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We must care for the Earth because it's the right thing to do

An article in the fall issue of Amnesty Now began: "Near the Arctic Circle, elders of the Inuit nation are seeing their lives disrupted by vivid consequences of global warming: deformed fish, depleted caribou herds, dying forests, starving seals and emaciated polar bears. ... As the sea ice melts, rising water levels are washing entire villages and a way of life into the ocean. 'These are issues of life and death, Sheila Watt-Cloutier, chairwoman of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference said. 'We go out to hunt on the sea ice to put food on the table. You go to the supermarket.'"

The preponderance of scientific evidence supports Watt-Cloutier's assessment of global warming's life-and-death consequences. The Inuit's experience reveals that, initially, those living closest to the Earth are in greatest peril. Eventually, however, even those of us who do our foraging at the supermarket will find our lives significantly affected by global warming.

Although our diverse religious traditions portray the nature of our relationship to Earth differently, there is increasing agreement among religious people that we have a responsibility to



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address the issue of global warming. For example, during a recent Evangelical meeting focused on global warming, for the Rev. Rich Cizik, vice president of governmental affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals said, "I don't think God is going to ask us how he created the earth, but he will ask us what we did with what he created."

While most Unitarian Universalists engage this issue from a different theological perspective, we certainly can agree with Cizik's discernment of our obligation to care for the Earth. During our association's last national gathering, a statement was drafted asking our congregations: "What can Unitarian Universalists do to promote individual and collective changes in the way we live and work in order to slow

and ultimately reverse global warming?"

Since January, the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation has explored ways that we might respond to that question. In our upcoming intergenerational Earth Day service April 24, we will consider "50 Hot Ways to Cool the Earth." While we recognize that our most helpful actions arise from collective responses, we also know that individual actions are important. As a British parliamentarian asserted 200 years ago, "No one made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do so little."

Among the notable results of our individual actions can be

the deepening of our resolve to assume greater responsibility through collective action. Toward this end, we are planning a June gathering with members of the greater Olympia religious community who share this commitment. Its purpose will be to jointly explore collective actions for slowing and ultimately reversing global warming. To participate, leave word at our congregation's office by calling 360-786-6383 or sending an e-mail to ouuc@aol.com.

We are called to care for the Earth, not only because it's in our self-interest, but because it's the right and holy thing to do.

In "The Universe Story," Brian Swimme and Thomas

Berry wrote: "The well-being of the planet is a condition for the well-being of any of the component members of the planetary community. To preserve the economic viability of the planet must be the first law of economics. To preserve the health of the planet must be the first commitment of the medical profession. To preserve the natural world as the primary revelation of the divine must be the basic concern of religion."

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