

Application for Green Sanctuary Accreditation

Congregation Information

Date of submission:	February 11, 2015
Congregation Name, City and State	Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville Rockville Maryland
Address	100 Welsh Park Drive, Rockville, MD 20850
Web site	http://www.uucr.org/
Green Sanctuary contacts For Accreditation applic	Mary Lanigan and Terrie Barr, Co-Chairs, 2010-2104
Address	301 High Gables Dr., Apt. 408, Gaithersburg, MD 20878 (Mary) 11808 Hayfield Court, Potomac, MD 20854 (Terrie)
Phone	240-687-0517 (Mary), 301-279-9292 (Terrie)
Email	malanigan1@comcast.net, terriebarr@comcast.net
Green Sanctuary contacts Going Forward	Matthew Beyers and Julia Santerre, Co-Chairs, 2014-
Address	19831 Wheelwright Dr, Montgomery Village, MD 20886 (Matt) 7 Sky Blue Court, Germantown, MD, 20874 (Julia)
Phone	301-740-1994 (Matt), 301-310-4990 (Julia)
Email	matt_beyers@yahoo.com, julia.santerre@gmail.com
Minister or Congregation Leader	Rev. Lynn Thomas Strauss

Congregation Profile –

Please briefly describe significant changes since your application for candidacy.

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville (UUCR) was founded in 1956 as an offspring of the Unitarian Church of Montgomery County (now Cedar Lane UU Church. Initially called the Rockville Unitarian Center, the church incorporated as the Unitarian Church of Rockville (UCR) in 1959. The congregation voted in 1999 to add the word Universalist to the name, becoming the Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockville. In 2012, the congregation voted

to change its name from church to congregation, becoming the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville.

UUCR sits on six acres in a suburban setting purchased in 1961 and is within the Rockville city limits. Rockville is the county seat for Montgomery County, a county known for progressive policies and good schools in the Washington, D.C. suburbs. UUCR is one of 25 UU churches in the Washington, D.C. – Baltimore metro area.

UUCR has grown in membership from 352 in July 2012 when we submitted our application for Green Sanctuary Candidacy to 394 in January 2015, a gain of 42 new members. The enrollment in Religious Education classes for children and youth has changed from 143 in 2012 to 123 in 2015, due in large measure to how RE enrollment is determined. With the growth in numbers has come a growth in energy and vibrancy.

UUCR has a staff of twelve. The Senior Minister Rev. Lynn Strauss has served the congregation since 2005. The congregation hired its first Assistant Minister in September 2014 to assist with expanded programming to meet the needs of a growing congregation. September saw additional staff transitions with the resignation of the Director of Religious Education who had served the congregation for 29 years and the Youth Coordinator who had served for 5 ½ years. An Interim Youth Coordinator was hired in December 2014 and Interim Director of Religious Education (DRE) in January 2015 while the Religious Education Transition Team develops a plan for permanent RE staffing.

Rev. Strauss has expanded her ministry to include leadership and participation in county wide efforts to build bridges with religious leaders from other faiths. UUCR has hosted meetings of the Montgomery County Interfaith Working Group. She is also a member of the Montgomery County Clergy Response Team that seeks to provide support and a religious response to hate violence. This effort has served to broaden UUCR's presence within the larger community.

Through Rev. Strauss' efforts, UUCR hosted the formal launch of the Montgomery County Food Security Collaborative in October 2014. The group is working together to significantly reduce hunger in Montgomery County by 2020. UUCR has also gained much visibility in the community by creating the Rainbow Youth Alliance (RYA) in 2006 as a safe place for LGBTQ teens and their allies in Montgomery County to gather to ask questions, find mutual support, and learn information pertinent to their lives.

See Application for Green Sanctuary Candidacy at http://www.uucr.org/sites/default/files/SJ_GreenSanctuary_Application_for_UUA_062612.pdf for a more complete congregation profile as of 2012. Only an update is required here.

Congregational Vote

Please attach documentation of your congregation's vote to seek Green Sanctuary certification (e.g., Annual Meeting minutes). Include the specific statement the congregation voted on.

A congregational vote was taken at the Mid Year Congregational meeting on February 8, 2015 and the following statement was approved. The Minutes of the meeting are attached.

“We, members of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville (UUCR), recognizing that the congregation has completed our Green Sanctuary Action Plan, authorize submission of our application to the UUA requesting that UUCR be accredited as a Green Sanctuary congregation.

We understand that completing the Action Plan is a strong start to our ongoing work to integrate environmental awareness, sustainable practices, and environmental justice into our community life. Recognizing that the journey is a continuous and sometimes difficult process, we pledge our willingness to continue to deepen our spiritual interconnectedness with all existence of which we are a part, to expand our knowledge of environmental and environmental justice issues, and to make environmentally appropriate choices in our actions and decisions in the future.

As members of this congregation and participants in the Green Sanctuary program, we pledge our encouragement to one another in a personal and congregational commitment to preserve and protect the health, vitality, beauty, and diversity of this planet Earth for future generations. We commit to live out the 7th UU principle--respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

UU Identity and Spirituality

Please outline how your GS work was affected by being grounded in UU Identity and Spirituality. Also state how doing GS work affected your UU Identity and Spirituality (individuals, GS team and/ or congregation)

Our Green Sanctuary work was affected by being grounded in UU Identity and Spirituality through five of our seven Principles. The 7th Principle, “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part,” was paramount. The first and third Principles - 1) The inherent worth and dignity of every person and 3) Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations - were also pertinent. Our spiritual orientation shaped how we live our principles and respond to the interdependent web of existence.

In addition, two of the six sources of Unitarian Universalism guided us:

- “Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life.”
- “Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions, which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.”

The UUMFE curriculum, *Our Place in the Web of Life*, deepened the connections between UU theology, spiritual practices and the work of environmental justice. It was the perfect preparation for the two years of work on our 12 projects. It was key to our understanding that our deep commitment to the quest for justice and environmentalism are interconnected. This commitment is reflected in our second Principle, “Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.”

Through the UUMFE environmental justice curriculum *Our Place in the Web of Life*, we learned that we are connected to others even if they are invisible to us. For example, people who live near the mountains that have had their tops removed to get coal for the Dickerson Power Plant that powers UUCR. We identified many people who had been previously invisible to us in our

use of resources and disposal of waste. We continued throughout these 2 years to discover that our neighbor is a wider circle of people. We are guided in this by our first Principle. In addition, we understand that caring for the Earth and all of its inhabitants is a critical ingredient in building true justice. We used data to explore the impact of our congregation on the planet and we shared it with the congregation so that individuals and the institution would choose greener ways.

The fifth principle: “The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large” was reflected in the thoughtful discussions surrounding pursuit of this accreditation and the congregational vote that approved that pursuit.

Our world view and moral values motivated us to actively participate in our local social and political systems. We were called to reexamine our daily patterns of living: how we live, what and how much we consume.

As religious pluralists, we worked with UUs, interfaith organizations and nonprofits, including our environmental justice partner. We know without a doubt that we are all in this together. All of these groups, in their own ways, recognize and celebrate the interdependent web. We found common ground and understand that interfaith and intercultural cooperation is needed to solve global problems.

To do this work, we acknowledged that a healthy spiritual life balances action with reflection. In our faith community we turned to worship, celebration, study, reflection, prayer, and meditation to keep up the quest for a just and sustainable future for all beings. We learned that when pursuing matters of social justice and the environment, it is important to be patient, take a long view, and constantly educate and explain the benefits to stakeholders – members of the congregation, relevant congregation committees, Board of Trustees, Minister and staff. We are grateful for the participation and leadership of so many in our congregation and in the community. We are humbled by the enormity of the task and hopeful too.

