



*Green Sanctuary*  
*Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations*  
*Congregational Stewardship Services*  
*25 Beacon Street*  
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## **Application for Green Sanctuary Accreditation**

### **Congregation Information**

Congregation Name	Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation
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Web site	www.ouuc.org
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Minister or Congregation Leader	Arthur Vaeni

### **Congregation Profile**

History & membership: OUUC began in October of 1952 as the Unitarian Fellowship of Olympia and grew from a small membership into the current Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation with a membership of about 250. Our congregation built and moved into our church building on the cul de sac at the end of East End Street in 1993. We built the largest building we could afford, knowing that we would outgrow it soon. The Religious Education classrooms were filled from day one, and the need to expand was often discussed.

Serious discussions on what areas needed to grow began in earnest early in this century. Evaluations of our needs were followed by development of a several phase master plan, development of a financial plan and selection of an architect. The first part of the Building Expansion and Remodel Project was completed in the spring of 2010. The square footage of the building has been doubled from 5,000 to 10,000 feet, tripling the size of the foyer, adding a new classroom wing to the building, and remodeling existing offices and classrooms.

Attendance: The positive effect of our building expansion is reflected in the difference between the average children's attendance over the last year of 38, and the average children's attendance in RE classes this fall of 57. Average adult attendance at Sunday services over the last year has been 198, with the number split fairly evenly between two Sunday morning services.

Demographics: The makeup of our congregation reflects that of the larger Olympia area. We are predominantly middle class with some working class members and friends. The OUUC Committee on Ministry is currently examining the class-related exclusiveness of our congregation and looking for ways to address that issue. We are working to become more inclusive.

Until our recent building expansion was completed, we felt that families with young children were underrepresented in the congregation. With the addition of three classrooms and an enlarged nursery this year, we have seen a substantial increase in the number of young families participating in the congregation.

OUUC has been recognized as a Welcoming Congregation since 1992. Services of union are performed by the minister. We are active participants in the ongoing work in the state legislature for marriage equality and full legal rights of GLBT persons.

Staffing: OUUC has a full time minister, the Reverend Arthur Vaeni, who began his service as Olympia congregation's minister in August, 2001. We have a full time paid Director of Religious Education, three part-time paid staff, and two affiliated community ministers. Sara Lewis, Director of Religious Education, has been with OUUC for two years. Darlene Sarkela has worked for the congregation since 1989. She became the church administrator in 1991. Our music director, Troy Fisher, and caretaker, Bill Arensmeyer, are part time paid employees with long term relationships with the congregation. Childcare workers are paid on an hourly basis, and we have a part-time bookkeeper on contract.

Issues:

- The Out of the Woods Family shelter occupies an older residence on the OUUC property, which was originally purchased to provide additional Sunday classroom space. Out of the Woods has its own board of directors, but OUUC provides the building without rent, building maintenance, and half of its utility costs. We are working to help them develop an infrastructure that enables them to become self-sustaining through support of the larger community.
- Now that we have completed the first part of our building masterplan, we have started discussing when we will be able to do the next phase: expansion of our sanctuary and the expanded parking that will be required by the City of Olympia.
- We have recently reorganized the congregation's governance structure, moving responsibility and authority closer to the working level. Committees have been grouped in mutually supportive clusters, with representatives of the clusters constituting a decision-making Program Council. Removing the operational workload of the board will allow it to transition to policy governance. We expect 2011 to be a year of learning and adjustment.

## **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.

The minutes of the OUUC Congregational Meeting, December 19, 2010 are attached as a separate document.

## Completion of Action Plan

### *Worship and Celebration Projects (2 required)*

#### **Project Title: Integration of Seventh Principle in our Worship Services**

**Project Description and Action:** At the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation, weekly worship services have long reflected our members' recognition that threats to the environment are threats to the principles of justice and compassion at the core of Unitarian Universalism. Each year, Earth Day Sunday services articulate the responsibilities and challenges we have as people of faith to care for the environment and to act for the poor and powerless – those who have little control over how resources are used or how policy decisions are made.

Worship is one way this congregation connects the individual with the universal: worship calls us to recognize “The earth is a living, conscious being. ... and to name these things as sacred: air, fire, water, and earth.” [Starhawk]

Relationship and responsibility are not limited to Earth Day Sunday; these themes recur through the year in services and sermons that focus on justice and ethics. Within the last year, examination of such topics as consumption of resources, ethical eating and immigrant labor policies in our worship services have called us to examine our personal and collective behavior in relationship to environmental sustainability, and to respond to calls to action.

Service hymns, readings, and meditations are selected by the minister and the music director to underscore the themes of earth care, justice, and interrelationship.

**Timeline for Completion:** Ongoing

**Outcomes:** The congregation understands that earth stewardship and environmental justice are part of our faith community's values. OUUC's mission statement states: We are a liberal religious community that opens minds, fills hearts, and transforms lives. We work for peace, equality, a healthy earth and an end to poverty.

