



**going
green**
beyond belief

The UUA President's report
in response to the 2010

**Green Revolution in
Religion Business Resolution**



Going Green Beyond Belief



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

Going Green Beyond Belief

The UUA President's report in response to the 2010 "Green Revolution in Religion Business Resolution"

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“We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted knowing that they hold future promise... It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for (the Lord’s) grace to enter and do the rest.”

—Salvadoran Roman Catholic Archbishop Oscar Romero

Going Green Beyond Belief

This is a special year for the [Unitarian Universalist Association](#) (UUA). In addition to celebrating the UUA’s 50th anniversary, we are recognizing our commitment to and reflecting on our progress in the areas of environmental justice, environmental stewardship, environmental ministry, and related environmental issues.

Environmentalism, broadly conceived, is in the very soul of Unitarian Universalism, as demonstrated by the commitment and efforts of Unitarian Universalists (UU) and our close friends—from Thoreau to Joanna Macy, from every person who commits to Ethical Eating to passionate activists such as UU Tim DeChristopher, who faces 10 years in federal prison for disrupting a federal oil and gas lease in Utah.

It has been 15 years since “[Environmental Justice](#),” the historic General Assembly resolution, was passed in 1994, directing us to focus on environmental justice and environmental stewardship. We UUs have a deep and thoughtful connection to the Earth that extends much further back. Indeed, a special affinity to the natural world infuses the entire spirit of Unitarian Universalism, as reflected in our seventh principle: “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are part.”

Today, many of us see environmental issues as among the most urgent and critical matters of our time. Environmental justice is something which I—like many UUs and others—embrace with particular passion. Our 50th anniversary celebration presents an important opportunity to reflect on what we have done, so far, in regards to environmental ministries, including the areas of environmental justice and stewardship, biodiversity and ecosystem protection, and environmental restoration—and to more firmly set our course for the future.

The cornerstones of the UUA work around environmental issues are the [Green Sanctuary Program](#) and the [UU Ministry for Earth](#) (UUMFE), a UUA affiliate. For over twenty years, the UUMFE (originally known as the Seventh Principle Project) has helped bring environmental issues and environmental justice to the forefront of the work of Unitarian Universalism. Until 2008, the UUMFE administered the Green Sanctuary Program, through which congregations are recognized and accredited for broad-based environmental activities. The Green Sanctuary Program grew so successful that it required more structural support, and three years ago, the UUA, through its Congressional Stewardship Services office, assumed responsibility for it. Today, the Green Sanctuary Program and the UUMFE work closely together on a wide variety of environmental projects and initiatives, and they support Districts and congregations in their environmental work.

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The Green Sanctuary Program has become a central aspect of many UU congregations and the UUA more broadly. There are currently 165 accredited Green Sanctuary congregations and another five in re-accreditation candidacy (as they've been accredited for over four years and are officially re-engaging in the program). There are also 109 in candidacy for green accreditation. That's a total of 279 congregations officially engaged in the program. Seven of these are Canadian congregations; in the U.S., 43 states and the District of Columbia have congregations in the program. All 19 UUA Districts are represented. The number continues to grow nearly weekly, and we are very excited by our success.

But there is so much more to be done. In "[The Green Revolution in Religion Resolution](#)", the General Assembly seeks to see all member congregations support the Green Sanctuary Program and apply for Green Sanctuary accreditation.

Where are we now, and where have we yet to go? This report addresses the Association's progress in promoting environmental ministry. It also includes recommendations for continuing action in the 21st century.

Where We Are Coming From

Since the 1960s, when the environmental movement in the U.S. began to gather momentum, there has been significant interest among many UUs in issues of environmentalism. This response was not surprising, since UUs have a longstanding interest in the natural world, from our continuing interest in the Transcendentalists, to our Judeo-Christian roots which call us to be stewards of the Earth, to our recognition of nature-centered traditions including Paganism.

But, over the next decades, many UUs became concerned that mainstream environmentalists focused on wildlife protection and preserving the wilderness while ignoring other social justice issues such as racism and poverty. It had become increasingly clear that pollution and environmental problems had their biggest impact on people who were economically disadvantaged and otherwise disempowered. UUs—for whom interconnectedness of all things is paramount—began to discuss the concept of environmental justice, and how our concern for preserving the natural world must be addressed concurrently with concerns about racism, economic justice, and other issues.

In 1994, the UUA gave a formal recognition to environmental justice through two General Assembly statements. A Business Resolution called "[United Nations and Earth Day Celebrations](#)" called for attention to environmental justice in connection to international social justice work. The GA also adopted the historic "[Environmental Justice](#)" resolution, addressing head-on the issues of environmental racism and environmental justice, and directing UUs to focus their efforts in this area.

In the meantime, the Seventh Principle Project, which later was renamed the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth (UUMFE), was launched to promote environmental ministries among UU congregations, and it began the Green Sanctuary Program, to assist congregations in going green. The Green Sanctuary Program became so popular that the UUA took over its administration in 2008.

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As well, the General Assembly issued a number of resolutions to emphasize the UUA's commitment to environmental ministry, including, in 2006, [The Threat of Global Warming / Climate Change](#). At the 2010 General Assembly, delegates passed "[The Green Revolution in Religion: 2010 Business Resolution](#)," known as GRRBR. It called upon member congregations to make a special effort this year, 2011, to participate in the UUA's ongoing efforts in environmental justice, environmental stewardship, biodiversity, and related issues, and to "reflect on the religious teachings and experiences that inspire Unitarian Universalists in this important work ..."