We acknowledge the things we cannot change and ask for courage to change the things that we can change. We feel our connection to all living things and accept that not all do. We have offered opportunities for rediscovering wonder and will continue to. We are grateful for the Green Sanctuary program putting us in solidarity with thousands of other Unitarian Universalists across the country. Green Sanctuary has helped our congregation develop and work toward a vision of a more just, healthier, and more sustainable future.

Peter Morales, President of the UUA wrote in the fall 2014 issue of the UU World: “The great challenge of the coming generations is preservation of sustainable human life on earth. Climate change looms as a threat to all of us. The potential effects are devastating, especially to hundreds of millions of the world’s poorest people. Our religious challenge, now as always, is to help change hearts and minds. People need to see and feel our interconnection. They need to see what they are doing to their children and grandchildren.” This religious challenge inspires our actions now and in the future.

Completion of Action Plans in 4 Areas

1. Worship and Celebration Projects (2 required. Show how they are relevant to the different age groups present in your congregation. One should be ongoing for the foreseeable future.)

Project Title: Environmentally Themed Worship Services

Project Description in Action Plan: Two or more environmentally themed adult worship services will be held each year. One for Earth Day focusing on stewardship and a second summer service focused on earth centered spirituality. Children's and Youth worship will also have one or two services per year with an environmental theme of their choice. Special evening services to recognize and celebrate the Winter and Summer solstice as well as Autumnal and Spring (Vernal) equinox will be continued.

Actions Completed:

- Our Minister began incorporating themes of water scarcity, conservation and sustainability into the annual water ceremony at the Ingathering service each September. She has also preached on *Environmental Justice* on Earth Day, *Kitchens and Gardens*, *Walking as Spiritual Practice*, *Greening the Spirit: Theologies of Liberation*, *Holy Earth*, and *Loving the Earth*.
- The Green Team has sponsored guest preachers to bring an added perspective. Joelle Novey, Director of Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light (GWIPL) preached on *Confronting Noah and Ourselves: A Religious Response to Climate Change* in March 2013. The service was followed by an environmental forum to introduce our environmental justice project with Groundwork Anacostia. Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb from Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation, a local model "green" congregation, spoke on *Blue, Green, and Holy: Labor Day, Environmental Awareness, and Spiritual Community* in September 2014.
- The Worship Arts Committee has continued to organize an evening worship celebration of the vernal equinox (spring), summer solstice, autumnal equinox, and winter solstice to remind us of our connection to the Earth in ritual, poetry, and song. The services are intergenerational and afford an opportunity for members and friends to lead or participate in the services.
- Children's and Youth Worship:
 - Earth Day, April 2013 Theme: *Caring for the Earth as Sacred Work* as demonstration of the Seventh Principle. Each class made artwork from recycled materials such as water bottles, floppy discs, cans, egg cartons, etc. and displayed their project at coffee hour.
 - Children's Worship theme for one service in Feb 2013 focused on *Environmental Justice and Climate Change* and ways to reduce trash and litter.
 - A Green Team member purchased the children's book *Watershed Adventures of a Water Bottle* by Jennifer Chambers for use in Children's Worship. The book was used in the 2014 Earth Day Children's Worship service and was supplemented by photos and an account from a local stream cleanup held the previous day.

- Junior High youth conducted a worship service for preschool through senior high youth in March 2012 based on UUSC's Right to Water campaign. The service involved water rituals around four themes – purification, thirst, caring, and anointing.
- The winter solstice and summer solstice are celebrated in Children's worship by going outside and using earth blessings.
- The Adult Choir has incorporated more environmental songs into their repertoire and the congregation has learned the UU environmental anthem *Blue Boat Home* which is sung with gusto.

Timeline for Completion: September 2012 – September 2014

Outcomes: There is increased awareness of the spiritual grounding for care for the environment through our Seventh Principle *Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*. We have raised the visibility of concern for the environment and its theological underpinnings. Because of our participation in interfaith environmental activities, we have also learned that UUs are but one of many faith communities working on concern for the environment from a theological perspective as many other denominations have their own creation care or environmental program grounded in their particular spiritual beliefs.

Lead: Cynthia Shires-Thurston, Liaison, Worship Arts Committee

Project Title: Celebration of Nature through Art

Project Description in Action Plan: Seek out local environmental artists and invite them to display their artwork at the congregation as part of the aesthetics program. Recently the Washington Post Magazine featured Bruce McNeil, a photographer with the Anacostia River School of Photography.

Actions Completed: Our Aesthetics Committee arranges the showing of artwork by local artists. While much art depicts nature anyhow, the Green Team made a special effort to help identify artists whose work had an environmental theme. The following 3 exhibits resulted from our identification:

- Artists Donna Baron and Marlene Sapperstein exhibited water colors featuring local rivers and streams. Their March 2013 exhibit was titled "The Water Around Us".
- Artists Sandra Davis, who was identified by our environmental partner Groundwork Anacostia, and Sharon Burton exhibited mixed media art and collage made from recycled materials in June 2013. Their exhibit was "Re-Purposed Art".
- Artists Madeline Wikler and Estelle Dawn Zorman exhibited watercolors and acrylics in February 2014 as part of our series of "green themes". Both artists express their love of nature through their art. Their exhibit was "Two Artists Inspired by Nature".

Timeline for Completion: September 2012 – September 2014

Outcomes: Art is an additional means to convey a message. Having visual displays of the natural world in the spaces adjacent to our worship and gathering spaces provides a constant reminder of the importance of the natural world.

Lead: Liliane Blom and Sherry Dittmann, Co-Chairs, Aesthetics Committee (Former Lead as Chair of Aesthetics Committee until May 2014 was Laura Huff)

2. Religious Education Projects (3 required. Show how they are relevant to the different age groups present in your congregation. One should be ongoing for the foreseeable future.)

Project Title: Environmental Films and Book Discussion

Project Description in Action Plan: Institute a series of Friday Night Environmental Films and discussion open to the public. Four films per year will be offered. The films will be advertised through local listservs including Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light (GWIPL) and at the local community college in order to connect with others around common issues, build community, and demonstrate UUCRs activism regarding environmental issues. Also institute an environmental book discussion in the spring and fall of each year.

Actions Completed: We showed 14 environmental films on Friday nights. The films are either borrowed free from the GWIPL film library or we rent or buy the film making sure to pay the license fee for a public showing. The film showings are publicized in the congregation newsletter, on the website, and at coffee hour. They are also advertised on the UUs for Social Justice of the Washington/Baltimore area website <http://uusj.net/wp/> and on the GWIPL website at <http://gwipl.org/>. We also send an email announcement to the GWIPL listserv that reaches people from many congregations in the area and is also picked up by the local chapter of the Sierra Club, Muddy Branch Alliance, and others. People are invited to bring a brown bag dinner, view the film, and participate in a discussion afterwards. Our average attendance is 20-25. The following films have been shown:

- *Gasland* – fracking. January 2012
- *The Last Mountain* – mountain top coal removal March 2012
- *A Crude Awakening: The Oil Crash* – fossil fuels July 2012
- *Food, Inc.* – agribusiness October 2012
- *Tapped* – bottled water October 2012
- *The End of the Line* – overfishing February 2013
- *Forks Over Knives* – health hazards of animal based & processed foods April 2013
- *Bidder70* – UU Tim DeChristopher’s disruption of sale of land for oil and gas Sept 2013
- *Chasing Ice* – ice melt and climate change December 2013
- *Nothing Like Chocolate* – fair trade chocolate February 2014
- *A Sense of Wonder* – Rachel Carson June 2014
- *The Greening of Southie* – building green (LEED) in Boston September 2014
- *Gasland II* – fracking October 2014
- *Nourish: food + community* November 2014

We had one book discussion in March 2014. The book *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth* was discussed after the service. Fourteen people attended including several from outside of UUCR. The discussion was publicized via the GWIPL listserv. The book is series of essays from spiritual and environmental leaders around the world showing how humanity can transform its relationship with the Earth.

