

APPLICATION FOR GREEN SANCTUARY ACCREDITATION

Congregation Name First Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse

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Minister or Congregation Leader Rev. Holly Baylies, Consulting Minister

GREEN SANCTUARY TEAM

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF SYRACUSE

WHEREAS the motion to designate the Green sanctuary Program as the Society's Social Justice Task Force was unanimously passed by the congregation at its April 10, 2005 meeting and

WHEREAS the Executive Committee of the Green sanctuary Task Force (which became the Green Sanctuary Committee) reported to the Society's Board of Trustees on its goals, activities and accomplishments in each of the following years (2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2008-2009, 2009-2010), and

WHEREAS the Action Plan of the Green Sanctuary Committee, which consisted of 12 actions for a congregational wide effort to be given certification by the UUA as a Green Sanctuary, was submitted to the congregation at its annual meeting on June 3, 2007 and passed without opposition, and

WHEREAS the UUA Office of Congregational Stewardship Services admitted the Society as a candidate to the Green Sanctuary Program on January 16, 2009, and

THEREFORE the Green Sanctuary Committee, after due consideration of the suggestions made by the UUA Office of Congregational Stewardship Services, has prepared its application for accreditation as a Green Sanctuary, which is hereby respectfully submitted to the Board of Trustees.

Jerry Clausen, Chair

THE TWELVE SELECTED PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

WORSHIP SERVICES AND CELEBRATIONS I

Regular Sunday worship services created, prepared and presented by the First UU of Syracuse Green Sanctuary Team with support of the Worship Committee, the Music Coordinator, and the minister.

1/24/ 2010 – “The Grinch Who Stole the Green Sunday”, a parody written by team member Radell Roberts. During the service a list of the last five years’ accomplishments by the team and the congregation was presented. The “Earth Stewardship Commitment”, written by the Green Sanctuary Team, approved by the Board of Trustees, was read, and signed by members of the congregation

5/17/2009 – “Out of the Wild: Lessons from Nature” with special music, Native American readings, reflections on how nature has influenced lifestyles and imparted meaning.

11/30/2008 – “Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice”, a presentation of the UUA Study/Action Topic for 2008 – 2012 as it relates to individuals and the congregation collectively

4/20/2008 – “Reconnecting with the Earth” – three members of the congregation shared their unique relationships with nature and how these relations affect their daily lives.

9/25/2006 – Introduction of Green Sanctuary concept to congregation

12/2006 – “Green Resolutions” – encouraging people to consider sustainable actions they would take in the New Year.

In Addition:

Summer Sunday Services – presented by individual GS Team members: 8/08: Marilyn Lyman on population issues; 8/07: Jim D’Aloisio on “Changing the Changes”; 7/06: “Green Dreams”

Worship service and sermon by the Rev. Holly Baylies: 1/16/2011 – “The Tip of the Iceberg”

WORSHIP SERVICES AND CELEBRATIONS II

Celebrations

4/19/2008 – “Deep Ecology Workshop: Council of All Beings”. GS Team worked with CUUPS to present this day-long workshop on restoring connections with the Earth. Participants were welcomed and the circle was cast. Each person shared first memories of connection with the earth, nature and how those connections were disrupted. In a mourning ritual each placed items representing aspects of nature they do or would miss in a black box. The group tore a sheet tie dyed in earth and sun colors into strips, representing separation from nature.

After lunch the group participated in an outdoor walking meditation with chanting and attention to sensual stimuli. A deep meditation followed, facilitating a reconnection with earth/nature. In a healing ritual the pieces of sheet were tied into one long strip, and then rolled into a ball –symbolizing the earth and our reconnection. This ball has been used to decorate the sanctuary at special services. The day ended with a purifying ceremony, commitments to connect with the earth and releasing the circle.

2/10/2007 – “Spiritual Response to the Problem of Global Warming” The GS Team sponsored a workshop with Jim Scott on his VISION. The group looked at the reasons that people are hesitant to accept the fact and to commit to solutions. Suggestions were made on how to dialogue with others in a non-threatening manner.

