

## UUMFE Announces 2009 Earth Day Resources

*Environmental Justice* is the theme of  
UU Ministry for Earth's second annual  
Earth Day Resource.

As UUs, we are called to articulate the interface between our understanding of our place in the natural world and the daunting political, social and economic issues of our time. We call this interface Environmental Justice, justice which pursues simultaneously the protection of natural systems and the ecological health of human communities – especially communities of the poor, minorities, and indigenous peoples.

UUMFE Resources for Earth Day 2009 will make it easy for your congregation to:

- Learn about environmental justice and participate in one or more national actions being coordinated by UUMFE, the UUA Office for Advocacy and Witness, and UUSC.
- Bring Van Jones and his 2008 Ware Lecture to your congregation via DVD at a special Earth Day price.
- Honor an Eco-Hero in your congregations and nominate them for the UUMFE *Guardians of the Future Award 2009*.
- Educate your members about UU Ministry for Earth and encourage support for this vital UUA Affiliate organization through congregational and individual memberships
- Take a special offering or shared-plate collection for UUMFE.
- Save money when purchasing our newest publication, *Environmental Justice: A Guidebook For Understanding And Action* by Rev. Katherine Jesch, at a special Earth Day price. Available in late Spring. ♦

Visit the UUMFE website after February 17 and click on the **Earth Day 2009** button to learn more, to purchase the Van Jones DVD, and to download the following free resources:

- Cover for Earth Day Sunday Order of Service
- Certificate of recognition for congregational honoree
- 7 beautiful posters to print and display
- UUMFE membership form and brochure
- Nomination form for UU Ministry for Earth *Guardians of the Future Award*

[www.uuministryforearth.org](http://www.uuministryforearth.org)

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Unitarian Universalist  
Ministry for Earth

Unitarian Universalist  
Ministry for Earth  
NEWSLETTER  
is published three times  
per year by

UU Ministry for Earth  
1034 SW 13th Ave.  
Portland, OR 97205.

The points of view expressed by contributors are their own and not necessarily those of UU Ministry for Earth.

Subscriptions are available through membership in the organization.

The printed version of this NEWSLETTER uses 100% post-consumer content recycled paper.

### ABOUT UUMFE

Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth is a nonprofit organization whose membership envisions a world in which all people make reverence, gratitude, and care for the living Earth central to their lives.

Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth is a 501(c)3 organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

### UUMFE BOARD

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## from the Board

### RAISING ALL VOICES, LIFTING ALL BOATS

Recently, we conducted an online survey to get feedback and learn your opinions about our work in the denomination. We offer great thanks to the almost three hundred of you who responded. Some of the information was surprising, some not so much, but we will take this information forward as we continue to plan for “UU Ministry for Earth: The Next Generation”.

The first surprise... only 22 percent of the respondents were under the age of fifty. This may be skewed a bit by some element of the survey, or by the general active UU population, but seems to be some indication of a need for programming to connect to the younger generation of UUs. Another surprising piece of information is that only eight percent of respondents visit our website on a regular basis for news and resources.

We hope to not only be “The Voice”, but also to lift up the Community of Voices in our faith in new and creative ways.

Feedback on Ministry for Earth’s programming priorities was very positive. *Ninety percent* of you indicated that environmental justice, and resources to support your work in it, was an important priority. Slightly lower numbers indicate that our resources for religious education, Earth spirituality, and sustainable living were considered valuable.

So, while our mission seems to be clearly supported, we have some work to do to broaden and engage our audience. The UU Ministry for Earth board just met in Houston to plan for some new ways of engaging the denomination in the work of Earth Ministry. We have long been cited as “the voice of UU environmental values”. As more UUs are actively working on Earth concerns, both in their congregations, and in their lives, we hope to not only be “The Voice”, but also to lift up the Community of Voices in our faith in new and creative ways. You will see in this newsletter resources and ideas for environmental justice work and religious education which will support the lifting of all voices for our faith’s Seventh Principle.