Timeline for Completion: September 2012 – September 2014

Outcomes: This has been one of our most successful projects and has drawn in people from the community, other UU churches, environmental groups, etc. It has provided good opportunities for networking and establishing partnerships. Several UU congregations showed the films that they saw at UUCR to their congregations. This outreach activity sends a message to the larger community that UUCR is concerned about the environment and actively working on issues. Offering a free film and discussion on a Friday night provides fellowship and learning in a relaxed atmosphere.

Lead: Jim Carleton and Cathy Higgins-Bisnett, Green Team members

Project Title: Adopt a Road – Youth Project

Project Description in Action Plan: Youth (Senior High, Junior High and 6th grade RE classes) will each determine an environmentally friendly service project of their choosing to perform annually. For the next two years, the Youth have chosen to Adopt a Road. They will periodically pick up trash from along the chosen road and discuss the impact of the trash on the environment. In addition the congregation will obtain additional publicity by having the congregation name indicated on the Adopt A Road sign, letting others in the community know of our commitment to the environment.

Actions Completed: A road was assigned in May 2013 by the Montgomery County Adopt a Road Program, part of the county Transportation Department, and the Adopt a Road Sign for “UUCR Youth Group” was erected. A complaint was lodged by the neighborhood association indicating they were already cleaning up that section of road so the sign was removed. After a long process, a new road was assigned in August 2014 and the youth began picking up trash after a Sunday service in September 2014. Because youth in grades 6 through 12 will be involved, care was taken to select a safe road with little traffic.

Timeline for Completion: September 2014 – September 2016

Outcomes: A road has been identified and the youth along with parent volunteers will pick up trash from their designated road every other month or at least six times a year as required by the Adopt A Road program. We plan to have six youth from the program, 2 each from 6th through 12th grade. Following our pick up, we will sort the trash and recyclable material, record how much we pick up and take our haul to the Montgomery County Transfer station. This will be an ongoing Youth project. The first pick up was September 28, 2014.

Lead: Alberta Maschal, Green Team member. (Former lead was Jenn Maschal-Lorms, Youth Coordinator who resigned Sept 2014)

Project Title: Family Environmental Field Trips

Project Description in Action Plan: Organize one environmentally oriented field trip per year on a weekend for children and families for witness and learning, e.g., stream cleanup, gather seeds from native trees. UUCR will participate in Faithfully Picking Up the Potomac coordinated by GWIPL and the Alice Ferguson Foundation. Working with this interfaith partnership we will pick up trash from the Muddy Branch tributary on April 14.

Actions Completed:

- We have participated in the annual Potomac Watershed Cleanup sponsored by the Alice B. Ferguson Foundation for the past three years. The event is held around Earth Day and is a region wide effort. The 2013 cleanup, which involved a total of 633 sites, yielded an estimated 312 tons of trash, including 193,800 beverage containers and 1,314 tires. Bennett Rushkoff, coordinator, selected and registered a site that is not too far from the congregation – a tributary of the Muddy Branch off Route 28 in Gaithersburg. Approximately six to twelve adults, teens, young adults, and parents with younger children have participated each year. We are joined by Boy Scout troop 291. The DRE advertises the event to the RE families and Bennett visited each one of the RE classes one year to talk about the cleanup and encourage participation. Part of the cleanup is an explanation of why it is important to retrieve recyclable bottles, plastic bags, cigarette butts, scrap paper, and other discarded items before they are eventually washed downstream into the Potomac River. Bennett showed some photos from the cleanup at Children’s Worship and told the kids about the cleanup and why it is important.

- The Green Team organized a day trip boating to and having a guided tour via bus of Poplar Island in the Chesapeake Bay on June 20, 2014. Poplar Island is home to Maryland terrapins, muskrats, bald eagles, cormorants, herons, and egrets. Tons of dredge taken from the Chesapeake Bay ship channel to keep it clear for ships going to the port of Baltimore are used to create this environmental success story. Twenty two people - six were religious education family members and six were Green Team members - attended. All had fun holding terrapin babies. We learned about children and youth in classrooms all over the state nurturing the terrapins to ensure, when they are released on Poplar Island at several months old, they have a better chance of survival than those who hatch and swim away immediately!

Timeline for Completion: September 2012 – September 2014

Outcomes: Adults, teens, young adults, and children participated in local stream cleanup activities and learned about the importance of picking up trash from the stream before it is washed downstream to a larger body of water. These activities provided opportunities for hands-on learning outdoors.

Lead: Bennett Rushkoff, member of the congregation

Additional Religious Education activities not included in the Action Plan but that focused on educating children and youth about environmental issues include the following:

Curriculum:

- Len Taylor, Master Teacher, developed a curriculum *Caring for the Earth* for preschool – 1st grade children. The curriculum was used in the Summer 2013 and included age appropriate activities to help children learn about reusing and recycling to demonstrate our interconnectedness. A unit on Disposing of our Garbage and Trash used activities to show what items rot and which don't. The lessons used multimedia, provided hands on experiences, and projects to take home. The curriculum will be repeated on a rotating schedule.
- The new UUA Tapestry of Faith curriculum *World of Wonder* for Kindergarten – 1st grade children was used in the 2013/2014 congregation year. One unit involved buying 1,000 worms from a worm farm, showing the children how to use them to create compost, and taking their project home. Some of the worms are still at work today. Another unit involved building a solar oven and cooking pizza in it. All of the lessons had the children engage directly with nature and share their experiences.

Other

- A multigenerational potluck and program in Fall 2013 used the theme *Gratitude for the Earth*. Participants wrote what they were thankful for on brown paper that was used as table coverings. Participants also created a living tree sculpture.

3. Environmental Justice Project (1 required plus one Optional Additional)

Project Title: Environmental Justice Awareness

Project Description in Action Plan: Build on the awareness begun in the environmental justice (EJ) course, at UUCR January - March 2012. The class researched UUCR's use of water, food, energy and waste. We learned that we are connected to others even if they are invisible to us, for example, people who live near the mountains that have had their tops removed to get coal for the Dickerson Power Plant that powers UUCR. We will share insights with the congregation

through monthly articles in Quest that will be posted on the website. We will publish/post articles about (a) other congregation's EJ projects to identify ways to partner and build relationships to create a larger impact; and (b) other EJ efforts to inspire us to further action.

Actions Completed: The Green Team offered the new UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE) environmental justice curriculum *Our Place in the Web of Life* on five Sundays after the service from January 8, 2012 to March 11, 2012 to deepen our understanding of where UUCR fits in the complex set of interdependent relationships that comprise life on earth, deepen connections between our UU theology, spiritual practices and the work of environmental justice, and explore UUCR's environmental impact on Rockville and beyond in terms of water, waste, air, energy, food and land.

Green Team Co-Chairs Terrie Barr and Mary Lanigan facilitated the sessions. An average of six people attended each session. Since we were one of the first congregations to use the new curriculum, we and one of the posters created in the class were featured in the Winter 2012 UUMFE Newsletter.

