

Update on Activities of the Green Sanctuary Subcommittee of the Social Justice Committee

In accordance with the Social Justice Committee's designation of global warming as it's primary area of concentration for this year, several concerned members have been investigating the Green Sanctuary certification program of the UUA's Ministry for Earth. We're pursuing the initial steps in the program, and want to keep the Board of Governors fully informed about our activities. We have obtained two copies of the Green Sanctuary manual, and have passed it among several interested volunteers.

Following are excerpts from the draft plan we have created for the enacting the program at Channing:

Why a Green Sanctuary?

A team of scientists from 113 countries has affirmed with more than 90% certainty that global warming has been caused by human activity—namely burning of fossil fuels. The strongest conclusion to date makes it nearly impossible to blame modern day climate changes on natural forces. However, the same scientists warn that people and their government forces must not respond with surrender and despair, and that although it is already too late to prevent vast changes, there is still time to limit those changes. A report later this year will address the most effective measures for slowing global warming. (adapted from AP release, 2/2/07)

What is a Green Sanctuary?

"A Green Sanctuary [is] a congregation that lives out its commitment to the Earth by creating a sustainable life style for its members as individuals and as a faith community." From the Manual – [Green Sanctuary: Eco-spirituality for Liberal Religious Congregations](#)

A Green Sanctuary has earned accreditation from the UU Ministry for Earth (MFE) and commits to maintaining and renewing that accreditation. The program is modeled on the UUA's Welcoming Congregation program.

How does the program work?

The program seeks to help a congregation recognize the moral, spiritual, ethical dimensions to stewardship of Earth. Each congregation's program is tailored to its own strengths, interests, and capacities. It's important to design a program with the input of the whole congregation and that involves the whole congregation, so that changes made become personally meaningful and lifelong. Change is based on the understanding of the environmental implications of ones own actions, and motivation to change.

It is designed to bring about changes in three arenas: personal life style choices, congregational activities and structures, and activism within the broader community.

There are four focus areas:

- Worship and celebration
- Religious Education
- Environmental Justice
- Sustainable Living

Steps toward certification as a Green Sanctuary

- Establish a Green Sanctuary Committee, consisting of representatives from key committees of the church and other interested volunteers.

- Conduct an environmental audit, which includes an energy audit and a self-evaluation of policies and activities in the church that relate to green practices.
- Design a comprehensive program and Action Plan
- Apply for candidacy (Application plus \$100 fee)
(Once application is made, support and advice are available from the MFE director)
- Complete 12 projects in the Action Plan
- Apply for accreditation (General time frame from candidacy is one to two years.)

Accomplishments to date

All related activities that we've already undertaken or completed can be included in the fulfillment of the plan, and we're already well along the path to becoming a green sanctuary! Consider the following:

- Designating global warming as our 2006-07 social justice theme
- Amy's service related to our theme last fall
- Amy's *Newport Daily News* Clergy Corner columns
- Educational pieces in the Catalyst, and Susan Adie's new monthly Catalyst feature, "Eco-Bits and Tips"
- Last year's hot topics forum on global warming conducted by Michael Larkin
- Showing "An Inconvenient Truth" to the congregation and community
- Showing two additional global warming videos after church
- Making available literature on things we can all do to reduce our "carbon footprints"
- Conducting two presentations by the companies responsible for the green energy options offered by National Grid
- Letters to the editor and opinion pieces by Channing members in local press
- Selling compact fluorescent light bulbs during fellowship,
- Donating the remaining bulbs to the RE students to take home to their families
- The church's conversion of many of our lights to compact fluorescent
- A new energy audit conducted by RISE
- Evaluating National Grid Green Energy options for the church,
- Joining and helping lead RI Interfaith Power and Light,
- Networking with Portsmouth United Methodist Church's Missions/Social Justice Committee and other UU churches' Green Sanctuary committees
- Collaborating with PUMC to produce Step It Up 2007 and follow-up activities
- Drafting a mission statement on environmental responsibility
- RE program Earth Day clean-up and plans for a green summer program]

Next steps

As a general timeline, we plan to convene a Green Sanctuary Committee by early summer, and begin collecting data for the environmental audit. Early in the fall, we plan to offer to the congregation a survey through which they can share what they're already doing towards "living green," along with additional suggestions that they might incorporate. We're also looking into offering a "simplicity circle," a green support-oriented small group. By late fall, we plan to finalize our action plan, and then we expect to be ready to apply for candidacy. We hope to complete the process and apply for certification within a year after our candidacy is accepted.