Environmental justice work, which “lifts all boats” in these perilous times, clearly needs more of us educated and engaged. This will take creativity, spiritual grounding, and community. The leadership of UU Ministry for Earth will be announcing some new changes in programming, communications, training, and resources in the coming months to support us all in our deeply held desire to be a part of the healing of our world.

For the Earth,  
*Barbara Ford*  
UU Ministry for Earth Board Chair ♦





## A Response by Rev. Peter Morales

*In our Fall Newsletter, we posed seven questions to UUA Presidential Candidates **Rev. Peter Morales** and **Rev. Laurel Hallman** to better understand their ideas about theology, environment, and the role of the UUA and its President. In this issue we present the response from Rev. Morales. We hope to publish a response from Rev. Hallman in our spring newsletter in May.*

*1. What do you see as the role of UUA President in Faith-based advocacy and witness for social and environmental justice?*

The UUA President is the most visible spokesperson for our faith. The president has more access to Unitarian Universalists than any other person. The president must be a powerful advocate for environmental and social justice. My congregation and I have a long track record in this regard. Jefferson Unitarian was one of the early churches to become a Green Sanctuary. We currently have a Green Task Force and an Ethically Eating Task Force. We are helping lead an interfaith effort for green economic development in the greater Denver area. Personally, I have been involved on the UUSC's ministerial advisory board and have helped lead two human rights study delegations to Chiapas, Mexico and to Guatemala (both cases where environmental destruction has gone hand in hand with oppression of indigenous peoples).

*2. What do you see as the specific ministry needs for people struggling with despair and confusion related to environmental crisis?*

The struggle for an adequate response to the environmental crisis can be disheartening. We need to remind ourselves that this is a long struggle. We must work together and support and encourage one another. We must celebrate our successes. We should take inspiration from other struggles (anti-slavery, women's suffrage, civil rights) where the conflict was long but where justice prevailed. This is such a struggle. Among ourselves we must listen with compassion, yet never allow ourselves to give in to despair or bitter self-righteousness.

*3. What are the priority issues you see for the growth and transformation of our faith?*

We absolutely must grow our faith. I have always seen this as a moral imperative, not a matter of growth for the sake of growth. People need religious community. Hundreds of thousands (at the very least) are actively searching for a progressive spiritual home. I have led one of our fastest growing congregations and have been a national leader in practical and effective growth efforts for a decade. We absolutely can grow our faith. It is a matter of unleashing the idealism and compassion of our people.

*4. Given recent organizational changes (specifically, the dis-affiliation of many UU groups with the UUA), what relationship do you envision between the UUA and the grassroots advocacy groups active within our faith?*

I believe the Association needs to rethink disaffiliation. As a former member of the Board of Trustees, I can sympathize with the Board's desire to move away from direct oversight of dozens of groups. However, there are other alternatives. Specifically, we need a category of relationship to groups like UUMFE—groups that clearly espouse our fundamental values.

*5. What is your understanding of/connection to eco-theology?*

The answer to this question could fill a volume. Very briefly, every religious tradition on which we draw has a reverence for life. We are a part of an intricate web of life. Every tradition on which we draw teaches that the ultimate expression of our spirituality is our action. Deep spirituality leads to action in the world. A deep reverence for life, love of nature's complex beauty and sense of intimate connection with the cosmos leads inevitably to a commitment to work for environmental and social justice.

*6. What kind of institutionalized support, if any, should the UUA give to congregations in the honoring of the Seventh Principle?*

The UUA has many ways of supporting environmental stewardship and environmental justice. We can draw attention to it in our many communications. We can provide support materials. We can help congregations network. We can help congregations fund raise to reduce the carbon footprint of their buildings. Probably the most effective support is in consistently lifting up environmental concerns in our communications.

