

From the Governing Board

Green Congregation Update

EARTH DAY EVERY DAY: Green Channing

Of the 30 people who responded to our Home-grown Green Survey last summer, 18 were using compact fluorescent or LED light bulbs, 17 were buying mostly RI produce or products, 16 were recycling as much as possible, 13 were composting their yard waste, 11 were driving hybrid or fuel efficient cars, with two more planning make their next car a hybrid, and 10 were using cloth shopping bags. This is just a tiny snapshot of Channing people's efforts to reduce their carbon footprints. We'll share more of the results in future issues of *The Catalyst*.

Why do all this? Because a great many of us have recognized global warming as accelerating process to which humans (especially Americans) have contributed hugely since the start of the industrial revolution. And we have accepted that as people of faith, we have a spiritual, moral and ethical obligation to take immediate and dramatic action to try to slow it, if not reverse it. This isn't something to do at our convenience, or when we can afford it. We need to do it, and we need to start yesterday!

The survey was part of Channing's preparation for Green Sanctuary certification—the UUA Ministry for Earth's program, whose goals are to build awareness of societal environmental issues among UUs, to generate commitment for personal lifestyle changes, to motivate UUs to community action on environmental issues, to build a connection between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness, and to build awareness of and rectify environmental injustices.

For many of us, a Hot Topic discussion in Spring, 2006 sparked concern about global warming, and the Social Justice Committee's decision to make the subject its theme for 2006-07 fanned that spark. In May 2007, the Governing Board endorsed our Green Sanctuary candidacy, and the Green Congregation Committee, composed of concerned members and friends, and of standing committee representatives, convened in June to begin preparing our application. We requested a RISE energy audit of our properties, performed our own comprehensive audit of Channing policies and practices, conducted the congregational survey, and formulated the just-completed action plan. The next step is to apply for candidacy, after which we'll spend up to two years fulfilling the plan, and then apply for certification.

Our plan includes projects in four categories (Earth Justice, Worship and Celebration, Religious Education, and Sustainable Living) and three classifications (initiated projects to continue, projects to initiate, and projects to consider for future recertification.) Examples of projects include an intergenerational collaboration to create a new earth banner and an earth-themed song for Channing (Worship), mapping out a car-pooling initiative (RE), creating and distributing basic weatherization kits for

low-income home owners and renters, in collaboration with local assistance organizations (Earth Justice), and researching and encouraging the use of earth-friendly cleaning and office products, and non-disposable dishes and utensils for church functions (Sustainability).

Throughout this process, we've used various outreach methods to involve the congregation in what we're doing, and what they can do, because our plan is just ink on paper, if it doesn't reflect the "ownership" of our whole congregation. Our ultimate goal is permanent change on all levels—individual, family, congregation, community, state, nation, world! It needn't be grim. We deal in hope.

And we've already started. The list of projects we've undertaken goes on for two pages. They include our "EcoBits & Tips" and "Green Corner" columns, our partnership status in People's Power & Light (see Don Malinon's article in this issue,) our local and organic potluck dinners, and our participation in Step It Up and other interfaith and community events. They include environmental considerations by Worship and RE, by the Fellowship and Property Committees, in mission writing and Strategic Planning priorities.

One goal of the Action Plan is a vote of Governing Board to sign the Congregational Pledge of RI Interfaith Power and Light, the state chapter of the national organization of faith communities promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency. The pledge asks for a commitment to one or more of IPL's goals, most of which Channing has already subscribed to. Our minister, the Social Justice Committee and several members have already signed. Congregational representation gives this educational, non-profit, non-lobbying group greater influence in speaking for the environment. No donation is required. The Board plans to vote on this issue at its May meeting.

We're all part of this effort, and there's always room for more ideas and more participants. To see the entire plan, or to join us, contact our committee at

green@channingchurch.org. -Beth Milham, Chair,
Green Congregation Committee

Step It Up A.I. hosts energy film festival

To promote global warming awareness and strategies for change, we're offering a weekly film series on **Tuesday evenings in April, at Empire Tea & Coffee, 22 Broadway, at 7 PM.** All are welcome, and admission is free.

The series is still in development, but on April 1 we'll show "Kilowatt Ours," selected to commemorate "Fossil Fools Day," depicting coal mining mountaintop removal, and the ways southeastern communities are replacing coal use through conservation and renewable energy.

On April 8, "Everything's Cool," shows how America is finally "getting" global warming in the wake of the most dangerous chasm ever to emerge between scientific understanding and political action.

Watch the weekly announcements for the rest of the series.