GRRBR also encouraged all congregations to not only support the Green Sanctuary program but to apply for Green Sanctuary accreditation. And it asked for the UUA President to report to the 2011 General Assembly on the association's progress in the environmental area. This report is the formal response to that request.

Some people find the title "The Green Revolution in Religion Business Resolution" troubling. The term "the Green Revolution" refers to research, development, and technology-transfer initiatives between the 1940s and 1970s that increased agriculture production around the world. The intent of the Green Revolution was to produce more food for a growing population and abolish hunger; however, narrowly focusing on increasing production failed to address the problems of lack of infrastructure, governmental corruption, and distribution of economic power, especially access to land and purchasing power. One of the unintended consequences of the Green Revolution was that farming became more petro-dependent; also, focusing on high-yield crops limited diversity and sustainability, both important to successful production.

From an anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural lens, it is hard to celebrate "The Green Revolution" because it actually increased economic injustice and hunger in many cases, and left us all in a place of unintended and unknown consequences. This report, written in response to the 2010 "The Green Revolution in Religion Business Resolution," seeks to ensure environmental justice through environmental ministry; as such, we have entitled it "Going Green Beyond Belief," and do not use in it the language of "the Green Revolution".

In the Green: What We're Doing

The environmental ministry of the UUA and its affiliates, districts and congregations takes many forms, and continues to expand quite rapidly with new initiatives both large and small. It is clear that a commitment to environmental ministry is a very high priority among UUs. As one strong example, nearly 33 percent of congregations have voted to add [Ethical Eating](#) to the 2011 General Assembly agenda as a [Statement of Conscience](#), a remarkably high number. And, as revealed in a poll, 74 percent of participating congregations reported that they are doing activities related to Ethical Eating, including supporting local agriculture and engaging in education of food production issues.

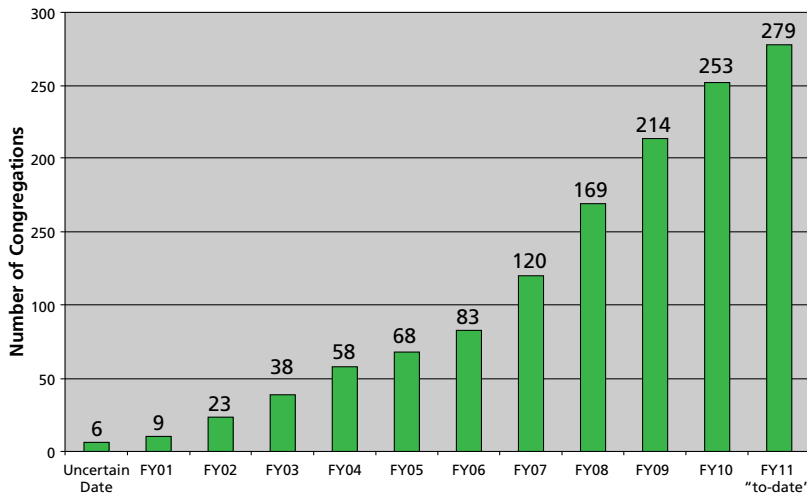
The following report—which is by no means exhaustive—highlights many of our green efforts. Our hope is to inform and inspire, to show what is now being done, and, ultimately, to offer recommendations for going forward into a greener future.

Green Sanctuary Program



The [Green Sanctuary Program](#) is a cornerstone of the UU commitment to environmental ministry. It provides congregations with a framework for living out our commitment to the Earth, and assists them in becoming accredited according to the program's requirements. The [Green Sanctuary Manual](#) offers a useful framework with specific guidelines for congregations that wish to become part of the Green Sanctuary Program. As noted in our introduction, 279 congregations are officially engaged in the Green Sanctuary Program, with more applying for candidacy all the time. Our goal, of course, is to have 100 percent participation by our congregations in the Green Sanctuary Program.

Total Congregations Involved in the Green Sanctuary Program



Growth of the Program.

When the UUA took over the Green Sanctuary Program in July 2008, there were 169 congregations formally involved. The addition of 110 congregations to the program represents a 65 percent growth of congregations participating. This demonstrates not only the success of the UUA in managing the program but also congregations' willingness to take on environmental ministries.

Green Sanctuary candidacy, accreditation, and re-accreditation applications are accepted year-round.

(Please send an electronic version of your application to uua_greensanctuary@uua.org or Rnelson@uua.org whenever your application is ready. Turn-around time for applications is approximately one month.)



All Souls Church, Unitarian in Washington, DC celebrates accreditation with a jumbo Green Sanctuary certificate.

Due to the tremendous growth and popularity of the Green Sanctuary Program among UU congregations, the UUA Leadership Council recently approved a fiscal year 2012 budget that included funding for a full-time Environmental Stewardship Manager at the UUA, an increased commitment of resources which reflects [UUA President Rev. Peter Morales'](#) passion for environmental justice.

[Robin Nelson](#), currently Congregational Stewardship Services Program Manager, will transition to this position on July 1st, 2011. (Since July 2008, Robin has worked with the Green Sanctuary Program one-third time.) Beginning in July, Robin

will focus on five components of environmental stewardship:

- Develop already-targeted resources for congregations
- Highlight and encourage congregations to participate in environmental stewardship efforts

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- Enable congregations to teach other congregations about religious-environmental work
- Partner with other UUA staff groups to bring environmental components into all of our work
- Further our partnerships with affiliate UU organizations and other environmental organizations.