More specifically, the congregation looked at sustainability and the status at First UU. We brainstormed ways that our church could improve, as an organization and as individuals. We also looked at community issues such as cleaning Onondaga Lake and the proposed coal gasification plant.

That evening Jim Scott presented a concert of environmentally inspiring music that was open to the public. He provided the Sunday worship service also.

9/2005 – GS Team sponsored and staffed an exhibit at the Westcott Cultural Fair, where we shared our vision with the community and offered literature on sustainability.

WORSHIP SERVICES AND CELEBRATION III

Mindful Hiking

4/18/09 - This provided an opportunity for members of the Green Sanctuary Team to get together with younger members of the congregation for a long hike in a beautiful but largely undeveloped county park. Seven people took part in a somewhat strenuous journey over several miles of rather primitive trails through heavily wooded and hilly terrain located about twenty miles southeast of First Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse. The pace maintained was slow enough to allow conversation, and we stopped several times to rest and talk at picturesque spots, for example, at a waterfall and at the top of a hill which overlooked a lake. Since the weather was sunny and cool and the leaves had just started to bud, we could enjoy the views

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – ADULTS

The Green Sanctuary Team has employed several methods to inform the congregation about our activities, and about sustainability and social justice issues of First UU of Syracuse and of the wider community:

First UU Website – has link to Green Sanctuary mission, activities

Green Corner – monthly educational items in the church newsletter

Green Table – an ongoing display in the fellowship hall of materials pertaining to environmental issues locally and globally, staffed by a committee member

Green Tips – suggestions on sustainability in the Order of Service each week

Green Circle – a discussion group every 4th Sunday – spring 2007

Forums:

Oct, Nov, Dec 2009 – 3 session colloquy on climate change coordinated and presented by Fred Lyman; May Memorial UU members attended

January 2008 – sponsored forum presented by Bill Meadows of Green Homes America on making existing homes more energy efficient, open to public. Several people made contracts for improvements to their homes.

June 2007 - sponsored forum presented by Janet Allen on wildlife-friendly landscaping using native plants, open to public

May 2006 – two forums to discuss the completed energy audit of the building, and to brainstorm plans

April 2007 – Team member Jim D’Aloisio co-facilitated a Green Sanctuary Workshop at St. Lawrence District Assembly

Movies: GS Team sponsored in coordination with the minister.

4/14/2009 – “The Great Warming”

9/2007 – “Green: The New Red, White, Blue”

9/2006 – “An Inconvenient Truth”, pizza and discussion

Earth Stewardship Commitment

GS Ream developed a statement of commitment for the congregation, approved by the Board of Trustees on 12/15/2009; presented to congregation on 1/24/2010 and members signed the commitment

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – YOUTH

YRE prospectus of the First UU Society of Syracuse - 2005-06: “The Interdependent Web: Be a Team – Make It Green” *“As our church begins its first year of the Green Sanctuary program, YRE will be working as a TEAM with the rest of the congregation learning about and supporting our Seventh Principle. We will start off by participating in the Green Sanctuary Worship service and planning a hike to a nearby park or forest.”*

Banners: The youth made two large banners that the congregation uses for exhibits in the church and in the larger community. They say

(1) “Green Sanctuary – First Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse”

(2) “Interdependent Web: Be a Team – Make It Green”

Earth Day Cleanup: Youth joined with adults to participate in the community Earth Day Clean ups sponsored by the Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency in 2006 and 2010

Field Trips:

October 2007 – an intergenerational group travelled to Grindstone Farm, a local organic farm which supplied produce to church members and friends over the summer. The group enjoyed a vegetarian lunch after the Sunday service and then toured the farm to see the fields and learn how vegetables are grown, harvested and stored. Each child was rewarded with a pumpkin to take home.

October 13, 2008 – an intergenerational group toured the Recycle America Waste Management plant to learn how the materials they discard in their “blue bins” are gathered, sorted, bundled, and sold to recycling companies. They learned about “one stream” recycling and walked along the conveyor belts to see how the various types of waste are separated.

