



Green Sanctuary
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Congregational Stewardship Services
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108
617.948.4251

Application for Green Sanctuary Accreditation

Congregation Information

Congregation Name University Unitarian Church

Address 6556 - 35th Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98105

Web site <http://www.uuchurch.org/activities/social-justice/310>

Green Sanctuary contact Laura Kennedy Gould

Address 3921 SW Barton , Seattle, WA 98136

Phone 206-937-5663

Email laurakgould@comcast.net

Minister or Congregation Leader Jon Luopa

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(See separate package for descriptions of program activities)

Revision History

Date	Author	Change
11/8/08	Laura Kennedy Gould	Congregational profile
2/9/09	Laura Kennedy Gould	Initial draft for Feb committee mtg.
3/1/09	Laura Kennedy Gould	Final draft for committee review
3/18/09	Laura Kennedy Gould	Revisions per committee mtg 3/10. Final for accreditation.

Congregation Profile

A brief introduction, to include: membership, demographics, maybe a little history and what issues are significant - whatever is relevant (about 2 to 5 paragraphs).

University Unitarian Church is a large metropolitan church in Seattle, Washington, founded in the early 20th century. It has a long tradition of social justice activities, a well-respected music program and a large Sunday school. The pledging membership is about 800 pledging units. In addition to two ministers, the church has a full staff, including a social justice coordinator. For many years, the church has owned/ managed houses for the mentally ill, Central American refugees, and AIDS patients. Current social justice activities include building houses with Habitat for Humanity, and being a founding member of Sound Alliance, a coalition of Puget Sound religious and labor organizations lobbying for economic and social justice at the state level.

University Unitarian Church is located in Seattle, a city blessed with natural beauty and a strong environmental ethic. Seattle was one of the first cities in the United States to start a recycling program (in the 1980s) and today, nearly half of its garbage is recycled or composted. Seattle's mayor, Greg Nickels, founded a coalition of cities to sign the Kyoto accord in the absence of leadership from the Bush administration. In this atmosphere, the high school youth at University Unitarian in 2006 put in a bike rack and challenged the adults to reduce UUC's carbon footprint. A core group of volunteers started Green Sanctuary activities the same year, with the approach: "What do you do *after* you've changed all your light bulbs?"

The Green Sanctuary Committee has learned several lessons along the way, among them:

- Even seemingly small gestures (for instance, eliminating plastic coffee stirrers) make a big difference.
- In a church as large and busy as UU, it's a challenge to instill Green Sanctuary as a philosophy, not just another committee.
- On the other hand, not all activities need to have the "official Green Sanctuary" stamp to be green -- for instance, a covenant group came up with their service project to supply the kitchen with plates so paper products didn't need to be used.
- Even in a city as "granola" as Seattle, you still need to train congregants which bin to put the paper plate in!

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.

Language of resolution:

We, the congregation of University Unitarian Church, request Green Sanctuary certification from UUA.

We affirm our commitment to the Seventh Principal.

We affirm respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part.

We affirm to continue to include Earth consciousness in all of our programs and practices.

We affirm to continue making environmentally appropriate choices in our actions and decisions.

We affirm to strive to live sustainably on the Earth, our home.

Completion of Program Activities

Describe the 12 projects or program activities your congregation has accomplished: What action was taken? What specific outcomes have resulted from the action? Each project description should be no more than half a page.

(See separate zip file of project descriptions)

Accomplishment of Program Goals

In a two or three page narrative, describe the degree to which you have achieved the five Green Sanctuary Program goals with your program:

- *To build awareness of societal environmental issues among UU's.*
- *To generate commitment for personal lifestyle changes.*
- *To motivate UU's to community action on environmental issues.*
- *To build a connection between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness.*
- *To build awareness of and rectify environmental injustices.*

Build awareness of societal environmental issues among UU's.

