Malcolm Dalglish. These made a nice transition into and out of the spoken contributions from people.

If Covenant Groups or Small Group Ministry are part of your congregation, perhaps your group will want to explore the Seventh Principle. The outline of the session can be found on the UUMFE website

www/uuministryforearth.org . ♦

The Seventh Principle

*We, the member congregations of the Unitarian
Universalist Association, covenant to affirm
and promote....*

**Respect for the Interdependent web of
all existence of which we are a part.**



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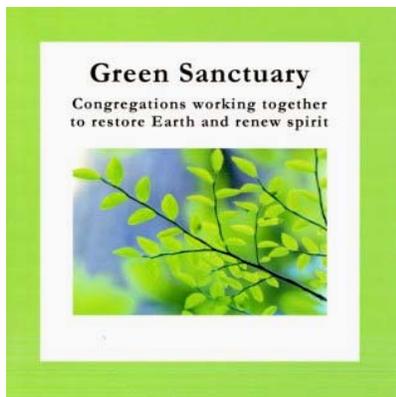
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