Focus on Youth: During a Sunday worship service Jim D’Aloisio, Green Sanctuary Team member, used a wattmeter to show energy saved by using LED lights compared to other available lights.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: BIGGER BETTER BOTTLE BILL

Since New York State passed a Bottle Bill in 1982 almost 100 billion containers were redeemed, contributing to a healthier environment. In 2002 the Bigger Better Bottle Bill was introduced. The First UU Green Sanctuary Team actively campaigned for passage of the bill. We wrote letters to the editor, collected hundreds of signatures on petitions, prepared an exhibit and kept the congregation informed through our Green Corner in the church newsletter.

The BBBB passed and was signed into law in the spring of 2009. Starting October 31, 2009, all bottled water sold in New York under a gallon in size requires a 5-cent deposit. Beverage companies will have to transfer 80% of the unclaimed deposits they collect to the state. The new law will improve the system for collecting and recycling bottles and cans, making it more convenient for people to return their empty containers.

This major grassroots victory will have huge benefits for New York. Together, these reforms will result in noticeably cleaner communities, higher recycling rates, new revenue for the state, and the creation of new "green jobs" across New York.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Coal Gasification A local businessman proposed converting an area surrounding some old structures in nearby Jamesville into a coal gasification plant. Green Sanctuary Team member Fred Lyman, a professional engineer, agreed to keep all at First UU informed about the process of approval by the Town of DeWitt Board. Fred wrote to the Town Supervisor offering his services to assess the situation and possible results from the huge amounts of water and coal to be delivered to the location. Air, water, ground and noise pollution were all to be considered. Several public meetings were held and attended by team members. So much negative outcry was heard that the developer has withdrawn his proposal. The businessman may try again to develop this area and the Green Sanctuary Team will become involved.

Since such gasification might also reduce the carbon footprint which would occur from other coal burning, the First UU effort was to try to look at the whole picture, not just the negative side-effects of this development. However, a huge concern in this location was the effect on a nearby elementary school and houses close to the old structures. Some of the residents are obviously living in poverty. Guarding against the injustice of having the coal gasification plant adjacent to these homes was of primary concern to the Green Sanctuary Team.

Hydrofracking A new development in our area is the proposal to lease land from property owners by petroleum developers in order to get natural gas by the process of hydraulic fracturing (aka hydrofracking). Team members have attended several public meetings and films on this proposal and we have encouraged a moratorium until all facts are known about this method of getting natural gas. We are working closely with the May Memorial Green Sanctuary committee and this will become a major effort for our congregation as our Green Sanctuary carries out its study of water this year.

Our Congressman and several others spoke at our church during the Mini-Conference on Hydrofracking on October 23, 2010. This forum was part of the New York State Convention of Universalists annual meeting and was attended by UUs from many churches. Another speaker at the conference was Geri Aird from May Memorial representing the Sierra Club. We all see the need to be vigilant in the forthcoming efforts to deal with or prevent hydrofracking. We will be joining with many other groups as we move forward. Since poor farmers tend to want to sign up for leasing their land, social justice as well as environmental justice must be considered.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: COLLABORATION WITH EASTERN FARM WORKERS ASSOCIATION

Staff from the Eastern Farm Workers Association have spoken in our worship services and explained their mission. Many in our congregation actively support them. Congregants donate used clothing which is taken to the association, thereby recycling clothing and benefiting those in need, including migrant workers and poor residents of Syracuse. Undesignated money from a monthly Sunday collection was donated.

A member provides transportation for weekly deliveries of left over food donated by a local grocery chain, thereby preventing hundreds of pounds of food from being wasted and benefiting hungry families. Others provide transportation for migrant workers to medical and dental appointments, and act as advocates for patients at doctors' appointments.

We also support their superbowl tamale fundraiser by purchasing authentic homemade tamales. Several church members help with making the ingredients and then assembling them. As a result we learn to appreciate foods of another culture.