Several Green Sanctuary activities have been successful at increasing awareness of environmental issues:

--The Sunday School raised money for "water hippos" in Africa. These are rolling plastic barrels that make it easier to transport water instead of lugging heavy jars. The campaign helped the children realize that clean water doesn't always magically come out of a tap. The high school youth group raised money in 2009 for 30 more hippos and will be focusing on water as their political/ economic justice theme for the year.

--Several Northwest Earth Institute courses have been facilitated for UU's Adult Religious Education program. The goal of these courses is to increase awareness of environmental issues, such as global warming, local economies, and agriculture. A repeat class of "Menu for the Future" is currently being offered in Winter 2009.

-- The Pesticide Free Zone campaign, done in partnership with Washington Toxics Coalition and Seattle Tilth, has helped raise awareness among the congregation of the impact of pesticides on human health and the environment. This project provided education about the toxic nature of pesticides and how they can have devastating health effects for a variety of populations, including pregnant women, small children and those with compromised immune systems. In this way, the PFZ program was an issue of social justice. While we enhanced overall awareness for sustainability issues, we really focused on the toxicity issue since many pesticides are cancer causing, endocrine disruptors (affecting the entire hormonal system regulating our bodies), and toxic to the neurological system.

Many members were genuinely surprised that products so pervasive and sold over the counter could be so harmful. Others were unaware that if a neighbor regularly used pesticides, their health could be compromised through no fault of their own. (Pesticides are sensitizers and irritants, though reactions vary greatly by person.) Awareness was raised for unsuspecting farm workers who use pesticides, for our food supply, and waterways.

Others were unaware of Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) in which people can become reactive to all chemicals after exposures to pesticides, thus inhibiting/limiting their lives in multiple ways.

Generate commitment for personal lifestyle changes

Even in a city as green as Seattle, congregants have been inspired to be even greener by Green Sanctuary activities at University Unitarian.

--Over 100 UUC member have signed the Pesticide Free Zone pledge, a result of UUC's partnership with Washington Toxics Coalition. Ladybug signs with "Pesticide Free Zone" are sprouting on lawns all over Seattle. The response to the campaign has been overwhelmingly positive. We have about 800 member households at UUC and up to 50% may have been excluded from posting a PFZ sign because they cannot control what their apartment or condo does. Still, they were educated to our message. Of those who were able to post a sign (approximately 400 households who may live in homes), about 25% participated.

It is always difficult to raise unpleasant subjects and pesticide use falls into this category. We tried to balance this with an upbeat "we can change this" attitude and by providing the joy of sustainable gardening classes (giving members critical information to garden more safely). It can also be challenging to ask members to take a step like posting a sign—some people are fearful, though they may know in their hearts it is the right thing to do. It was gratifying when people said, "thank you for doing this!" People who posted signs felt good about what they were doing, about making a difference and in this way they were empowered. Some (like a long term member whose husband died prematurely due to cancer) became more outspoken about environmental issues as her consciousness was raised.

--In addition to the Pesticide Free campaign, classes on sustainable gardening practices have helped promote a more environmentally sensitive approach to gardening. This commitment has

been emphasized by church work parties to take care of the church's drought-tolerant, native plant landscaping.

--The order of service for "Getting Around Green" Sunday included pledge cards to reduce car trips by one a week. The pledge campaign was followed up by an Impact Forum four Sundays later for people to share stories how they reduced their car use.

--An active recycling group has promoted recycling at Sunday morning coffee hour, and at church special events. Although the recycling ethic is already very strong in Seattle, this group's efforts have increased awareness and commitment among congregants to recycle. Initially, the recycling group stood by recycling bins and coached individuals. Now, the Green Sanctuary Recycle group has worked with the church's business manager, to obtain new waste bins that provide "cues" on what to place in the bin by the shape of the lids plus signage.

Motivate UU's to community action on environmental issues

University Unitarian's long tradition of social action continues with Green Sanctuary activities.

--UUC's Green Sanctuary Committee partnered with Sustainable Northeast Seattle (a neighborhood organization dedicated to local sustainability) and Climate Dialogues (an environmental organization focused on climate change) to hold an all-day workshop on transportation issues. The workshop invited transportation experts and state legislators to help citizen activists identify how they could make a difference in making Seattle less dependent on fossil-fuel-based transportation.