The Green Sanctuary Program's major steps this year include:



Launch of the Green Sanctuary blog, which highlights the work of UU congregations engaging in the Green Sanctuary program, provides resources and ideas, and shares information. From its launch on July 1 through May 27, it posted 79 blogs featuring 25 congregations, engaging 12 guest authors, highlighting 28 resources, and providing seven updates about the program: <http://greensanctuary.blogs.uua.org/>

Reflections on the Gulf Coast. In August, the Program partnered with the UUMFE to bring “**Reflections on the Gulf Coast,**” which encouraged congregations to reflect and act on the themes of water with the Gulf of Mexico and connections to the disasters and hope that can be found there.

10/10/10 Global Work Parties + 350.org On Oct. 10, 2010, UUMFE invited UUs to join with the Green Sanctuary Program in prayer, meditation, action, and celebration in collaboration with 350.org in a day of action for climate justice. UUs from almost 90 congregations joined people in 188 countries to participate in 7,347 Global Work Party events.



Work with Districts. Robin Nelson, Green Sanctuary Program Manager, presented at the Ohio-Meadville District's Green Leadership Conference in late October and the Northern New England District's Environmental Sustainability and Justice Conference in early November.



UU Fellowship of St. Augustine held a 350.org day including demonstrations on worm farming and solar cooking, information on garbage and recycling, planting blueberry bushes and the herb garden, a huge 350.org banner pre-painted and ready for the kids to decorate. The children also painted our rain barrel. Inside the Fellowship building, we had a “Meatless Monday” sign-up sheet, as well as a project for the children where they could make their own decorated baskets using natural and found materials. In the sanctuary, we screened the movie, “The End of Suburbia.”

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Resources. The Program continues to review resources for Green Sanctuaries including green books and films. Currently, reviews of Children's Books and films are [compiled](#). Additional films, additional books, curricula, and websites will be added periodically.

Collaboration with Energy Star for Congregations. "Energy Star for Congregations" is an Energy Star tool that offers free benchmarking program for tracking a congregations' energy use. We strongly encourage all congregations to register for this free program, so that they can track their energy use and make changes as needed. For more information, please go to: http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=small_business.sb_congregations or at <http://greensanctuary.blogs.uua.org/2010/12/21/energy-star-for-congregations/>



The UUA

In addition to committing more resources to the Green Sanctuary Program, Rev. Peter Morales, President of the UUA, has shown his commitment to the environment through his participation in the [UUA 40 Day Challenge for Earth Day video](#), which highlights the Association's staff members' commitments to an environmental action for 40 days. In the video, Rev. Morales invites UUs to participate in this year's 40/40 challenge along with UUA staff. The 40/40 Challenge encourages participants choose one of more of 40 listed actions for a 40-day pledge, or to create their own adventurous 40-day lifestyle change for the sake of the Earth and all who live here. At the start of the 40 days, each participating congregation [registered its Earth Day plans](#).

Here is a small sample of suggested actions to take for 40 days (or forever!):

- Bottle your own water! Say "yes" to tap water and "no" to disposable bottled water for 40 days. If you're not sure about your tap water, have it tested some time during the 40 days and install a filter if needed or use a pitcher with a filter.
- Watch the eight-minute video [The Story of Bottled Water](#) to learn why.
- Turn off the water after you wet your toothbrush.
- Every time you drink a glass of water over the 40 days, take a moment of gratitude for the abundance of water in your life.
- Reflect on the BP Oil Disaster of April 2010. Go 40 days without driving. If you don't drive anyway, see if you can go 40 days without getting into a car.



The Voices from the Heart, a Portsmouth based vocal group, presented the story of how the Earth and the Moon were separated by Water and all the creatures in it to South Church, a UU congregation in Portsmouth, HN. A workshop was held on the Saturday before the service where some of the puppets were made by the children (and some adults too) in our religious education program.

This 40/40 sample actions list was developed in collaboration with the UUA, UU Service Committee, Ethical Eating Core Team, Clean Water Action, and

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the Coalition for Waste Water Treatment. After your congregation has completed the challenge, please share what you did: Use the [Earth Day registration form](#) to write your narrative. Send photos and/or videos to envirojustice@uuministryforearth.org.

In addition, other actions by the UUA include:

Corporate Responsibility. Over the last four years, the UUA has been the [lead filer](#) on nine resolutions with five companies asking for sustainability reporting and steps to address climate change. In the case of Legg Mason, the filing resulted in a dialogue with the CEO and other top management in which the company agreed to the UUA's call for comprehensive sustainability reporting and actions to reduce their carbon footprint. In three other cases, the UUA has engaged in dialogue with top management and will continue to push them for better environmental performance. In the six cases where the resolutions have gone (or will go) to a vote, the UUA has sent representatives, usually from local congregations, to the annual meetings to present its case to top management, the board, and other shareholders. The UUA is an active member of the [Investor Network on Climate Risk](#) and the [Ceres Coalition](#). Tim Brennan, Treasurer for the UUA, was selected as a judge for the annual [Joan Bavaria Awards for Building Sustainability into the Capital Markets](#), presented by Ceres and [Trillium Asset Management](#) to individuals and organizations that have helped move the capital markets from a system focused on short-term profits toward one that balances financial prosperity with social and environmental health.