A series of newsletter articles about environmental justice were published as outlined below:

- *Environmental Justice and UUCR* – Report of findings from UUMFE class *Our Place in the Web of Life* about food and waste - where our trash goes. Stunning finding that trash was being hauled a long distance to a poor county for dumping led to change in congregation's trash company. (See Recycling writeup) February 2012
- *Environmental Justice and UUCR* – Report of findings from UUMFE class *Our Place in the Web of Life* about source and usage of energy (gas and electric) by UUCR, link to mountain top removed coal, and proposal to explore solar panels. – March 2012
- *Are We Living Our Values During Coffee Hour?* – Fair trade coffee and tea – May 2012
- *Environmental Justice* – Three goals of environmental justice and information about the Anacostia River in D.C., sometimes called “the forgotten river” since it flows through the poorer side of town. June 2012
- *Fracking and Environmental Justice* – Fracking affects the rural poor and those who rely on wells for drinking water. August 2012
- *Green Team Update* – Effect of climate change and rising sea level on coastal areas of Louisiana, Southern Florida, and the Chesapeake Bay and storms. August 2012
- *We Are Now a Green Sanctuary Candidate!* – Relayed request by UUA review team to identify and add to our Action Plan an environmental justice project that enables us to work with a community that has been adversely impacted by environmental degradation, and request for congregational input on a community or group we might work with. September 2012
- *Father of Environmental Justice and Interfaith Youth for Climate Justice* - Article about Bob Bullard, the father of environmental justice, and also highlighted the Interfaith Youth for Climate Justice (IYCJ) in D.C. – November 2012
- *Where Environmental Justice and Social Justice Intersect* – Several ideas for an environmental justice project. – December 2012
- *Solar Cooking Attacks Environmental, Health and Economic Ills* - International environmental justice. January 2013
- *Environmental Justice Service and Forum on February 3* – Report of environmental justice service with guest preacher Joelle Novey, Director of Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light, that was followed by Environmental Justice Forum with Dennis Chestnut, Executive Director of Groundwork Anacostia (our chosen environmental justice partner) and

Alissa Stern, President of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation, a neighboring congregation already working with Groundwork Anacostia. February 2013

Timeline for Completion: January 2012 – March 2013

Outcomes: Findings from the *Our Place in the Web of Life* class regarding UUCR's use of water, food, energy and waste as researched by the class members were published in the congregation newsletter and on the website. The information also served as a springboard for changes that bring our use more into balance. (Changes listed under Recycling) The series of newsletter articles and conversations led us to identify an environmental justice project to add to our Action Plan - described in next section.

Lead: Terrie Barr, Co-Chair, Green Sanctuary Team

Note: The following project was not included in the Action Plan submitted in July 2012 but was added in March 2013 in response to the UUA reviewer's request that we add an environmental justice project working with a marginalized community that has been adversely impacted by an environmental issue to our Action Plan.

Project Title: Eco-Justice Partnership

Project Description in Action Plan: Partner with Groundwork Anacostia DC, to learn and work with residents of Ward 7 in the District of Columbia to improve their environment by restoring the health of the Anacostia River, improve green spaces, and build relationships.

Intergenerational activities will include field trips to learn about current efforts to restore the Anacostia River; service projects such as tree planting, urban gardening, and stream cleanups; and opportunities to partner with youth and adult residents on neighborhood projects.

Actions Completed: The kick-off of the project was held at an Environmental Justice Forum after the service on February 3, 2013 and was attended by 30 people who learned of possible projects from Dennis Chestnut, Executive Director of Groundwork Anacostia DC.

- Our first activity was a field trip on March 16 to Groundwork's location in N.E. Washington to see what they were doing to restore the environment and strengthen communities. After introductions at the Center for Green Urbanism, twelve of us toured the Deanwood Learning Garden (vacant lot being turned into a community garden), Parkside Community Park, Mayfair Community Garden (gardening opportunity with residents), and Kenilworth Park Bandalong Litter Trap (catches trash before it goes into the Anacostia River – trap needs periodic cleaning). As a follow up, we participated in several events.
- A UUCR mom and son team participated in a tree planting project in the Benning Ridge neighborhood of Ward 7 in DC in April. The two helped with the planting of 19 fruit and nut trees on a vacant lot that is being transformed into a community garden.
- Six participants joined with Groundwork Anacostia and other community volunteers for the annual Anacostia Watershed cleanup on Earth Day along the Watts Branch tributary of the Anacostia River in April 2013. The group cleared large branches and logs clogging the stream and cleaned out the Kenilworth Park Bandalong litter trap.
- Five people joined three members from Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation and teens and adults from Groundwork for a Sunday afternoon November 17 clean up of the Bandalong Litter Trap in Kenilworth Park. We removed lots of plastic bottles, styrofoam, glass bottles, and aluminum cans.
- Three people participated in the annual Anacostia Watershed cleanup on Earth Day in April 2014. Due to the ongoing search in the Kenilworth Park area for Relisha Rudd (missing eight year old African American girl who has still not been found) the group cleaned an area

around the Anacostia Park Recreation Center instead of the Bandalong litter trap that is located in Kenilworth Park.

- In an effort to acquaint members of the congregation with the area around our eco-justice projects, three Green Team members sponsored a field trip to Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens (a national park known internationally for its water lilies and lotus) and picnic brunch as part of our Action Auction fundraiser. Fifteen people enjoyed a tour of the park and picnic brunch in July 2013 when the water lilies were in bloom. Even though our project is only 40 minutes from the congregation, many people have never visited the area since it is on the other side of town.

Timeline for Completion: March 2013 – September 2014

Outcomes: We've learned it is important to stretch boundaries and invite people to step a little outside of their comfort zone to participate in a worthwhile project and interact with residents in a neighborhood on the other side of town who are trying to improve their environment. We are trying to work with Groundwork to identify a specific ongoing project that we would have primary responsibility for working on.

Lead: Terrie Barr and Julie Robinson, Green Team members

4. Sustainable Living (4 required – we have 6 plus one optional additional)

Project Title: Solar Energy Partnership

Project Description in Action Plan: Begin improving the ecological health of our community and promote justice for those affected by mountaintop removed coal by exploring the feasibility of installing solar panels on UUCR's roofs to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

Montgomery County Student Environmental Activists (MCSEA), a group of high school students, committed to help raise funds for a community solar project, inspired this effort and is our partner. (Note: partnership with MCSEA did not materialize.)

Actions Completed:

- The student activists from MCSEA and their adult advisor from the Mount Pleasant Solar Co-op presented their proposal to an interested group of 26 people from UUCR on February 29, 2012 as part of an adult education program. There was high interest among attendees and a Solar Working Group (SWG) was formed to explore the technical and business details of installing solar on a congregation. The SWG consulted the *Learning from Solar Congregations* booklet compiled by Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light (GWIPL) as well as other resources and met with the Board of Trustees twice to obtain preliminary concept approval for the student group to begin fundraising.
- Unfortunately the student fundraising project did not materialize but the spark had been ignited and the SWG continued to study and research options. They issued a Request for Proposal in September 2012 to determine interest from commercial solar companies and obtain an idea of costs. Further action was delayed by other congregation priorities. The SWG continued to review the responses to the RFP and learn from other congregations who were in the process of considering solar panels.
- A more specific proposal was presented in October 2013 asking the Board of Trustees for authorization for the SWG to proceed to negotiate in good faith with a commercial solar firm to install a 42.7 kilowatt system that would generate approximately 35% of UUCR's electricity needs under a Power Purchase Agreement costing no more than the anticipated cost of electricity from the local utility.

- After much discussion, meetings, and a conference call with the Director, GWIPL, the Board authorized the SWG in September 2014 to proceed to negotiate a contract with a commercial solar company for review by the Board. A solar communications team determined over the summer 2014 that there was overwhelming support within the congregation for installing solar panels.
- A company was identified and contract language reviewed in December 2014 by a pro-bono attorney arranged by GWIPL. The contract language was acceptable to the company and was approved by the Board of Trustees in February 2015. The panels should be installed in June.