*7. What leadership role, if any, do you see yourself and the UUA playing in interfaith work on environmental issues?*

We cannot separate environmental issues from issues of social justice, racism, and economic justice. This must be an interfaith effort if it is going to be strong and effective. I already have a track record on interfaith work (board of trustees of the Colorado Interfaith Alliance, chair of the public policy commission). I was an ardent advocate of environmental responsibility when I was a newspaper publisher in Oregon. As I write this, members of my congregation are working on a local interfaith initiative based on the work of Van Jones. ♦

# ethical eating

2008 -2010  
Congregational  
Study/Action Issue

## Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice

### Issue

Religious organizations throughout the world have discussed the production, distribution, and use of food. Some people enjoy many food choices while others remain hungry. The food industry produces wealth, but small farmers and farm workers are often poor. Food production and transportation contribute to many environmental problems.

### Possible Congregational Topics

- Religious teaching about food
- Environmental concerns, animal rights, human rights
- Poverty, hunger, nutrition, health
- Congregational purchase and use of food

### Possible Congregational Action

- Support sustainable agriculture
- Volunteer in hunger projects
- Advocate for social and economic justice for those who produce and distribute food

### Early Key Dates

11/1/2008 - Study Guide was posted online

3/1/2009 - Initial Congregational comments due to UUA for input to upcoming workshops

6/24-28/2009 General Assembly workshops

### Additional Dates and Information

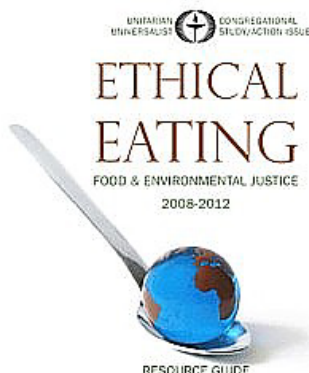
<http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/issuesprocess/currentissues/55648.shtml> ♦

## Genesis of "Ethical Eating" Study/Action Issue

by Rev. Robert Murphy, minister, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship  
of Falmouth, Massachusetts

The members of Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth, Massachusetts place the food conversation in a religious context. We're a religious organization, so this seems very appropriate. We ask people, "Why is food so important in all of the great religious traditions? What do the Muslims, and the Buddhists, and the Jews and the Christians, and others, say about food issues?"

The Falmouth fellowship is the congregation that introduced the Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI) known as "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice." The new CSAI was introduced for two reasons. First: The Falmouth fellowship is eager to bring Unitarian Universalist congregations into the "environmental justice" conversation that's developing in several parts of the world. Second: The congregation supports a down-to-earth discussion with opportunities for both religious reflection and constructive action. Food is a global theme that brings a variety of groups together.



We talk about the production, distribution, and use of food, including the ritual use. The Hindu and the Jewish dietary laws are famous, so they receive some attention. However, there are other religious teachings that are also important. Jewish tradition has a lot to say about caring for the land and feeding the hungry. The Buddha and Jesus of Nazareth were two religious radicals who traveled around the countryside, breaking bread with all sorts of people, and, sometimes, they engaged in acts of radical hospitality that involved food.

The conversation moves to Unitarian Universalist experience. Church leaders have said that, "Unitarian Universalists don't have any food-related creeds or dietary laws." In some respects, that's true. We don't have creedal tests and we respect individual beliefs. However, many congregations, probably most, have rules that govern the purchase and use of food and beverages. Some Unitarian Universalist groups require the use of "fair trade" coffee at church events. In some congregations, the distribution of candy and junk food is restricted. There may be different rules for adults and for children. Recycling and composting are required in many churches. In some places, the use of throwaway cups and plates is prohibited. Ceramic coffee mugs and ceramic plates are required.

Some Unitarian Universalist groups prohibit the use of alcohol on church property. In a few churches, the use of meat products is prohibited or actively discouraged. Vegetarian meals are served at church suppers and lunches. Even the smallest fellowships, with very limited resources, have to ask, "What's the right way to manage food?"

In the larger world, many groups are involved with food-related activities. For decades, clergy have expressed concern about the rights of farm workers and other workers who are employed in the food industry. Often, the issues of racial justice, economic justice, and environmental justice are joined together. Because most of the farm workers in North America are people of color, they get a double dose of pollution. They're exposed to high levels of pollution in the labor camps where they live, and, then, they go into the fields to be exposed to

(continued on Page 5)

## film review

# THE ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT OF WAR

by Carolyn MacDonald, All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, Kansas City, MO

**Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives: The Environmental Footprint of War** is a 2008 feature-length documentary that describes the interconnection between war and the environment – both issues of great importance to Unitarian Universalists.