UUA Headquarters has taken a number of green steps; just a sample:

- Hired and worked with a consultant to review the feasibility of obtaining [LEED](#) (Leadership in Energy Efficiency and Design) certification for facilities (starting with 25 Beacon St.) Basic, low- or no-cost, energy and environmental efficiency measures have been started, with the review and evaluation process still underway.
- Instituted energy conservation practices with Operations Department staff for daily monitoring and reduction of energy usage (shutting off lighting, office equipment, and heating/cooling systems).
- Continue ongoing conversion program for office lighting to more efficient T-8 florescent fixtures (approximately 75% converted)
- Continue incandescent lighting conversion program to compact florescent for all chandeliers, wall sconces and security/safety lighting units left on for extended periods of time (approximately 80% completed)
- Purchase 30% of electricity from “green” sources provided by our energy supplier (these include solar, wind power, etc.)
- Increased committee teleconferencing/electronic meetings -- saving on transportation costs and environmental impacts
- Encourage staff alternative transportation to work (i.e. biking and walking), by providing on-site shower/changing facilities as well as secure bike storage
- Significantly reduced amount of printed materials, by doing many publications online

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- Increased recycling and decreased trash stream throughout headquarters facilities; in the last two years, ratio of trash to recycling has gone from 70% trash and 30% recycled, to 60% trash and 40% recycled
- During the last three years, moved from 20% to 90% Green Seal certified cleaning products; percentage of all paper goods used that contain some recycled content is nearly 90%; changed paper towel dispensers to controlled usage, single-sheet units; to reduce wastage; converted to filtered water cooler system from bottled water units (no vehicles needed for deliveries)
- Installed replacement low flow toilets, shower faucet flow restrictors throughout facility, when upgrading (wherever feasible)
- Utilize coffee service supplier providing Fair Trade certified products only, and divert majority of by-product into recycling or waste to fuel program; instead of trash

Partnership with Green Faith. The UUA and [GreenFaith](#) announced a collaboration to enroll UU leaders from around the US in the [GreenFaith Fellowship Program](#). This unique program helps leaders from diverse religious communities become effective religious-environmental leaders, through an 18-month education and training experience. To support the collaboration, GreenFaith will underwrite 50% of the tuition of four UU Fellows annually during 2011, 2012 and 2013. Two UU Fellows have already graduated from the program – the Rev. Peggy Clarke and the Rev. Wendy L. Bell. Two UU Fellows are in the program’s current class – Dr. Robin van Tine and the Rev. Amy Brooks.



Greening the General Assembly

In concert with our Seventh Principle and with urging from the UUMFE, since 2005 the [General Assembly \(GA\) Planning Committee](#) has been working toward the environmental sustainability of its meetings—the “Greening” of GA. Oftentimes, success is dependent on what destinations can offer, although the GA advocates to improve practice in each city. The Committee has entered into consultation with [Meet Green](#), experts in environmental stewardship with extensive knowledge of environmentally responsible meeting practices, to determine goals and monitor implementation of those practices.



Meet Green consultant Shawna McKinley with composting volunteers at GA.

Since 2005 green practices at General Assembly have:

- Saved enough energy to supply power to five homes for a year.
- Conserved enough water to fill 11,000 one-gallon milk jugs.

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- Reduced emissions equivalent to taking 17 cars off the road for a year.

We made some great progress at the 2010 General Assembly in Minneapolis.

- 46% less waste was produced in Minneapolis than Salt Lake in 2009. This is on top of a 53% reduction in onsite waste the year previous. Between 2008 and 2010 total waste from General Assembly has dropped from over 17,000 lbs to just 1,400 lbs.
- 76% of our waste was diverted from landfill – a record for both GA and the convention center. This represents fewer than half a pound of trash per attendee. That’s an impressive achievement when you consider the typical American produces about 4.5 pounds of waste per day.

Annual Greening Case Studies (*the following documents are PDF files*)

- [2010 Minneapolis, MN](#)
- [2009 Salt Lake City, UT](#)
- [2008 Fort Lauderdale, FL](#)
- [2007 Portland, OR](#)
- [2006 St. Louis, MO](#)
- [2005 Fort Worth, TX](#)

For more information contact generalassembly@uua.org.

UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE)

Since the Green Sanctuary Program was assumed by the UUA in 2008, the [UUMFE](#) has focused on other initiatives, including organizing comprehensive [annual Earth Day materials](#) for congregations and framing and organizing for environmental justice and advocacy by collaborating with other UU and interfaith organizations. This has been helped immeasurably by the presence of Environmental Justice Program Associate Rowan Van Ness through a partnership with the UUA.



Earth Day

UUMFE publishes resources annually to assist congregations in the celebration of Earth Day each April. These materials include action suggestions, topical research, valuable web links, and downloadable print materials.

In 2010, the focus of Earth Day celebrations was **Ethical Eating**. Congregations celebrated food and food justice in worship and activities following



Young people at Harmony UU Church in Ohio planted seedlings in an Earth Day celebration

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worship, in a year that marked the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. Through a partnership with the UUA Ethical Eating Core Team, the 40/40/40 for the Earth! Campaign was introduced, and in many congregations, at least 40 people made a specific pledge to eat more ethically for 40 days, in honor of the 40th Anniversary. About 150 congregations registered their participation in Earth Day.

In 2011, the theme has focused on **Sacred Waters**, recognizing the first anniversary of the BP Oil Disaster off the Gulf Coast, named the most devastating environmental disaster in US history.

Earth Day 2009

http://www.uuministryforearth.org/Earth_Day_2009

Earth Day 2010: Food & Environmental Justice

http://www.uuministryforearth.org/earth_day_resources

UU campaign honors Earth Day's 40th anniversary

<http://www.uuworld.org/news/articles/160449.shtml>

Hundreds of congregations mark 40th Earth Day

<http://www.uuworld.org/news/articles/162587.shtml>

UUs Celebrate Earth Day and Commit to Ethical Eating

<http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/160964.shtml>

Earth Day 2011: Sacred Waters

<http://www.uuministryforearth.org/2011-ED-MainPage>

UUs Celebrate Earth Day with Theme of Sacred Waters

<http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/181760.shtml>

10/24/2009: International Day of Climate Action with 350.org

UUMFE, UUA Washington Office for Advocacy, UU Service Committee, UU United Nations Office, and the UU State Advocacy Networks were instrumental. The [International Day of Climate Action](#), organized by [350.org](#), was a worldwide initiative comprised of more than 2,000 events in over 140 nations. The UUMFE and UUA endorsed the 350.org campaign, which is dedicated to creating an equitable global climate treaty that lowers carbon dioxide below 350 parts per million. More than 100 congregations participated. UU Ministers Rev. Fred Small and Rev. Jim Scott composed and arranged a song for the campaign, "[Three-Five-Oh](#)," complete with music video, featured on 350.org's website, and heard and sung by congregations and others across the country and around the world.



