

## Green Sanctuary Accreditation - Executive Summary

UUCR received accreditation as a Green Sanctuary on February 18, 2015 after completing the 12 projects outlined in our Action Plan. Listed below is a summary of our accomplishments. More detail is contained in the Application for Green Sanctuary Accreditation posted on the UUCR website.

### 1. Worship and Celebration projects

- a. **Environmentally Themed Worship Services** – We deepened our understanding of the spiritual grounding for care of the environment as evidenced by our 7<sup>th</sup> Principle - *Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*. Our Minister incorporated themes of water scarcity into the annual water ceremony and also preached on environmental justice, greening the spirit, and loving the earth throughout the two year period. We had guest preachers who shared their thoughts on the religious response to climate change and environmental justice. Children's and Youth worship services featured caring for earth as sacred work and environmental justice.
- b. **Celebration of Nature through Art** – We used visual displays of the natural world in the spaces adjacent to our worship and gathering spaces to provide a constant reminder of the importance of the natural world. Three particular art show themes were The Water Around Us, Re-purposed Art, and Two Artists Inspired by Nature.

### 2. Religious Education projects

- a. **Environmental Films and Book Discussion** - We established a Friday Night film series and have shown 13 documentary films on the environment. We have average attendance of 25 including people from the community and have shown films such as *Gasland*, *The Last Mountain*, *Tapped*, *Bidder70*, *Chasing Ice*, etc. We had one book discussion on *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth*.
- b. **Adopt a Road – Youth Project** – Youth (Senior High, Junior High and 6<sup>th</sup> Grade RE class) have adopted a section of Crabbs Branch Parkway in Derwood, will pick up trash six times/year, and will learn about the environmental impact of littering first hand. The congregation obtains additional publicity from the sign that says “UUCR Youth Group”.
- c. **Family Environmental Field Trips** – Participated for the past three years in the Earth Day Potomac Watershed Cleanup sponsored by the Alice B. Ferguson Foundation by cleaning up a tributary of the Muddy Branch in Gaithersburg. Children, youth and adults learned the importance of removing plastic water bottles, tires, and other debris before they are washed downstream into the Potomac River. Also organized a trip to Poplar Island in the Chesapeake Bay to learn about the state's efforts to have school children nurture terrapins in their classrooms and release them in the bay.
- d. **Other** – A UUCR master teacher developed a curriculum *Caring for the Earth* for preschool – 1st grade children that was used in the Summer 2013. The new UU curriculum *World of Wonder* for Kindergarten – 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

### 3. Environmental Justice projects

- a. **Environmental Justice Awareness** – Conducted the UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE) environmental justice curriculum *Our Place in the Web of Life* to deepen our understanding of where UUCR fits in the complex set of interdependent relationships regarding where our water, waste, energy, and food comes from and goes to. Wrote a series of 11 newsletter articles about various aspects of environmental justice.
- b. **Eco-Justice Partnership** – Established a partnership 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. Removed trash and debris from the Kenilworth Park Bandalong litter trap along the Anacostia River and joined with Groundwork Anacostia and other community volunteers for the annual Anacostia Watershed cleanup on Earth Day.

#### 4. Sustainable Living projects

- a. **Solar Energy Partnership** - Inspired by a group of a group of high school students from Montgomery County Student Environmental Activists (MCSEA) who wanted to raise funds for a community solar project, we formed a Solar Working Group (SWG) to explore the feasibility of installing solar panels on the UUCR roofs. The SWG kept working after the student fundraising fell through. The Board of Trustees signed a contract with a commercial solar firm in February 2015 to install a 42.7 kilowatt system that will generate approximately 35% of UUCR's electricity needs under a Power Purchase Agreement. The panels should be installed in June.
- b. **Energy Efficiency and Conservation** – Conducted a forum *Logistics and Dollars of Going Green* to allow members of the congregation to learn from one another about green steps they have taken. Tracked the congregation's electricity and gas usage from 2010 to 2014. The son of a Green Team member analyzed the data and created a greenhouse gas emission report that will serve as a baseline against which to measure future energy use.
- c. **Renewable Energy (Wind)** – Advocated for building wind farms in Maryland by attending rallies in Annapolis, signing postcards, and writing to legislators. Worked collaboratively with Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN), UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland, and Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light. Developed a handout *Switching to Wind Energy* and publicized opportunities to switch to wind power through a group purchase facilitated by Groundswell and GWIPL.
- d. **REduce, REcycle, REuse = RESPECT and Green Purchasing** – The congregation purchased new recycling containers and switched to a more environmentally friendly and local trash/recycling hauler that was less expensive. Also switched to paper products (toilet paper and folded paper towels) made from recycled content, again less expensive. Youth use only re-usable plates, bowls, cups in downstairs area. Fellowship Dinner table hosts are asked to bring re-usable rather than disposable plates and tableware. Coffee grounds are saved and placed on acid loving azaleas. Bottled water is no longer used at events.
- e. **Water Conservation, Sustainable Landscaping, Ecological Gardening** – A rain barrel was installed in the courtyard. A small native plant garden was installed. Work continues on removing invasive species (English ivy, garlic mustard, and bush honeysuckle) from the property. Sponsored a presentation by a Master Gardener on “Less Lawn, More Life” to promote planting more trees, bushes and native plants instead of lawn. Participated in an interfaith workshop on “Greening Our Sacred Grounds”. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade class installed a small demonstration rain garden.
- f. **Ethical Eating** – Activities have focused on educating people about a plant based diet and providing opportunities to eat and share vegan food. Three of the Friday Night films were about ethical eating - *Food Inc*, *Forks Over Knives*, and *Nothing Like Chocolate*. A new section on Conscious Consumption was added to the congregation library and stocked with books and DVDs. A vegan recipe exchange and lunch was offered as part of the Action Auction. Do It Day volunteers were treated to a vegan lunch.
- g. **Education and Advocacy on Fracking** - Joined other environmental and faith groups to march and lobby in Annapolis and Washington, D.C. against fracking. Hosted CCAN's showing of the film *Triple Divide* about fracking. Advocated against a proposal by Dominion Resources to create a natural gas export plant at Cove Point in Calvert County.