--UUC is a founding member of Sound Alliance, a community organizing alliance of Puget Sound religious congregations, labor organizations, and community groups, promoting social and economic justice at the state level. UUC's strongest participation has been on the Alliance's *Sustainable Jobs & Environment Team*, which has been pursuing local change that marries sound environmental stewardship with good jobs at living wages. It trains apprentices in the newest, cross-disciplinary approaches to energy retrofits. People who need them get skills and good jobs in the trades. Homeowners and small businesses reduce energy costs, and the retrofit work comes affordably and with quality assurance. The initiative matches what the Obama administration is looking for as a stimulus opportunity, and is being eyed by our state legislature as a centerpiece of economic stimulus in our state. Several UUC members are highly involved in moving this effort forward. Members of our congregation have also met with state legislators and utility officials.

Build a connection between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness

--Green Sanctuary Sunday on January 20, 2008 helped kick off ramped-up Green Sanctuary activities and raised environmental consciousness. It also reminded the congregation of the Seventh Principal, the interdependent web of all existence. The sermon, "Green Hope" by Reverend Jon Luopa, tied together the global issue of climate change with local and congregational action. The service was held on the third Sunday of the month, when the children come up from Sunday school for the first half of the service. Worship included a children's story

"The Edible Fabric of Rohner Mill", a true story about a fabric manufacturer in Germany which changed from highly toxic dyes to natural (edible!) organic dyes.

--The Green Sanctuary Committee has hosted two "100-mile potlucks" at the church, one early in the growing season (May), and the other after harvest (November). The 100-mile potluck was an idea we picked up from a neighborhood group, Sustainable Ballard, to bring food made or grown within 100 miles. We stretched the 100-mile boundary a bit to include the bounty of the entire state of Washington. These dinners really raised congregants' consciousness about the interdependent web of existence among farmers, manufacturers, retailers, and consumers. It also caused us to think about the interdependent web across what Washingtonians call the "Cascade Curtain" between food growers (largely in eastern Washington) and the consumers in our western Washington.

Build awareness of and rectify environmental injustices

--University Unitarian has over a century record of social justice. Its latest chapter is helping found Sound Alliance, a community organizing alliance of Puget Sound religious congregations, labor organizations, and community groups, promoting social and economic justice at the state level. The environmental effort in the 2009 legislative session has been to promote *Sustainable Works*: a grassroots initiative to combine living wage jobs with affordable energy retrofits for homeowners and small businesses and nonprofits. Sustainable Works is a win-win-win program: training in energy retrofits leading to living wage jobs, lower energy costs for homeowners and small businesses, and lower carbon emissions. The initiative leverages money from the federal stimulus package along with local utility funding, and is a pivotal centerpiece of economic stimulus in our state. Several UUC members have participated in team meetings, state lobby days, and other volunteer activities to push this initiative forward.

--Seattleites can't resist chocolate and coffee! This lighthearted premise has formed the basis for successful fund raisers to fund three microlending banks in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The project has helped raise awareness among the congregation of the power of small loans to promote economic justice, and the interdependent web between Seattle and far-away Haiti. The coffee and chocolate themselves are organic, shade-grown, and Fair Trade Certified, meaning the producers get more of the proceeds and commit to environmental growing practices. And as another environmental benefit, the coffee roaster and chocolate maker are both local Seattle companies.

Program Evaluation

Please evaluate the effect the Green Sanctuary Program has had on your congregation. This narrative should be approximately 3 to 5 pages, and include the following questions:

Benefits

- 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?

--Perhaps the biggest benefit of the Green Sanctuary Program at University Unitarian is to make the congregation aware of environment considerations as an integral part of congregational life and church operations. Simply living in Seattle already sustains a very strong environmental

ethic among congregants. However, the Green Sanctuary program has brought that ethic home -- that is, to our church home. It is no longer a topic of conversation that in the corner of the coffee hour hall are several recycling and food waste bins. These are simply an accepted part of the background, as they should be. In planning church events, transportation and waste minimization are routine parts of the planning. At church potlucks and other events involving food, it's not unusual for participants to bring their own dishes. Every Sunday School room has a recycling bin next to the trash bin. The Montessori parents who rent the rooms for pre-school don't need to worry that toxic cleaning substances might be used. They know that University Unitarian has an environmental ethic and has eliminated these substances from its custodial practices.