A representative from the Coalition of Immokalee shares a story for all ages at Earth Day Service at the First UU Church in Orlando.



UU Congregation at Rock Tavern participated in wetlands cleanup at last remaining dairy farm in the community.



UU Church of Binghamton, NY celebrates 350.org.

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350.org International Day of Climate Action Press Materials:

<http://www.uua.org/pressroom/mediakit/350/index.shtml>

International Day of Climate Action: October 24th, 2009:

<http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/calendar/151654.shtml>

UU congregations observe International Day of Climate Action:

<http://www.uuworld.org/news/articles/152068.shtml>

UUA President Issues Statement of Support for the International Day of Climate Action:

<http://www.uua.org/pressroom/pressreleases/151588.shtml>

10/10/10: Global Work Parties

On October 10, 2010, UUs across the country participated in the [10/10/10 Global Work Party](#). Coordinated by 350.org, this was an international grassroots initiative encouraging politicians to take action against global warming. More than 7,000 events were held in 188 countries. With encouragement from the UUMFE, 89 UUA congregations and two UU statewide networks supported the 10/10/10 Global Work Party.



Westwood Unitarian Universalist Congregation members pose for a picture on the 10/10/10 Global Work Party day.

Congregations That Participated in the 10/10/10 Global Work Party:

<http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/issues/environmentaljustice/climatechange/172403.shtml>

89 UU congregations join Global Day of Action:

<http://www.uuworld.org/news/articles/172440.shtml>

More Than 80 UUA Congregations Participate in 10/10/10 Global Work Party (News Story & Media Coverage):

<http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/172405.shtml>

Environmental Justice Program Associate

The UUMFE Program Associate currently works in the UUA Boston office to connect UUs to the significant environment and justice issues and action opportunities. This position is funded by a generous grant from the UUA.

Rowan Van Ness, Environmental Justice Program Associate, represents UUs at Earth Day rally



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Social Media and Communications

UUMFE established a Facebook presence to connect with people with articles, news, resources, and opportunities to take action. It also manages the Green Sanctuary and Global Warming email lists.

- Visit www.uuministryforearth.org to check the latest news, share comments and be inspired
- UUMFE on Facebook: Search for 'Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth' and share your successes and issues
- UUMFE eNEWS: Electronic email newsletter. Sign up on our website.
- UUMFE Newsletter published fall, winter and spring. Available online, or by mail to members.
- Global Warming Email Discussion List: <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/globalwarming>
- Green Sanctuary Email Discussion List
<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/greensanctuary>

Sign-On Letters

The UUA and UUMFE have signed onto hundreds of letters sent to the US President, Congress, and governmental agency secretaries (including the Environmental Protection Agency), reflecting the values



UU Ministers and Lay Leaders attend Climate Witness at the US Capitol

passed by General Assemblies in Statements of Conscience, [Actions of Immediate Witness](#), and General Resolutions. These include letters opposing coastal drilling for oil, in favor of extending low-income housing credits for Gulf Coast victims, in favor of a stimulus package to fund “green jobs,” and making specific recommendations for amendments to congressional bills to strengthen their support of the environment.

Green Papers

The UUMFE presented a series of “[green papers](#)” on the broad topic of environment and justice, as well as specific focus areas such as food, climate disruption,

environment and health, and animal welfare. The papers are a result of a collaborative review and edit process with over 30 ministers, lay UUs, and UUA staff. The papers are intended to continue the conversation about what environmental justice is, its history within Unitarian Universalism, and how it can be moved forward by congregations and the Association.

Partnerships with Districts

UUMFE has received a [\\$6,000 challenge grant](#) from the UU Funding Program to provide support for UUA Districts furthering the work of building a just and sustainable future for life on our planet. The grant provided for direct work with four Districts, but also provides a template for other Districts or regions to use in strengthening their Earth ministry. It has also given UUMFE the opportunity to build organizational

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capacity. Participants include [Northern New England, St. Lawrence](#), [Ohio Meadville](#), and [Metro New York Districts](#).

Environmental Justice Curriculum

This innovative, values-based curriculum will involve individual congregants and UU leaders in a highly experiential process, designed to reach people at multiple levels (intellectual, emotional, kinesthetic, practical) in order to stimulate whole-systems thinking, increased appreciation of one's interdependence with all of Creation, deepened ethical and spiritual discernment, personal behavioral change, and collective congregational advocacy. It will be one of the first national curricula of any faith tradition to deeply link anti-racism/anti-oppression training with environmental theology, spirituality, ethics and advocacy. The first module has been piloted, and the full development of the curriculum is pending funding.



Organizers for the Awakening the Dreamer Symposium section of the Northern New England District Environmental Sustainability and Justice Conference.

UU Climate Change Coalition

UU leaders from the UUA, UUMFE, UU United Nations Office, and UU State Advocacy Networks have come together to collaborate on issues of climate change, to make their joint work more effective.