SUSTAINABLE LIVING: REDUCING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT FOR CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Although First Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse (First UU) is on the edge of the city, it is actually in the suburb of DeWitt and serves a large area of the county with a few members living in adjacent counties. Some members live close enough to walk to church, except when there is a large snowfall or heavy rain. Approximately six congregants walk regularly now. The Green Sanctuary Team installed a bicycle rack and a few members ride bikes to church for services, meetings, etc. Green Sanctuary will continue to encourage both walking and biking for those who are able to do this. Meetings are often held on Sundays, before or after church, to limit the number of trips to and from the building.

Metal recycling was provided on two Sundays in October 2008, including items from TVs to kitchen utensils. In addition, the church has purchased a charger that will charge up to 10 batteries at the same time. Also, CFL bulbs were sold to congregants after Sunday services.

Car-pooling is encouraged. A wall chart of members' zip codes was posted. A pot luck supper was held where people sat in zip code areas to get better acquainted with those with whom they might share rides. The number of cars in the parking lot was counted each Sunday; members were urged to share rides whenever possible. Efforts to increase car-pooling will continue. The car of choice for many in the congregation is a hybrid vehicle, but even one hybrid uses less gas than two if we fill it with people! We have been somewhat successful in this effort to limit travel but we will not give up!

SUSTAINABLE LIVING: IMPLEMENT ENERGY SAVING IN THE BUILDING AND BEYOND

After our energy audit was completed in 2006, efforts were made to make our building more energy efficient and to help the congregation become aware of ways in which all of us can conserve. Lighting fixtures in our main hallway were replaced to reduce energy use immediately. These lights are used daily by the people at the Montessori School in our building. The parlor fireplace chimney has been blocked to save energy. The monthly newsletter is now distributed electronically.

In 2009, Fred Lyman, an engineering professor and member of our Green Sanctuary Team, offered a three session evening colloquy on Confronting Climate Change: What are our priorities? In September, team members attended a May Memorial event at which Rick Weinstein, a representative of the Al Gore Climate Project, spoke on Global Climate Change, What Next? First UU followed in October, November and

December with the colloquy. In addition to the presentations and discussion, an annotated bibliography was distributed. Each session was attended by ten people from First UU and May Memorial.

On December 7, 2009, the members of the congregation were encouraged to call President Obama's office in support of strong and just climate change agreements as part of the Dial Down Climate Change sponsored by the UU Ministry for the Earth. Our Sunday morning Green Table display featured this on December 6, 2009. One hundred UU signatures were collected on a letter to our Senators prior to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen in December 2009. As always, the Green Table encouraged everyone to participate in the UUMFE effort to conserve energy.

We will continue to inform and educate our congregation about climate change and the need to conserve energy at church, at home, at work and traveling.

SUSTAINABLE LIVING: LOCALLY GROWN ORGANIC PRODUCE

In early 2008, the Green Sanctuary Team decided to offer our congregation and others an opportunity to receive local organic produce weekly for 20 weeks starting in June. We approached the local Community Supported Agriculture - Central New York (CSA) group requesting that our church become a location (pod) for people to receive this fresh produce. We were told that we needed 12 families to participate in order to become a pod. We encouraged our congregation to enroll through notices in the newsletter and through announcements on Sunday mornings. Fliers and posters were used. Enough joined in and the pod opened in June.

We continue to arrange the area for delivery and pick-up on Tuesdays during the 20 weeks of the Full Season. We have had more than 20 families involved each summer. The CSA helps the organic farmer, provides local organic food for families and heals our Earth without chemical pesticides and fertilizers. We have used special posters explaining that our Green Sanctuary and our church sponsor this pod and using pictures of our congregation visiting the farm and pictures of our farmer and the farm featured in the newspaper. Left-over food was taken to a food pantry. Our CSA continues as the only church pod in our area. During this winter (2010-11) a few families continue to receive food at our pod. In April, 2010, our organic farmer presented an exhibit and video at the church plant sale.