Challenges

- What has been the most difficult or challenging aspect of the program for your congregation to achieve?

--University Unitarian is a large, busy church involved in many social justice issues, and it is hard to get people's attention. The Green Sanctuary Committee has been challenged to get more widespread involvement outside of a core group of volunteers. This is a common challenge for all committee activities, not just Green Sanctuary. One way we've addressed this is to have more "bite-size" projects (vs. ongoing projects). For instance, we're planning a Saturday afternoon work party at a CSA organic farm, and have encouraged the high school youth to adopt this as their service project.

--We have been challenged to get feedback from the congregation. Congregants are exposed to many sources of environmental education and awareness, of which Green Sanctuary activities are one small part. The Green Sanctuary Committee has tried different techniques. Initially, the Green Sanctuary Committee held a couple Town Halls with a professional facilitator (a member of the congregation). About 40 people participated. These sessions were very effective in identifying potential projects and areas of interests, although they did not necessarily result in building a body of volunteers. One project we did, to raise awareness and get feedback, was to create inserts for the Order of Service. Each month's insert focused on a particular environmental topic and asked for feedback from the congregation. We had baskets and tabling after the service to collect feedback. The response was interesting, but very limited. We table after services once or twice a month. This provides one way to publicize upcoming events, and we get some good conversations, but it's not effective at getting ongoing feedback. We continue to explore techniques to get more congregational feedback and involvement.

--Integrating the Seventh Principal into worship continues to be a challenge. There are many demands and requests for sermon topics on UUC's two ministers. The interdependent web of existence tends to be one more special topic, to be recognized on Earth Day, rather than an integrated part of ongoing worship.

Changes

- 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?

--"Going green" has become an ongoing part of congregational life and church operations. It is not considered an "add-on" but instead a standard factor to include in making decisions and plans

about church life. A good example is purchasing a hot water heater. A few years back, before Green Sanctuary activities began, the church needed to purchase a replacement hot water heater. With lavatories long distances from a central heater location, and a low need for hot water, an excellent environmental choice would have been on-demand hot water heaters. However, this choice never even entered the discussion, and the church replaced the central water heater with a similar tank. Nowadays, the decision process would be much different, and would include annual operating costs. Green Sanctuary activities contribute to the many sources of environmental awareness surrounding congregants.

--A challenge initially for the Green Sanctuary program was getting congregants to take it seriously. Many congregants figured that the church (being a Seattle church) was already doing everything it could to be environmentally conscious. "Why do we need Green Sanctuary certification?" was the unspoken question.

Now, a positive change is that we better realize that there continue to be environmental improvements we can make, both in church operations and in the lives of individual congregants, and that these are not necessarily straightforward changes. For instance, the church's business manager and members of Green Sanctuary thought it would be a simple matter to replace the church's incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescents. It turned out that the need to dim lights during worship services and the church's antiquated 1960s electrical system made this change largely not possible.

Another example where the congregation realizes it still has environmental actions to take is in transportation. Last spring's "Getting Around Green" Sunday raised consciousness about reducing car trips, but nearly all trips to church continue to be by car. Organizing carpools and otherwise reducing car trips is a future challenge for the congregation.

Future intentions

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

--The Green Sanctuary's "Getting Around Green" Sunday was great for raising awareness about available transit, but nearly all congregants still come to church by car (both services and committee meetings), despite UUC's urban location. Transportation in Washington State accounts for half the state's carbon emissions, and, along with food, is the area where personal choice can make a big difference. A carpool matchup would be a great way of reducing the congregation's footprint while building community.