Weaving justice into environmental work

The UUMFE board decided to deepen its commitment to environmental justice by devoting resources to a continuing education training on anti-racism and environmental justice.

UUMFE Timeline A [full timeline of UUMFE activities](#).

UU Service Committee (UUSC)

Water injustice in the United States and around the world has a class, race and gender dimension. Women and girls must spend 2 to 4 hours daily collecting and treating water, time that could be spent on education or income-generating activities. In Boston Water and Sewer's service area, for every 1% increase in the population of a ward of people of color, there is 4% increase in the incidence of water shutoffs. In California,



11.5 million people are drinking water that violates state and federal safe drinking water laws, many in rural communities that work in the agricultural industry. Hydraulic fracturing, the process to extract natural gas that breaks through geologic formations with chemicals and high pressure water, received an exemption from regulation under the [Safe](#)

[Drinking Water Act in 2005](#); communities in many states bear the burden passed on by the gas industry of cleaning up drinking water contaminated by the process. As the rates for water increase, water shut-offs are disproportionately affecting people living with disabilities, serious illness, children, and those who have limited fixed incomes.

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Communities across the globe and in the U.S. are organizing to “right these water wrongs” by enacting the [human right to water](#) where it does not protect us -- as in the United States -- and requiring governments to fulfill their obligations where they have adopted the human right to water. And they are having success.

- With support from [UUSC](#) in Ecuador, [El Movimiento Mi Cometa](#) is working to implement the new constitution that enshrines the rights of nature, and the human right to water.
- In Kenya, Soil Farm Multi Culture Group’s ground breaking “hope in crops” movement is protecting the last remaining rainforest and the watershed of the Nile, while providing heirloom medicinal and food crops to communities and the natural forest habitat to future generations.
- In California, UUSC and [UU Legislative Ministry of California](#) work with the Environmental Justice Coalition on Water, the [Community Water Center](#), [Clean Water Action](#) and the [Winnemem Wintu people](#) to bring forward a historic package of bills that, if adopted, will make the state the first to enshrine a human right to water – and will require state funding agencies to redress the legacy of decades of prioritizing development and agriculture over the environment and communities, winning bipartisan support along the way.
- In Boston, [Boston Water and Sewer](#) has developed a “[right of service](#)” program that provides some protections against shutoffs for marginalized people – a first step in the right direction.

UUSC, with partners and allies like Clean Water Action, organized the mission to the U.S. by the United Nations independent expert on the human right to water and sanitation, Ms. Catarina de Albuquerque, to assess the situation of the human right to water and sanitation. During the mission, February 22-March 4, 2011, she visited California, Massachusetts and Washington, D.C., where she



Rev. Schulz visiting with the Human Rights Circus youth in Quito, Ecuador – the youth are working for the human right to water and against xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination.



The Isla Santay, the houses of the fisher people, looking across the Guayas River to the port at Guayaquil, Ecuador by Arturo Morales



Hope in Crops photo of the women in a small community in Kenya who are in the program.

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heard from communities affected by water and sanitation problems. She reported to the U.S. government her findings that conditions in some communities and for the homeless were worse than in some developing countries she has visited. She also witnessed efforts by communities to build a “new water paradigm,” one that puts justice and the environment at the center of policy.

UUSC’s environmental justice work to promote and defend the human right to water – access to safe, sufficient water for daily human needs – is having an impact, but there is much to be done to protect access to water for all, particularly with climate disruption impacting water resources and making drinking water services ever more expensive. Eliminating disproportionate subsidies to some economic sectors, while making basic services financially sustainable, will make the human right to water a reality in the U.S. and overseas.

During fiscal year 2011, the UN recognized access to safe drinking water and sanitation as a human right. Meanwhile, UUSC’s partners made significant advancements participating in international meetings and global consultations.

Eye-to-Eye Partnerships

- In Guatemala, UUSC’s partner, the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the Americas -- Sipakapa and the [Commission for Peace and Ecology](#) (COPAE), won a significant victory at the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights when the Commission issued precautionary measures in their favor and against the government of Guatemala, requesting that the government address human rights to water and health violations associated with gold mining activities in the country.
- UUSC’s partner the [Habitat International Coalition](#) (HIC-AL) made significant advancement towards defending the human right to water in Mexico. For the first time in the history of the country, a federal court agreed to hear a petition which claims that the country has violated its human right to water obligations to local communities.
- As a result of UUSC’s support and recommendation, UUSC partners -- the [Center for Human Rights and the Environment](#) (Argentina) and the [Asociacion Movimiento-Mi Cometa](#) (Ecuador) -- were in Geneva in September 2010 to present their work before the Human Rights Council during the consultations on good practices related to the provision of human right to water and sanitation.
- With UUSC’s support, partners the [Asia Pacific Research Network](#) (Philippines) and the Center for Human Rights and the Environment (Argentina) participated in the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (COP-16) held in Cancun, Mexico in December 2010. Together with other social justice activists from around the world, UUSC’s partners called on governments to keep their commitments to reduce carbon emission and address the impact of climate change on human rights, particularly in developing countries
- UUSC and partner the [Tanzania Gender and Networking Program](#) (TGNP) are working with a team on students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on an innovative project called [Advancing the Quest for Uninterrupted Access](#) (AQUA). The project will support access to safe drinking water and sanitation in Tanzania.



Blue Water tanks on tops of houses with out running water in Guayaquil.

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Local Human Right to Water Policy in the U.S. (California)

UUSC is working with the Environmental Justice Coalition on Water and the UU Legislative Ministry of California on a new human right to water legislation in California called [A.B.685](#). The bill seeks to make it law in California for every human being to have the right to clean, affordable, and accessible water for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes, adequate for the health and well-being of the individual and family.