We consider our CSA effort a real success story. After a local Catholic church was closed, CSA pot-luck suppers were held at our church. We will continue to provide a pod and keep up our efforts to involve more members of our congregation and others in participating. Our Board president now serves on the CSA-CNY board.

SUSTAINABLE LIVING: EARTH STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT

The Green Sanctuary Team discussed at length the items to be included in a document to be signed by the congregation. Several versions were developed and the Earth Stewardship Commitment was approved the Board of Trustees on December 15, 2009. Forty-two members signed on January 24, 2010. Additional members will be invited to sign in the spring of 2011. Here is our commitment:

Members and staff of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse will strive to adopt environmentally responsible practices. Efforts to advance consciously sustainable living by the society, within all legal and reasonable financial parameters, in the larger context of the neighborhood, county, state, nation and world, will include:

- Building construction and renovation
- Energy use including heating and cooling

Use of efficient lighting fixtures and bulbs
Procurement of cleaning supplies and materials that are non-toxic and non-polluting
Landscaping and groundskeeping without pesticides
Waste disposal including recycling
Respect for any private or public land used by the congregation

The Building and Grounds and Green Sanctuary committees will gather information and report to the Board of Trustees in the following areas:

Waste reduction through reuse and recycling
Improved energy conservation and efficiency
Reduction of toxic substances in product procurement
Ways to increase awareness and use of fair-traded goods and services.

We have made a good start on this and will continue to get additional signatures and implement it.

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF PROGRAM GOALS

To build awareness of societal environmental issues among UUs.

The members and friends of the First UU Society of Syracuse are a community of people who have grown increasingly aware of societal environmental issues. They have been very supportive of the work of the Green Sanctuary Team, which has used a variety of methods to build awareness of such issues. We have set up and staffed a Green Table in the fellowship hall at which we have exhibits and provide materials on environmental issues in our local community, as well as in the world. We have used media such as the First UU newsletter, weekly orders of service and letters to the editor of the Syracuse Post Standard. Information has been provided through forums and movies. Some issues in our local community which we have emphasized are cleaning Onondaga Lake, the sacred grounds of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), the proposal to build a coal gasification plant and a sewage treatment plant in low income neighborhoods, and the dangers of hydrofracking to our water, soil and air.

To generate commitment for personal lifestyle changes.

On December 31, 2006 the Green Sanctuary Team created and presented the Sunday worship service titled "Green Resolutions". As part of the service we asked members of the congregation to write down what steps they would take to change their personal lifestyles. The resolutions varied from changes they could make in their own homes to ways they would participate in community efforts to better the environment and help poorer neighborhoods.

The Green Sanctuary Team wrote the "Earth Stewardship Commitment" for the society, got Board of Trustees approval, and presented it to the congregation. On January 24, 2010 over 40 members proudly signed the commitment, and new people are encouraged to sign.

To motivate UUs to community action on environmental issues.

Our Green Sanctuary Team has been successful in motivating the congregation to sign petitions, write letters to the editor, call and write legislators on issues, such as the New York State Bottle Bill, hydrofracking, and federal climate change legislation. On an individual level many of our congregants are active in the community.

To build a connection between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness.

GS Team worked with CUUPS to present a day-long workshop on restoring connections with the Earth – “Deep Ecology Workshop: Council of All Beings”. It was designed to honor the pagan worship rituals. In several of the worship services the Green Sanctuary Team has presented drumming and chants have been used to draw people into consciousness of the natural world.

To build awareness of and rectify environmental injustices.

Several people attended a series of lectures sponsored by NOON (Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation) on the issue of cleaning Onondaga Lake, the ancestral home of the Haudenosaunee, (Iroquois) to lend support to the Native American community.

Staff from the Eastern Farm Workers Association have spoken in our worship services and explained their mission. Many in our congregation actively support them in several ways.

We have only about 127 members in the congregation. Carrying out activities in the community has been hard for our congregation to do as an institution. Our hands-on support is currently necessary to keep our own congregational activities and building viable.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

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?