--For the Pesticide-Free Zone, if we had had more member participation in our Green Sanctuary project, it would be useful to create a church library notebook with photos of each member in their yard/garden near their PFZ sign and a helpful gardening tip they've learned for others to try. We hope that eventually our church grounds can become a pesticide free zone with signs posted at high traffic areas, thus extending our message further into the community. Currently, we use sustainable gardening practices and UUC would be joining a select group of Seattle institutions that have made this commitment to the earth.

--The Green Sanctuary Recycling Subcommittee has discussed various education methods to help our congregants deal with waste at coffee hour. Initially, we attempted to stand by the bins

and coach individuals. This seemed to be effective but was labor intensive. We tried to engage Coffee Crew individuals, but this effort was only partially successful as there is turnover among the crew. Our group was considering reworking our education project to include recruitment of our youth and young adults to assist with staffing the bins during coffee hour, but this did not get much response. In the future, the Recycling Subcommittee hopes to build a cadre of recycling volunteers during coffee hour, make sure the church custodians are a part of this process, and assure that garbage and recyclables go into the correct containers outside the church once they leave the building.

--The Green Sanctuary Recycling Subcommittee plans to continue to work with special events planners to reduce non-recyclables and increase the use of ceramics, glass, silverware and brown paper table coverings and napkins. Most plastic utensils, plastic tumblers, and plastic plates have been removed. The GSRS assists all special events planners and implementers in making sure that all waste is disposed of properly. The GSRS has staffed plate scraping, dishwashing and appropriate disposal at three major events. We now have sufficient resources of reusable items in our kitchens as we had covenant groups come in as a project to revamp kitchen ware.

--The Green Sanctuary Committee would like to see more integration of the Seventh Principal in church services. The Sunday school program already comprehensively integrates the Seventh Principal.

--The church's business manager is interested in offering a community compost/worm bin and a community garden on the church grounds. He is also working with the church's youth group on installing water barrels.

Role in the wider community

- What on-going role do you expect your congregation will take in the wider community relative to environmental issues? How do you feel recognition as a Green Sanctuary affects your position in the community?

--With Sound Alliance, UUC will continue to advocate at the state level on environmental and social justice issues. In the current 2009 state legislature, Sound Alliance is focused on two environmental initiatives. Sustainable Works's core objective is to provide green jobs in retrofitting energy improvements. The Sustainable Jobs & Environment Team is also focusing on our state's participation in the Western States "cap and trade" initiative for permitting, taxing, and limiting the right to emit carbon, to ensure that this market-based system is developed in a way that not only achieves our true environmental goals, but is also economically just for the people of our state. If these issues do not pass this session, Sound Alliance will continue to partner with environmental and faith-based organizations to pursue these in the next session. Having a Green Sanctuary certification will increase our environmental "street cred" when we are advocating for environmental legislation.

--UUC as a church that draws from all over Seattle has a great potential to partner with neighborhood organizations on environmental projects. Two of Green Sanctuary's members are active with neighborhood organizations promoting more sustainable communities (Sustainable West Seattle, and Sustainable Northeast Seattle). One member, who is a founder of Sustainable Northeast Seattle, formed a partnership between the neighborhood group and UUC to sponsor a

day-long workshop on transportation issues. Partnerships like this may occur in the future. The Green Sanctuary certification will increase UUC's visibility as a potential partner with sustainable and environmental organizations.

--The Green Sanctuary Recycling Subcommittee did an assessment of our waste process and found that the church's permanent tenants were doing well with recycling. The Recycling Subcommittee hopes to continue to reach out beyond the congregation itself and work with tenants to reduce and recycle waste. In particular, tenants renting the church for special events involving food, present an opportunity. The Green Sanctuary certification should help to emphasize UUC's emphasis on environmental good practices.

Application Instructions

Using this format, submit your electronic application in MSWord format to greensanctuary@uua.org. If you cannot email the application, please contact Robin Nelson for snail-mail instructions.

For additional information and advice for preparing your application, feel free to contact Robin Nelson via email at rnelson@uua.org or by phone at 617.948.4251.