In the words of filmmakers **Alice and Lincoln Day**, “What prompts this film is recognition of our deep dependence on nature and the threat to nature posed by war. When we make war we destroy not only the enemy, we also destroy our earth. The environment is war’s silent casualty.”

The film includes interviews with thirteen specialists from a variety of fields. It visits many countries impacted by war, illustrating how war in all its stages – preparation, combat, and cleanup – leaves a huge environmental footprint. But this enormous damage to the environment is largely underestimated and often ignored. There are limits to our ecosystem’s capacity to recover from such severe damage. And war in all its stages diverts money and natural and intellectual resources away from social and environmental concerns.

Familiar as well as less familiar examples are included. Wild pistachio woodlands provided an important part of pre-war income in Afghanistan. However, massive deforestation during war largely removed this source of income. The commercial oil tanker Exxon Valdez is infamous because of its massive oil spill twenty years ago. But few realize that the South Pacific contains more than 300 oil tankers sunk during World War II. Unless action is taken, they will continue to deteriorate and begin releasing huge amounts of oil in 25 to 65 years.

The final message of the film is hopeful. Although it will be difficult, we can change our ways. We have the resources and the knowledge to transition to a sustainable future. We must take action now.

This documentary is more affordable than most. A DVD can be purchased for \$19.95, with no additional fee required for a church screening. However, donations to The Fund For Sustainable Tomorrows are appreciated. For more information, visit the website [www.fundforsustainabletomorrows.org](http://www.fundforsustainabletomorrows.org)

*Editor’s Note: Line 104 of the draft Statement of Conscience on Peacemaking (downloadable at <http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/issuesprocess/currentissues/peacemaking/index.shtml>) proposes that UUs covenant to act in the wider community in reducing the causes of structural violence through “Supporting Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth in adopting life styles and policies that promote harmony with our natural environment.” ♦*



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## Genesis of “Ethical Eating” Study/Action Issue - continued from Page 4

pesticides and other toxics. It's dangerous work. The irony is that many farm workers are poor and many struggle to put food on their family tables.

Animal rights activists, consumer rights activists, and environmentalists have other food-related concerns that need to be mentioned. When you get involved with food-related issues, look around to see what's happening in your region. In some ways, the situation in Arizona is very different from the situation in Maine, but every town has its hungry people. On the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, some Unitarian Universalists discuss the future of commercial fishing. Is it safe to eat seafood? Will the oceans of the world be a source of cheap protein for future generations? On Cape Cod, home of the Falmouth congregation, these are major concerns.

You and your friends may ask, "What can we actually do that will be helpful?" There's a need for religious societies to understand their values and food-related practices. As Unitarian Universalists go into the larger world, we have opportunities to engage in both advocacy work and human services work. I hope that every church will do a bit of both.

Think about the opportunities for direct service. Some congregations help community food pantries while others are involved with local soup kitchens, meals on wheels programs, and community gardening. Then, look at the opportunities for advocacy work. Talk with local farmers, with environmentalists, with advocates for the elderly, and with other groups that have food-related concerns. Try to bring different groups together. For example, you might ask, "How do we get locally produced food to people who need some help?"

Get involved with some good projects. Then, encourage some discussions and some spiritual reflection. What lessons have you learned as people of faith? What's helpful in your congregation and in your community? Share a meal with each other. Be generous with each other. This is how congregations grow. The Buddha and Jesus of Nazareth and the prophet Mohammad and generations of Jewish parents and grandparents will agree. The message is simple, "Nurture the spirit, help heal our world." ♦

from our members

## HOBBS FARM – A Miracle, Seeing the Connections

*by Pat Killian, Membership Chair, UU Fellowship at Stony Brook, Setauket, New York*

**This story is about farming, miracles and the connections to the Earth.**

Hobbs Farm is a 13-acre historically black owned farm in central Suffolk County, New York. The Hobbs family came to Long Island from Alabama in 1906 and grew farm vegetables for local Long Islanders for 3 generations.