Timeline for Completion: September 2012 – February 2015

Outcomes: The UUCR Board of Trustees signed a contract with Solar Solution LLC in February 2015 to place solar cells on UUCR roofs under a Power Purchase Agreement. The contract is the result of a lengthy process of review and negotiation by the UUCR Solar Working Group, advised by a pro bono lawyer experienced in renewable energy areas. Under the contract, Solar Solution will install 42 kW of solar panels on south and west facing roofs of UUCR buildings, with installation likely to take place in June. The company will own the solar panels and will sell UUCR electric power generated by the array – an amount estimated to average about one third of UUCR’s current electricity usage. UUCR will continue to buy the rest of the electricity we need from the electric utility (e. g. PEPCO). We learned that when pursuing matters of social justice and the environment, it is important to be patient, take a long view, and constantly educate and explain the benefits to stakeholders – relevant congregation committees, Board of Trustees, Minister and staff.

Lead: Barbara Harrison, Chair, Solar Working Group

Project Title: Energy Efficiency and Conservation

Project Description in Action Plan: Educate members of the congregation and the community on the benefits of conserving and using less energy as a personal action each of us can take to help address climate change. Assess energy usage for congregation buildings and look for low cost improvements for high return on investment. Partner with GWIPL to host a Home Energy Workshop for homeowners in the congregation and in the community to learn about energy saving improvements.

Actions Completed:

- Many energy saving devices such as programmable semi-locking thermostats (casual user can only reset temperature for 3 hour period then it reverts back to pre-set temperature), motion sensitive light switches, etc. were installed prior to the start of the program. See Green Sanctuary application for Candidacy, pages 10-12.
- *A forum entitled Logistics and Dollars of Going Green* was held after a service in November 2013 to allow members of the congregation to learn from one another about green steps they have taken. Issues discussed were: What does it take to go solar? Are credits a sure thing? What is a tank-less water heater? Are all electric cars the same? What’s the payback? Ten members and friends who have made the commitment to reducing their carbon emissions attended.
- An effort to upgrade florescent fixtures and incandescent and CFL bulbs to LED at no cost to the congregation was explored in May 2014 as part of the PEPCO Small Business Rebate Program. This is part of the local electric utility’s effort to lower the demand for electricity. Unfortunately after meeting with the representative, it was determined that UUCR has too

high a demand on electrical usage to qualify for the free upgrade. A rebate would be available under another program but the upgrade would entail considerable cost.

- A Green Team member tracked the congregation's electricity and gas usage from 2010 to the present by reviewing the utility bills monthly. The son of a Green Team member who is pursuing graduate work in Sustainability Management analyzed the data in the summer of 2014 and created a greenhouse gas emission report. His very sophisticated report will serve as a baseline against which to measure future energy use since no prior analysis had been done. The findings showed that energy use has remained relatively constant for the period 2010 – 2014 despite increased usage of our buildings for rentals and free use by Community Ministries of Rockville for twice a week English language and citizenship preparation classes and associated child care. He noted inconsistencies in the electric usage from 2013 to 2014 when compared to cooling degree days (CDD) and suggested further study of building usage and/or an energy audit. One electric meter covers all five buildings.

Timeline for Completion: September 2012 – September 2014

Outcomes: The congregation now has good baseline data from which to assess future energy usage. Efforts to improve energy efficiency at the congregation should continue. The Green Team decided not to host a home energy workshop for homeowners and members of congregation as noted in the Action Plan as there is much publically available information as the green movement matures.

Lead: Jon Landenburger and Wayne Crump, Green Team members

Project Title: Renewable Energy (Wind)

Project Description in Action Plan: Advocate for renewable energy at the state and federal level and educate homeowners in the congregation and in the community on switching to renewal sources of energy as means to address climate change. Advocate for building an offshore wind farm off the coast of Ocean City, Maryland by partnering with Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN), UU Legislative Ministry, GWIPL, etc. Host advocacy meetings at the congregation. Provide information on how individual members can sign up for wind power.

Actions Completed:

- Green team members have been actively involved in advocacy for building wind farms in Maryland. We've worked collaboratively with Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN), UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland, and GWIPL by attending rallies in Annapolis, signing postcards, writing to legislators, etc. Efforts were successful and the Maryland Offshore Wind Energy Act of 2013 was passed in April 2013. This legislation lays the groundwork for the building of a large offshore wind farm off the coast of Ocean City, MD and other projects. Team members continue to advocate for other wind projects such as one proposed in Somerset County that faces opposition from the Patuxent Naval Air Station.
- We developed a handout on *Switching to Wind Energy* that explains the nuts and bolts of how to switch and includes information on several companies from which wind energy can be purchased. This handout is updated periodically and is posted on our website.
- We are fortunate that our local IPL chapter – GWIPL – facilitates the switch to wind power for individuals and congregations by partnering with Groundswell (local organization that brings people and organizations together and leverages the group's collective buying power) for the bulk purchase of wind power under their Community Power Program. Groundswell conducts two competitive bids per year in the spring and fall. We always advertise this

opportunity, have information available at a lobby table, and recommend it as the best option for switching to wind power.

Timeline for Completion: September 2012 – September 2014

Outcomes: Our activities have raised the visibility and possibility of wind power. People in the congregation are aware they can switch to wind power and frequently ask about it. Many people in the congregation have already switched to wind power or plan to in the future.

Lead: Mary Lanigan, Co-Chair, Green Sanctuary Team

Project Title: REduce, REcycle, REuse = RESPECT and Green Purchasing

Project Description in Action Plan: Improve/assess/educate on recycling, reduction of goods, and re-use to reduce the amount of trash and plastics both at the congregation and in the home. Transition to using reusable plates, bowls, glasses as feasible. Complete transition dependent on remodeling and expanding our old kitchen. Explore purchase of green cleaning supplies, paper products, etc. at the congregation. Educate people about sources of green products for the home.

Actions Completed:

- *Recycling bins:* Office staff reported that recyclables were being mixed in with trash in 2012. Recycling containers consisted of large blue containers without tops. Trash/recycling hauler Waste Management did not require separation of paper recyclables from co-mingled glass and cans. Green Team researched better recycling bins and selected Rubbermaid Slim Jim tall blue (with rectangular opening for paper) and green (with round opening for cans) bins. Six bins were purchased and placed in high traffic areas. Purchase was made in anticipation of selecting a new trash/recycling hauler who used Montgomery County facility that requires separation of recyclables. Free signage from the Montgomery County Department of the Environment was obtained to indicate what is to be placed in each bin.
- *New trash/recycling hauler (company):* Based on findings from UUMFE class *Our Place in the Web of Life* that trash from the congregation was being hauled a long distance to a poor county in Virginia for dumping, the Green Team recommended changing the congregation's trash company. The office staff wholeheartedly agreed. The Green Team assisted in researching alternative companies for consideration. A local company, Potomac Disposal that transports our trash and recyclables to the Montgomery County Shady Grove Transfer Station just a few miles from UUCR was chosen. There was a significant delay in switching to the new hauler due to the existing contract with the previous hauler. As an added bonus, the congregation saved \$1,000 per year by switching. Going green resulted in saving green.
- *Recycled paper products:* The church administrator researched various options for toilet paper (TP) and invited the staff and visitors to participate in a blind TP testing program to rate three different brands of environmentally friendly, 100% recycled toilet paper for softness, tearing ease, and wet strength. A winner was selected and is now stocked in all of the rest rooms. The winning selection was also the least expensive and comes in larger rolls, meaning less frequent replacement. She used the same evaluation method to test and select folded paper towels used in dispensers. Blind testing of two different brands of environmentally friendly, 100% recycled fibers was used with staff and visitors. The choice again was less expensive and saved the congregation money at the same time.
- *Exploration of recyclable or biodegradable paper plates, bowls and napkins:* The Green Team spent considerable effort exploring whether biodegradable kitchen ware (plates, bowls, etc.) could be used. We concluded that unless these products could be composted, there is no environmental benefit to buying these more expensive products. Green team members

explored whether community composting facilities exist that we could take the compostable items to however did not find a satisfactory solution. In the meantime, it was recommended the congregation buy paper plates and bowls made from recycled paper content and that the purchase be made in bulk rather than have each committee or event organizer buy their own. Centralized purchasing would ensure recycled products were used and bulk purchase would be more economical. This was implemented on July 1, 2013. The congregation hopes someday to renovate the kitchen to install a commercial dishwasher so that re-usable plates and bowls can be used.