The United Nations Affirms the Human Right to Water

The efforts of UUSC and other human rights allies to ensure the recognition of the human right to water at the global level yielded tremendous results in FY11. The UN General Assembly recognized “the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human right” in July 2010. The Human Rights Council (HRC) followed the General Assembly in September 2010 when it reaffirmed that [safe drinking water and sanitation is a human right](#). The Council stated that “the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living and inextricably related to the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as well as the right to life and human dignity.”



Rev. Ann Hoffman (UU LMCA) pictures from the announcement of AB 685 and the IE's visit to the Winnemem Wintu and northern CA

UU-United Nations Office



The [Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office](#) (UU-UNO) has contributed to environmental stewardship goals through its ambitious Climate Change Initiative, which includes:

- The world-class [UU-UNO Climate Portal](#) website with extensive resources on climate action, impacts, and science.
- Editor for the [Climate Statement of the UN-NGO Committee on Sustainable Development](#), given to leaders at the Copenhagen and Cancun conferences.
- “Countering the Contrarians” including the popular [one-liner responses to pseudo-scientific climate fallacies](#).
- Climate talks at UU congregations, environmental, faith, and university groups.
- Cooperative action with other climate initiatives.



Jan and Lynn Dash at the Copenhagen Cop15 Climate Conference.

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Districts and Congregations

The many and varied environmental justice projects of our congregations are impressive in their breadth and scope—from legislative activism to community partnerships, from educational programs to greening of the church buildings, and much more. We express our deep gratitude and respect for all our congregations in their environmental efforts, and we share some stories here to inspire and support each other's efforts.

Please note – this is just a small sample of the work that each of these districts and congregations is doing! And many others are engaged in a wide variety of activities to support environmental justice and stewardship. We hope these examples will give a broad flavor of steps other congregations may take.

Ballou Channing District Various UU Congregations have installed solar panels at the meetinghouse, and removed an old underground oil tank from church property and abated oil contamination in surrounding soil. Some work with area human services organizations to distribute information about fuel assistance and energy conservation to low-income households, and educated congregation about barter/exchange activities so members borrow tools and equipment rather than purchase new.

Florida District The [UU Society of the Daytona Beach Area](#) and the [UU Church of Tallahassee](#) have installed solar panels. The UU Church of Tampa's sermon on Earth Day 2011 by the Rev. Dr. Sara Zimmerman addressed deniers of global climate change. The [UU Fellowship of Key West](#) is in constant partnership with environmental organizations such as [Reef Relief](#), and it regularly advocates on environmental issues, including appearing as a group at City Commission meetings wearing green "It's Easy to be Green" gecko t-shirts with the name of the Fellowship on them.



UU Society of Daytona Beach Area sanctuary with solar panels.

The [First Unitarian Church of Orlando](#) has had an ongoing relationship with the [Coalition of Immokalee Workers](#) (CIW). They've participated in and supported CIW rallies, trying to increase pay for tomato pickers. For their 2010 Earth Day Service on Ethical Eating, they dedicated their service to farm workers and invited CIW as their special guests and "share the plate" recipient. Children and adults participated in a [variety of activities](#).

At the [UU Fellowship of Charlotte County](#), the Garden Group, a crew of five friends of the congregation and one member faithfully give at least



First Unitarian Church of Orlando participate in CIW picket and rally.

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four hours each week to reclaiming and caring for the natural habitat of the fellowship's two-acre plot. This extensive work has all been done through environmentally friendly, chemically free means. The [UU Church of Fort Myers](#) continues to tend the [Paul Holton Eco-Preserve](#), a backyard wildlife habitat surrounded by developments and gated communities that has been restored to native flora. The children in the faith development program learn about loving the Earth through organic gardening, combined with the Earth Wonders curriculum created by two of the church's members. This summer the Children's RE is offering a reasonably priced week-long summer camp called "Summer Eco-Camp: An Introduction to Florida Ecology Stewardship for Kids."

[Pacific Northwest District](#) has solidified a "Green Team" as a standing—rather than optional—function on its District Assembly planning team, with the mission of working with the host facility to uphold and augment practices that honor the seventh Principle. Many congregations in the past few years have added composting to the recycle options at church. Some have started gardens at church and compost on site; some have members who take the compostables to their home gardens. [Kitsap UU Fellowship](#) in Bremerton, WA, has been a leader in promoting church gardens among other congregations.

[Pacific South West District](#) uses recycled paper printed with soy ink for PR postcards (such as those for young adult camp), and the District newsletter and directory are now online. At District Assembly, people were encouraged to choose the vegan meal option.

[Prairie Star District](#) The [Nora Church in Hanska, MN](#), has erected a wind turbine; electricity will flow back onto the grid when it's in abundant supply. The [First Unitarian Church of Omaha](#) invited other UU congregations to participate in a spring Scavenger Hunt for recycling. At the [Bismarck-Mandan UU Fellowship](#), a member organized an evening of video clips, her music and discussion around the impact of oil and gas exploration in the [Bakken Shale](#) region in northwestern North Dakota.



Nora Church Turbine on May 2011.



Nancy Jo's Garden at Kitsap Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is tended by KUUF members, friends and youth with the help of youth attending the PNWD annual Goldmine Youth Leadership School. Produce is sold at the KUUF Farmer's Market, given to the Bremerton Foodline, and used to prepare KUUF's Thursday Lunch for neighbors who may be hungry or lonely.

[Northern New England District](#) dedicates a CO2 offset each year to environmental projects of the Chalice Lighters program, and held a conference on the environment last November.