Without doubt, the most important benefit our congregation has gained from our participation in the Green Sanctuary program is awareness of the state of the Earth’s environment and the importance of our Seventh Principle as a religious issue for us all. We have shared information and education at Sunday services and other venues helping the congregation learn of the problems of our Earth in the Twenty-first century and ways that we can help individually and collectively. In a recent survey of the congregation, nearly half used the word awareness. The congregation expressed appreciation for the constant reminders from the Green Sanctuary group. The Green Sanctuary team was thanked for our education of the congregation with humor and love. We’re certainly tried! Our Community Supported Agriculture has definitely made a difference, even for those who did not participate but learned of the importance of eating local organic produce.

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

Reports from the congregation indicate that as individuals they have made many changes in their lives in order to show their respect for the Earth and her problems. The hardest part for the Green Sanctuary group and the congregation has been getting the whole congregation involved together in projects. A few years ago, our minister of 18 years left under unpleasant circumstances and many congregants left as well. In 2009-2010 the congregation gave a great deal of energy to searching for a new minister. The result was that our interim minister has continued with us as a contract minister. In addition, the size of the congregation has continued to decrease. The present membership is 127 members.

The Green Sanctuary Committee (now called Team as we are decreasing the number of committees) is one of the shining stars as a functioning group constantly involved in church efforts and activities. We are very proud that we have kept the flame for the earth burning during these difficult and challenging times.

Successful efforts to provide local organic produce, present meaningful worship services, signing the letter to our Senators about climate change, the trips to the organic farm and the recycling center, the Deep Ecology workshop, mindful hiking, Jim Scott's evening of music, passage of the bottle bill, and our Earth Stewardship Commitment all involved many people in the congregation. One comment on our Green Sanctuary program was that we had too much going on. This year, we will concentrate on water issues (especially hydrofracking) in addition to the ongoing efforts which will continue. Our Green Sanctuary work is both challenging and rewarding.

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?

Thankfully, we do discern positive changes among members of our congregation. Many readily comment on their awareness of effect on climate change by turning down the thermostats and installing energy saving light bulbs at church and at home. Recycling is a part of church life as well as home life. Participation in the CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program is now a given. Efforts to reduce paper products at church have worked. Constant reminders in the Sunday Order of Service and in the monthly newsletter have brought only positive comments. Education is ongoing and seems to be appreciated. Efforts with the Eastern Farm Workers are increasing. The Green Sanctuary team is gratified by these changes and will continue to involve everybody in our effort to live our Seventh Principle.

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

The survey of the congregation conducted in February 2011 indicated a strong awareness on the part of our members of ways in which they can continue to treat our Earth in better ways. Members request the need for more information on many areas of environmental concern; the Green Sanctuary Team will keep working on this. Habits described in survey response include using energy-efficient light bulbs and turning down thermostats at home and at church; recycling at home, church and in the workplace; making fewer trips through efficiency; modeling of green living for children and adults; gardening, composting and awareness of food purchased; reducing use of toxic chemicals; and conserving through using less more wisely.

The Green Sanctuary will continue to inform, educate and make efforts to involve members in activities. Our new focus is on water and hydrofracking.

What ongoing 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?

We will work more closely with other groups on environmental issues in the future. We have already joined with the Green Sanctuary group at May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse in several activities. We will work together on the issue of water and hydrofracking. Both groups have agreed that we can accomplish more joined as a larger group. The minister at Plymouth Congregational Church has also expressed an interest in working with us. Environmental groups such as the Sierra Club and the local Environmental Science and Forestry College frequently offer opportunities for us to participate. We will continue to do that with an effort to get our congregation more involved.

An upcoming focus on water on Earth Day with the Sunday School children is being planned. Forums and films open to the community will demonstrate our commitment to the environment. Modeling by the congregation and individuals will help to spread the word. In the many areas of concern, we will continue to urge our members to become active. Where we see opportunities to work for social and environmental justice, we will act!

We believe we have made a good start on helping our congregation live an environmentally conscious life at church, at home and in the community. Because we are passionate about all of our Earth, our Green Sanctuary Team will continue this effort.