- *Composting:* Composting of food waste and biodegradable plates was explored but not deemed feasible at this time. Composting of paper products also requires a more sophisticated system since paper products take longer to degrade. Green Team members explored whether pickup by a commercial composting company would be feasible but because there is only an intermittent need it was not feasible. The congregation composts yard trimmings and coffee grounds but not food scraps. Green team members continue to keep abreast of new developments in this evolving area and recently attended a seminar on food scrap recycling presented by the Montgomery County Division of Solid Waste Services.
- *Re-usable plates at Fellowship Dinner:* Beginning two years ago, the organizers of the annual Fellowship Dinner held in March recommended that table hosts and hostesses bring re-usable plates, tableware and cloth napkins. A significant number of hosts/hostesses complied with the request which is notable given they must take all the dirty dishes back home to wash. The dinner organizers did this on their own without prodding from the Green Team which pleased us.
- *The Youth Program* uses only reusable dishes, flatware, cups etc. They have sufficient plates, glasses, cups, bowls, and flatware for their events. The youth program (6th thru 12th) takes turns on a monthly rotating basis to keep their kitchenette clean.
- *Recycling at home in Rockville:* A Green Team member wrote a newsletter article informing Rockville residents of opportunities for recycling, including recycling of hazardous waste.
- *Plastic water bottles:* A Green Team member wrote a newsletter article about the environmental impacts of using bottled water and provided resources for purchasing re-usable water bottles. She also purchased a children's book *Watershed Adventures of a Water Bottle* by Jennifer Chambers for use in Children's Worship. (See write-up in Worship section). Bottled water is no longer provided at congregation events. Pitchers of water and ceramic coffee mugs are provided instead. This is a big change from two to three years ago when bottled water was used frequently.
- *Plastic bag survey:* Three Green Team members assisted the Montgomery County Sierra Club to conduct a plastic bag survey outside of local grocery stores in February 2014 to gather data on the use of reusable versus plastic/paper bags in order to encourage a neighboring county to adopt a bag tax. Montgomery County adopted a 5 cent bag tax on plastic bags in 2012 that has significantly reduced the number of plastic bags found in streams. Over 50% of customers now bring their own re-usable bag.
- *Sale of Re-usable bags at fall fundraiser:* Two members of the congregation led sewing classes for members to sew nice cloth re-usable grocery bags and sold them at the annual fall fund raiser NovemberFest for 3 years running now. They also provided information on Montgomery County's bag tax. Customers attending the fair learned about the environmental importance of re-usable bags.

Timeline for Completion: September 2012 – September 2014

Outcomes: Recyclables and trash are more effectively separated at the congregation given the new recycling bins. Trash and recyclables are now hauled to a Montgomery County facility with a reputation for good environmental practices. The congregation has saved money by changing to a different trash/recycling hauler whose business is based locally. Recycled paper products are used in the bathrooms and in the kitchen to the extent possible. Bottled water is no longer used at congregation events. Reusable plates and tableware are used by many Fellowship Dinner hosts and hostesses.

Lead: Cathy Higgins-Bisnett and Marsha Luce, Green Team members (Former co-lead until 2013 was Carol Reinsberg)

Project Title: Water Conservation, Sustainable Landscaping, Ecological Gardening

Project Description in Action Plan: Educate members of the congregation and the community on the benefits of using sustainable features in landscaping as a means to conserve water, reduce runoff, benefit wildlife, and minimize damage to streams. Assess congregation property for installation of features such as rain gardens, additional rain barrels, and native plantings. Educate members of the congregation and the community about the damage caused by lawn chemicals and provide information about alternatives.

Actions Completed:

- *Rain barrel:* One rain barrel was installed in the main courtyard, is maintained by the Green Team, and is in a very visible location.
- *Rain gardens:* The Green Team explored installing a rain garden in 2012 however decided not to after meeting with the Environmental Engineer from the City of Rockville who indicated the only location for a functional rain garden would be a grassy area that is used for overflow parking. The Sixth Grade class installed a small demonstration rain garden in June 2014 as a service project. The leader met with a consultant who is knowledgeable about rain gardens, conducted a fundraiser, bought the plants, and had the consultant educate the class.
- *Native plant garden:* A small native plant garden was installed in May 2013 outside of one of the buildings rented to a nursery school. The following plants native to the mid-Atlantic region were planted: ink turtlehead, bee balm, purple coneflower, blazing star, penstemon, false blue indigo, wild ginger, spiderwort, and green- and-gold. Plant tags were added to help identify the plants.
- *Removal of invasive plants:* Several invasive plants notably English ivy, garlic mustard, and bush honeysuckle are prevalent on congregation property. We have increased our efforts to enlist the aid of volunteers in removing these plants at monthly landscape workdays and as part of our annual landscape fix up day known as Do It Day held around Earth Day. These are useful educational opportunities since volunteers are educated and instructed on how to identify and remove the invasive plants. A congregation member brought her Girl Scout Troop to Do It Day one year as a service project. The girls and their parents learned about garlic mustard and removed large patches of it.
- *Eagle Scout project:* A youth pursuing Eagle Scout rank chose as his project the partial removal of Japanese Honeysuckle and English Ivy on the property and also installed three blue bird houses.
- *Policy on herbicides:* A policy restricting the use Roundup on congregation grounds even further was issued in June 2013 and communicated via the congregation newsletter. Use had been infrequent but we felt there was need to restrict its use even further. The congregation has a long standing tradition of not applying fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides to the lawns.

The newsletter article also encouraged people to limit the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides on their home lawns as it is a major source of water pollution.

- *Native landscaping*: The Green Team sponsored a presentation “Less Lawn, More Life” on native landscaping by a Master Gardener in April 2014 to encourage people to plant environmentally friendly native plants, trees, and shrubs instead of grass at their home. The presentation was open to the public and advertised widely through the GWIPL listserv, UUSJ website, etc. Despite the rainy evening, twenty people attended.
- *Trees*: Five native tree and bush saplings (2 button bush, 2 paw paw trees, and 1 persimmon tree) obtained free from a local watershed group were planted in our forest buffer in April 2014 on Do It Day. All are good for wildlife as they produce fruits. We noticed we have lost trees in the forest buffer surrounding our five acres and have reached out to Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake asking to participate in their 10,000 Trees Project. They provide free trees to congregations and also conduct a 1 ½ hour spiritual workshop on creation care and watershed stewardship for volunteer tree planters from the congregation. We are on the waiting list for Spring or Fall 2015.
- *Interfaith events*: The Green Team Co-Chair made a presentation on UUCR’s Green Sanctuary program at the second annual Interfaith Workshop “Greening Our Sacred Grounds” in February 2013. The forum was organized by GWIPL and several local watershed alliances to bring congregations together to learn from one another and discuss projects that we can all do to make a difference in local stream health. We attended again in 2014 and learned much useful information.
- *Water Quality Protection Charge*: Montgomery County initiated an assessment (tax) on all property owners in the county (residential, business, government, non-profits) in 2010 to raise funds to support the County's clean water initiatives to improve stream and water quality and prevent stormwater pollution. UUCR has paid a total of \$15,937 to the City of Rockville from 2010-2014 to help with stormwater management projects within the City.