[Ohio-Meadville District](#) The [Allegheny UU Church's](#) Green Sanctuary Team has signed up to purchase 100-percent wind energy for both the church and Unitarian House. The [Olmsted Unitarian Universalist Congregation](#) has replaced wherever possible all light bulbs with CFL bulbs, revamped the heating system into 4 separate zones

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and installed programmable thermostats. At the District Assembly in March, special care was taken with the commitment to going green—as a result, trash production was reduced by a whopping two-thirds from the year before. Congregational Green Sanctuary leaders met to learn more about the [UU Pennsylvania Legislative Advocacy Network](#) (UUPLAN), which is working on issues around the [Marcellus Shale](#) exploration and exploitation.

Other Neat Examples:

- The [UU Church of Elgin](#), IL kept a congregational blog during the 40/40/40 campaign, sharing their stories with each other: <http://newuu.com/40days/>. Multiple members contributed stories to this blog, sharing about their experiences with their pledges.
- The [First UU of Columbus](#), OH, reviewed a proposal from the city to create a rain garden (bio-swale) that will do much to reduce flooding and icing around its property, and will reduce storm surges into the Olentangy River. Long-term maintenance costs for the church appear to be minimal, and the community benefits large. The Green Team recommends going forward with the plan.
- The [UU Church of Brunswick](#), ME partnered with [Habitat for Humanity/7 Rivers](#), over 10 members of this congregation weatherized 10 houses of people with low-incomes and 10 houses of members of their congregation. Weatherization decreases energy usage, thus reducing greenhouse gas pollution and costs associated with energy use.
- The [Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church](#) in Charlottesville, VA, explored the source of energy in their own congregation and tracked it back to mountaintop removal (MTR) mining practices. They trekked out to West Virginia to witness MTR and hear from people affected by the issue and to connect with the UU Congregation in Charleston, WV. They have begun holding annual, interfaith vigils for the mountains and the people, bringing some of the mountain culture to life, standing witness, and raising money for organizations working to end MTR. They put together a [YouTube video](#) that came out of their experience in WV .

[UU Statewide Advocacy Networks](#) (UUSANs) - Changing the Law

Efforts to change state laws to support the environment are at the forefront of UU work in several regions. In [Washington state](#), UUs are in three of the eight major leadership roles in the [Industrial Areas Foundation](#) (IAF)-Northwest and [SustainableWorks](#), which helped get historic green jobs legislation enacted in the state last year, which



Green for All called “the most comprehensive and groundbreaking green-jobs legislation of our time.” It is based on a model that ties together a well-defined jobs pipeline from disadvantaged constituencies with living-wage standards and significant environmental benefits. April Osborne of the [University Unitarian Church](#) in Seattle, WA is the president of the SustainableWorks



Two of five teams from Unitarian Universalist Church of Brunswick, Maine setting out to weatherize low income homes for Habitat for Humanity/Seven Rivers.

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board, while Jerry White of the [UU Church of Spokane](#) is vice president. Jennifer Bright of the University Unitarian Church in Seattle is treasurer of the IAF-Northwest board. IAF-Northwest has been involved in a number of other very significant projects including this [short video](#).

Particularly targeted and impressive are the efforts by the [Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland](#). Since its inception in 2005, one of its priorities has been to support legislation coming before the Maryland General Assembly that would help protect our environment and help slow climate change. It has supported a number of new laws that have been passed, including the 2007 *Clean Cars Act*, which reduces tailpipe emissions levels and strengthened fuel economy standards; the 2006 *Healthy Air Act*, which regulates emissions levels for power plants and was the strongest air pollution law in the country; and the *Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act of 2009 (GGERA)*, which sets a cap on global warming pollution in Maryland. It has also worked on the federal level. Its Task Force Co-Chair, Dave Hackett, testified before the federal EPA in 2009 in support of the agency's finding that greenhouse gases can be regulated under the Clean Air Act. (For an article about this testimony in *UU World*, [click here.](#))



Gov. Martin O'Malley Global Warming Rally 2008.



Governor's Offshore Wind Press Conference March 2011, Malcolm Woolf Director, MD Energy Administration with UUs.

Recommendations

The environmental ministry efforts of our congregations, districts, the UUA and its affiliates are impressive. But we recognize that, in some ways, we are only getting started. If we are to live the Seventh Principle, and, by it, save our planet home Earth, we must continue our work with renewed passion.

Our recommendations for moving ahead include that we:

- Share the stories of congregations doing significant environmental ministries.
- Be in communication with leaders of UU environmental groups to strategize about how environmental work can be fully integrated into Unitarian Universalism.
- Develop programs that create pathways to connect environmental activities with UUism.
- Develop models to enable congregations to teach other congregations about environmental work.
- Increase congregational participation in the Green Sanctuary Program to 40% of UU congregations in the next 5 years.
- Actively highlight the work of UU congregations and the Green Sanctuary program to other faith communities, offering it as a model for other faith groups.
- Recognize that UU SANs can be major grassroots resources for mobilizing UUs as established SANs represent approximately 53% of member of congregations and 48% of UU congregations.
- Explore the use of web-based organizing and other social media.
- Continue shareholder advocacy for environmental initiatives.
- Ensure UUA staff groups work together to bring environmental components into environmental ministry and coordinate specific environmental initiatives
- Develop a vision for UU environmental ministry: including environmental justice, and environmental stewardship as a core focus.

It is our responsibility as people of faith to support environmental ministries. We know that there are things that we can do as individuals, as congregations, and as a faith community to slow down, if not reverse, the trend of climate change. And so we are called to do so.

Join us... we're **Going Green Beyond Belief**.







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