Albert Hobbs' joy in life was watching things grow and in helping others. One neighbor talked to me with great affection of how Mr. Hobbs loaned him money to buy his first house and when times became hard and the man had trouble paying the loan back, Albert Hobbs told him not to worry about the money. Young people (now adults with their own children of various ages) of the area talked about how they wanted to work on Hobbs Farm more than working at the mall or at McDonalds. Mr. Hobbs was quoted as saying even as a retired farmer he grew enough food to help feed people in the Setauket, the birds and "thieves" who stole his vegetables. He didn't begrudge the "thieves" the vegetables because he believed they must have needed the food more than him.

The farm was bequeathed by Albert Hobbs in 1996 to Bethel AME Church, a very small Christian congregation in Setauket, NY. Although Bethel AME wanted to honor Mr. Hobbs' wishes for the land to remain a farm, it struggled with what to do with the property, and found it difficult to shoulder the financial tax burdens that the property represented. Eastern Long Island still has quite a few farms; however, the farms in Central Suffolk County like Hobbs Farm have become a sea of subdivisions and shopping opportunities. Before the recent real estate crash, the property could well have brought as much as \$300,000 per acre, or nearly \$4 million. But for the vision and faith of Bethel's Pastor, the **Reverend Gregory Leonard**, and others of faith, the property might have been sold.

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship at Stony Brook (UUFBS) is located only about 2 miles from Hobbs Farm. UUFBS exchanges pulpits with the Bethel AME during Black History Month, invites them to many a breakfast during that month, and we have referred to them as our "sister" congregation. However, Bethel's Hobbs Farm dilemma did not come to the attention of UUFBS until about 4 years ago, just as UUFBS was getting started with its Green Sanctuary program. When **Stefani Scott**, the Green Sanctuary co-chair, introduced

the Green Sanctuary program to **Tom Lyons**, another member of the Long Island Interfaith Community, he immediately saw possibilities for an eco-social justice project involving the farm. Tom, a Methodist, is also the Long Island Heifer Int'l representative. The Hobbs Farm project encompassed many worthy goals, including the preservation of open space, providing a source of local, organic vegetables for lower income people and preserving an important piece of local black history.



UUFBS members attended work parties at the farm to help Bethel clean up the property, including a dilapidated barn, and a small gutted farmhouse. Through UUFBS's Social Action committee, the farm was designated as the recipient of our social betterment collection on several occasions, raising over \$2,000 for the farm.

The increased activity on the property attracted quite a bit of interest in the surrounding community. Meetings regarding the farm began to be attended by people representing neighbors, civic groups, other Interfaith groups (including individuals from various other churches), and the principal of a nearby elementary school - as well as town legislators.

This past year, approximately 2 acres of property were planted. Local businesses provided labor for fixing the house and materials to improve the farm. UUFBS members collaborated with many other Interfaith groups to help with the planting, weeding, harvesting and fundraising. An estimated 20,000 pounds of chemical free vegetables were delivered to local soup kitchens and pantries. Everyone says that this amount  
*(continued on Page 7)*

# THE HIDDEN LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS

by Claudia Kern, Member, Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth Board

We give them to say, "I love you" or "I'm sorry". We put a bouquet on the table when company comes or cheer ourselves up with a bunch from the Farmer's Market. In my congregation, flowers are an important component of our Sunday worship. Members are invited to remember a loved one or to celebrate important events in their lives by bringing flowers for our services. These flowers help us to consecrate or "make sacred" the multipurpose room in which we gather for services, helping to transform a school auditorium into our "church" and reminding us of our connection with the natural world.

I love best the big blowsy bouquets gathered in armfuls from gardens and meadows. They seem especially joyful, and they are a bargain! Often they come with a bug or two, and sometimes a few petals are less than perfect. So much the better! Best of all, I know that growing them has not produced lasting toxic effects on workers and on the Earth.