Timeline for Completion: September 2012 – September 2014

Outcomes: Our activities have demonstrated the importance of using native plantings and removing invasive species. We have found new community resources to both help with our endeavors and also share our knowledge with others in the congregation and in the community.

Lead: Rachel Shaw and John Dickson, Green Team members (Former lead until 2013 was Jim Carleton)

Project Title: Ethical Eating

Project Description in Action Plan: Raise awareness and educate people through books, discussions and films about ethical eating and how supporting ethical eating supports our UU values. Explore many aspects of ethical eating including plant-based diet, sustainability, community supported agriculture and environmental justice such as how low income persons on food stamps can eat healthy and sustainably. Offer congregational meals from local produce and products. Use Fair Trade coffee and tea at congregation events.

Actions Completed:

- *Films*: Three of the films shown as part of the Friday Night environmental film series were coordinated by the Ethical Eating team that is part of the Green Sanctuary team. They chose and showed:
 - *Food, Inc.* – Shown in October 2012. Film exposes how our nation's food supply is controlled by a handful of corporations that often put profit ahead of consumer health,

- the livelihood of the American farmer, the safety of workers, and our own environment and result in food borne illness, obesity, and diabetes
- *Forks Over Knives* –Shown in April 2013. Film features two doctors whose research led them to a startling conclusion that degenerative diseases like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and even several forms of cancer could almost always be prevented and in many cases reversed by adopting a whole foods, plant-based diet.
 - *Nothing Like Chocolate* –Shown in February 2014. Chronicles the founder of the Grenada Chocolate Company Cooperative who pursues his vision to create the best chocolate in the world, ethically (no trafficked child labor) and in terms of taste. Samples of fair trade chocolate were available for tasting.
 - *Nourish: food + community* – shown in November 2014. Film reveals the many ways that food connects to our environment, our health, and our communities. Film offers specific steps that individuals and groups can take to create a sustainable food future.
 - *Resource materials:* A new section labeled Conscious Consumption was added to the congregation library to contain books and DVDs that explore the impact of our food choices. Readers were invited to write a review of a book to help others.
 - *Vegan food offerings:* The coordinators prepared a delicious vegan lunch of roasted veggies, soup, pita, salad and fruits for Do It Day (landscape fix up) helpers in 2013 and 2014. The food received rave reviews. A Vegan Recipe Exchange and Lunch was offered as part of the Action Auction fundraiser. Twenty five people signed up to participate. Children’s and Youth RE Committee receptions and Children’s Worship Committee reception always include vegan food options.
 - *Food sampling and Community Supported Agriculture:* Free samples of locally grown produce were offered at a lobby table after a service in September 2013. A newsletter article encouraged people to sign up for a share of locally grown produce through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm.

Timeline for Completion: September 2012 – September 2014

Outcomes: Educating people about a plant based diet and providing opportunities to eat and share vegan food has served to demystify the idea and gain acceptance. Most have found the food satisfying and delicious. A second Action Auction event was offered in the Spring of 2014 and will be held in the fall. There will be on-going films to educate the congregation and those outside of our congregation on the benefits of changing our diet. Additionally, our congregational receptions, potlucks and other gatherings always offer vegan and vegetarian options.

Lead: Alberta Maschal and Gwen Rowe, Green Team members

Note: While not included in our Action Plan submitted in July 2012, the Green Team has spent considerable time and energy on the emerging issue of fracking described below. We are therefore including it as an Optional Additional item under Sustainability.

Project Title: Education and Advocacy on Fracking

Project Description (not included in Action Plan): Educate the congregation about the environmental risks involved with extracting natural gas from Marcellus shale by the use of hydraulic fracturing or “fracking” and participate in advocacy activities. Fracking is an active issue in Maryland since there is Marcellus shale in the western part of the state.

Actions Completed:

- Green team members joined GWIPL, Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) and other faith and environmental groups for a *Stop the Frack Attack* rally on the West Lawn of U.S. Capitol in July 2012 and again in July 2014. A green team member attended an all-day conference on fracking in November 2012.
- The Rockville Campaign Coordinator from Food and Water Watch attended our July 2013 Green Team meeting, presented information on their efforts to ban fracking in Maryland and enlisted our support as a signatory on a letter/petition to be sent to the Governor and Maryland General Assembly asking them to ban fracking in the state. Team members worked with the Social Justice Committee, our parent group, to obtain approval to have the Social Justice Committee of UUCR listed as signatory to the letter.
- We hosted CCAN's showing of the film *Triple Divide* about fracking in October 2013. The event was widely advertised by CCAN. Our location was chosen because of our proximity to a Metro stop and our active involvement with CCAN. Thirty people attended, many from outside of UUCR.
- Beginning in October 2013, we began educating people and participating in advocacy activities opposing a proposal by Dominion Resources to convert an existing natural gas import facility at Cove Point in Calvert County to a natural gas export plant. The project would pipe fracked gas across Maryland to Cove Point where it would be loaded on tankers and transported to India and Japan. Green Team members attended forums conducted by CCAN; engaged in letter writing to the Governor, FERC, Maryland Public Service Commission; joined 1,000 others at a rally in Baltimore; wrote newsletter articles to educate the congregation; collected petition signatures outside of My Organic Market (MOM's); etc.

Timeline for Completion: September 2012 – September 2014

Outcomes: People in the congregation have been educated about the environmental dangers of fracking in our community and have participated in advocacy activities.

Accomplishment of Program Goals

(Please describe briefly where you were at the start, what you did, and the progress made in each area below. Please address each point separately; ideally 1-3 paragraphs each.)

The Green Sanctuary (GS) effort impacted a wide swath of our congregation. Over 10% of the congregation has been involved directly providing environmental awareness to UUCR and in learning about it in structured groups during the past two years. Over twenty people are currently on the Green Sanctuary team and five more serve on the Solar Working Group with responsibility for one of our projects. Our second Sunday monthly meetings are open and attract curious people visiting or new to the congregation. Some join the team, some don't, and some assumed leadership positions as co-leads for a project. In preparation for developing our action plan projects, we met with six committees of the congregation that we hoped would have a role in the action plan. We met with the Lay Ministry Council and with the Minister and Board of Trustees. Thirty-one congregants completed our Green Sanctuary survey and eleven volunteered to lead a project. Engagement and commitment were high.

- **Build awareness of the significance and complexity of environmental issues**

We began to consciously build awareness in 2010 with the establishment of an environmental action group. Prior to that, mindful of the 7th principle, individuals who were drawn to respond

to it, made better lifestyle choices and our staff working with our buildings and grounds committee certainly improved the congregation's use of resources and made good choices. For example, they chose a light colored roof when replacing shingles; they chose environmentally friendly building materials in constructing our new building when it was affordable.

Due to our films, book discussion, articles and services, awareness of the significance and complexity of environmental issues has increased considerably. We published a monthly series of newsletter articles for one year about environmental justice and local environmental issues. These reached many more congregants than the films, forums, services or book discussion and enabled those who can no longer attend to be included. Article topics that explored the complexity of environmental issues included: *Effect of climate change and rising sea level on coastal areas of Louisiana, Southern Florida and the Chesapeake Bay*; *Father of Environmental Justice and Interfaith Youth for Climate Justice (a local organization)*; and *Solar Cooking Attacks Environmental, Health and Economic Ills*. Articles re the significance and complexity of environmental issues were shared with the Green Team on a regular and recurring basis.

Now, documented in our accomplishments against our 12 projects and additional work, we have moved beyond awareness of the significance and complexity of environmental issues to active involvement, working in partnership to decrease our collective carbon footprint and to change unjust laws and prevent further damage of a social and economic type.

- **Encourage personal lifestyle changes**

Mindful of the 7th principle, individuals who were drawn to respond to it made better lifestyle choices prior to our Green Sanctuary effort. During the two year program:

- We developed a handout on *Switching to Wind Energy* that explains the nuts and bolts of how to switch and includes information on several companies from which wind energy can be purchased. This handout is updated periodically and is posted on our website.
- We advertised the opportunity to switch to wind power and had information available at a lobby table, about our local IPL chapter – GWIPL. They facilitate the switch to wind power for individuals and congregations by partnering with Groundswell (local organization that brings people and organizations together and leverages the group's collective buying power) for the bulk purchase of wind power under their Community Power Program. Groundswell conducts two competitive bids per year in the spring and fall and provides relatively low rates.
- We wrote a newsletter article encouraging Rockville residents to increase recycling, including properly recycling hazardous waste.
- We wrote a newsletter article about the environmental impacts of using bottled water and provided resources for purchasing re-usable water bottles. Children's worship focused on the importance of using re-usable water bottles through a book provided by a Green Team member.
- We sponsored a presentation "Less Lawn, More Life" on native landscaping by a Master Gardener to encourage people to plant environmentally friendly native plants, trees, and shrubs instead of grass at their home.
- We further restricted use of Round-up in April 2013 on congregation grounds, publicized it in a newsletter article and encouraged people to limit the use of

fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides on their home lawns as it is a major source of water pollution

- We posted environmental articles on the Green Sanctuary bulletin board.
- Now, we have 6 families that have installed photo voltaic cells on their roofs and many more who have switched to wind power. Many committed to less lawn at that presentation.

- **Engage in community action on environmental issues**

Prior to our GS work, we engaged in community action on environmental issues on a sporadic basis. During our two years, we became reliable partners with the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light, and our environmental partner, Groundwork Anacostia. We provided space to show films, invited them to speak to our community, provided volunteers and made donations to support their work, advertised opportunities to work with them on advocacy, demonstrations, stream cleanup and switching to wind power.

The Green Team Co-Chair made a presentation on UUCR's Green Sanctuary program at the second annual Interfaith Workshop "Greening Our Sacred Grounds" in February 2013. The forum was organized by GWIPL and several local watershed alliances to bring congregations together to learn from one another and discuss projects that we can all do to make a difference in local stream health.

- **Strengthen the connection between spiritual practice and Earth consciousness**

Reading and discussing *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth* was the most pertinent activity to strengthen the connection between spiritual practice and Earth consciousness. It was a spiritual response to the ecological crisis with a collection of essays from world environmental leaders. It enabled us to discuss common meanings for soul and spirit that UUs could be comfortable with. We discussed that there was a need for a spiritual practice to change our environmental attitude and develop earth consciousness. We shared our current spiritual practices and hopefully encouraged others to begin a spiritual practice.

Daybreak is an online meditation of music, reflection, spoken word which UUCR began offering on our website in 2014. Many of the weekday meditations are nature centered and provide an example of connecting spiritual practice and Earth consciousness. <http://daybreakuucr.wordpress.com/>

We have had winter solstice services for several years. Our regular and recurring solstice and equinox services have been more recent. They strengthen the connection between spiritual practice and Earth consciousness four times a year for the attendees.

- **Work to heal environmental injustice**

We had no clear understanding of environmental justice prior to presenting the UUMFE curriculum, *Our Place in the Web of Life*. From that time until now, we have not only increased awareness, we have worked with our environmental justice partner and financially supported their work.

Program Evaluation

(Please describe changes your congregation has been through from initial assessment through project completion. Please address each question separately; ideally 1-3 paragraphs each. Use a combination of metric indicators and stories of impacts on individuals, congregational or community life.)

- **What do you believe has been the most important benefit your congregation has gained as a result of your participation in the Green Sanctuary Program?**

Green Sanctuary has helped our congregation develop and work toward a vision of a more just, healthier, and more sustainable future. We believe that lifting up the 7th Principle through the comprehensive approach of the Green Sanctuary Program has reinforced that most powerful motivator that a religious perspective brings.

- **What has been the most difficult or challenging aspect of the program for your congregation to make progress on?**

We identified an environmental partner, Groundwork Anacostia River DC, groundworkdc.org, part of the growing network of Groundwork Trusts. They do really extraordinary work. We met with the Director annually, toured projects that they supported, provided volunteers for some public work days and created two stream clean-ups of our own, one involving a neighboring Jewish community, Adat Shalom, and contributed \$400 annually to its success. However, the director's primary staff is unpaid university students and interns. We were never able to successfully engage with them to identify a specific ongoing project that we would have primary responsibility for working on. National Capital Area UU environmental activists were willing to help too. We are now exploring another organization whose focus is the Anacostia River, a larger, more established one with paid staff, the Anacostia Watershed Society.

- **Have you been able to discern positive changes in your congregation's culture as a result of the activities you accomplished? If so, what are they?**

The staff and committee leaders have not only been supportive of efforts to green the congregation but have initiated their own environmental improvements. The best part is that these changes have saved us money. We are a green congregation and look forward to having the Green Sanctuary designation to affirm it.

Specific examples are documented in the REduce, REcycle, REuse = RESPECT and Green Purchasing Project write-up above. They include:

- improving congregational recycling;
- changing to recycled paper products;
- buying recyclable or biodegradable paper plates, bowls and napkins and buying centrally rather than through each committee;
- replacing our trash/recycling company;
- requesting that congregants bring re-usable plates to Fellowship Dinner; and
- providing pitchers of water rather than using bottled water at congregation events.

- **What are your intentions/aspirations for continuing to live out your Green Sanctuary commitments?**

We intend to use the momentum created by the Green Sanctuary program as the starting point for continued focus and action, involve new people, and respond to additional and new issues. An example is that a Green Team member had a letter to the editor published in the Washington Post on 9-7-14 regarding a new issue. Here is an excerpt.

The article discussed the environmental damage from large farms but saw the solution in getting “large farms to stop polluting.” That would be great, but problems with the dead zone in the Chesapeake Bay, attributed mostly to runoff from large farms, are growing. Medium-size farms with more environmentally sensitive practices may help, but where is the evidence that big agriculture is voluntarily giving up its environmentally destructive practices?

The two co-chairs who have led the environmental effort at the congregation for four years stepped down from leadership of the group in September 2014 with the exception of seeing the Accreditation process through to completion. Matthew Beyers and Julia Santerre assumed leadership of the Green Team. Many Green Team members expressed their intention to continue at the September 2014 meeting. We anticipate many activities will continue and new ones will be added based on volunteer interest and energy.

- **What on-going role do you expect your congregation will take in the wider community relative to environmental issues? How does your Green Sanctuary work affect your connection in the community?**

We expect that advocacy on behalf of the environment will be a focus. Our state has both wind power and fracking issues that will be decided in the next few years. We will be working with our partners as we have been. We expect that we will work with a new environmental partner, the Anacostia Watershed Society and will continue to work with GWIPL, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, and participate in regional UU environmental efforts.

Application Instructions

Using this format, submit your electronic application to uua_greensanctuary@uua.org . If you cannot email the application, please contact Brent Jurgess, Administrator for Congregational Life at the UUA, for snail-mail instructions.

For additional information and advice for preparing your application, feel free to contact Karen Brammer via email at kbrammer@uua.org or by phone at 603.380.1603.