The majority of commercially available cut flowers are grown in Latin America and Africa, in industries employing mostly women working without benefits and with forced overtime when holidays roll around and flowers are in demand. They are grown in greenhouses or under broad tents to keep in pesticides including up to 20 percent pesticides that are banned in the US. The chemicals get on worker's clothes, in their skin and lungs, and are carried out of the greenhouses to their homes. Pesticides also contaminate the soil and seep into water supplies. Studies in Costa Rica have indicated that 50 percent of floriculture workers show symptoms of pesticide poisoning, and rates of miscarriage and birth defects are higher in areas surrounding flower farms.

When next you need a poxy of flowers here are some alternatives to consider:

- Gather flowers, branches, and evergreens from your garden. Mother Nature is the best florist!
- Buy locally grown flowers. Even if they are not "organic" they didn't fly here on a plane and they were probably grown without the chemical soup applied to flowers shipped in from overseas
- For the winter "blahs" and special holiday occasions like Valentine's Day, you may be able to find locally-grown tulips, lilies, and poinsettias even when your gardens are asleep.
- Consider ordering organic and/or fair trade flowers from online vendor such as [Organicstyle.com](http://Organicstyle.com) for a special occasion or for when only a dozen roses will do. Ask your local florist to carry certified organic fair-trade flowers.
- Learn more by visiting these websites: [veriflora.org](http://veriflora.org) or [transfairusa.org](http://transfairusa.org) ♦



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## Hobbs Farm - continued from Page 6

of harvest is a miracle on such few acres. This year even with the economic crisis, the Township of Brookhaven has made a bid to buy the property for approximately \$600,000 to keep it a farm with Albert Hobbs' vision. I am working with Tom Lyons and Bethel AME on making the farm a non-profit organization so that we can expand and plant more acres and start nutritional and educational programs.

All the people who gave time, materials and money were of different visions, faiths and beliefs, but they worked together planting seeds and growing life. They ate together after getting their hands dirty harvesting crops, and laughed and celebrated together. And found that they really weren't so different at the core. Maybe that is the real miracle of Hobbs Farm.

See the **UUA CSAI: Ethical Eating** on the web at

[www.uua.org/socialjustice/issuesprocess/currentissues/ethicaleating/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/issuesprocess/currentissues/ethicaleating/index.shtml)

Suggested actions for congregations are to support local farms, community gardens and local food kitchens.

This particular Interfaith project connects UUA

CSAI Ethical Eating, UUMFE visions and many of the UUSC initiatives.

**Pat Killian** is both the former president and former treasurer of UUFBS, a lawyer, and a song writer in his "other" life. His CD called "Saltwater" was made in Nashville with some very famous musicians and is available on the web at CD Baby, iTunes and Rhapsody.

**Stefani Scott** is a worship associate for UUFBS, and serves on various committees, including the Social Action, the Religious Education (RE), and the Sunday Flower Committees. As a science teacher for 30 years, she has written innovative science curricula in both Regents Biology and in Math Science and Technology. Stefani has written RE curriculum for UUFBS was honored with the UUMFE Guardian of the Future award in 2008. Stefani has donated two RE courses to UUMFE:

**We Are All Connected - 7<sup>th</sup> Principle Butterfly Creepy Crawlies** was published in 2008

**We Are All Connected - Sounds of Nature** will be published in Spring, 2009.

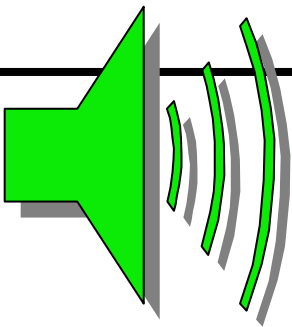
Photo courtesy Hobbs Farm website: [www.hobbsfarm.info](http://www.hobbsfarm.info) ♦



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# COMING SOON !

## 2009 Earth Day Resources

Check the UUMFE website  
after Feb. 17th

- 7 beautiful Posters
- UUMFE Order of Service cover
- Certificate for your local Eco-Hero
- ... and more.

[www.uuministryforearth.org](http://www.uuministryforearth.org)