**Lead:** Arthur Vaeni, minister

#### **Project Title: Greening the Sanctuary**

**Project Description and Action:** The Olympia chapter of the covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (OlyCUUPS or just “CUUPS”) has provided a place for spiritual seekers to explore an Earth Centered tradition connected to the seasons and honoring the cycles of life since 1989. We have also been a place to introduce newcomers to Unitarian Universalism within an Earth-based spirituality. New members of our group have stayed and become members of the larger church community as well and have served in many committees and activities. CUUPS members present Earth Spirituality information at adult RE classes and new member meetings.

CUUPS participates in the OUUC Worship Arts Committee and leads services. For more than 15 years the OlyCUUPS group has been responsible for decorated the sanctuary on the first Saturday in December and leading what has come to be called “The Greening Service” on the first Sunday in December. In this service the deep and ancient connection between the Winter Season, the Winter Solstice and the return of light is explored as the starting place for the myriad of seasonal holiday traditions of many peoples over time. The service weaves the common themes of hope, new life and the return of light to all our lives. It is a deeply Earth centered observance and as part of the service all attendees are given small sprigs of cedar decorated with ribbon to take with them as a meditation for the season. The service is well received and looked forward to as the kick off of our December OUUC holidays.

**Timeline for Completion:** Ongoing

**Outcomes:** The presence of CUUPS over the years has helped make a place at the table for Earth spirituality in all its manifestations. In turn the larger OUUC community has accepted the members of our group in a way that is not always found in other congregations. The path of Earth based, creation based spirituality has in turn enriched us all.

**Lead:** Mary Marsh

## *Religious Education Projects (2 required, 1 for children and 1 for adults)*

### **Project Title: Integrating the Seventh Principle into our Children's RE Program**

**Project Description and Action:** The children's RE program has thoroughly integrated the 7th Principle into the RE Roadmap we operate under. Each fall we do a pillar for "UU Identity" which includes all 7 Principles and the lives of UU's who have upheld those principles. In the past 2 years that fall pillar has included lessons on appreciation of nature and Henry David Thoreau, lessons on The Lorax by Dr. Seuss, and congregational guest speakers talking about the work they do with endangered species. Then in each spring, we have a pillar for "Faith in Action" and the 7th Principle and the interdependent web of life are large parts of that pillar. Examples from the last two years are a session of "Earth Scouts" for this pillar and we have used a curriculum called "Sounds of Nature" which focused on environmentalism. In addition to these parts of our regular Sunday School program, we do a Children's Chapel once a month, and the themes for chapels are frequently 7th Principle or "Green" related. A recent example was a chapel called "Seeds of Change" that focused on the story of Wangari Maathai and had the children go outside to plant crocus bulbs. This last summer we had a summer camp for the first time, and one whole day of the camp was focused on The Interdependent Web of Life, while another day that focused on the Evolution of Life also had many 7th Principle elements. The RE program works to put on an Intergenerational worship service for Earth Day each year, and has participated in other special events including the [350.org](http://350.org) Day for Climate Action last year. Last year the youth group attended a youth conference focused on ethical and sustainable eating, and consequently the youth group has worked to make their food for events and meetings more ethical and sustainable by going vegetarian, local, and organic. The entire RE program makes an effort to conserve, compost, recycle and re-use and to recycle materials for projects and crafts - and to involve the children and youth in those efforts.

**Timeline for Completion:** Ongoing

**Outcomes:** Children and youth take what they learn home and influence their parents. Meals and snacks provided by the youth are healthier and more sustainable.

**Lead:** Sarah Lewis, Director of Religious Education

### **Project Title: Offering Classes related to the Seventh Principle in our Adult Education Classes**

**Project Description and Action:** Our congregation has sponsored occasional discussion groups and video series throughout its almost 60 year history. In this decade an Adult Education Committee was formed, and offers a semi-annual catalog of classes and discussion groups. Households may register for as many classes as they like for a \$10 registration fee – which may be waived on request. A few classes may require funds for materials, but all the instructors are volunteers.

The Green Sanctuary Committee offers workshops through the Adult Education Program at least once each year, and other members and friends of the congregation offer many programs on earth stewardship and humans' spiritual relationship with the Earth. During the three year period of our action plan, the Green Sanctuary Committee has offered a Global Warming Café, the Menu for the Future discussion class (twice, including this fall), and a five session Ethical Eating film discussion series.

The following are among the twenty-two classes offered in the Fall 2010 catalog:

**EARTH CHARTER DISCUSSION:** led by a local Roman Catholic nun, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Names with Masters degrees in education and spirituality. OUUC provides space for interfaith discussions on issues of widespread interest.

**LOW CARBON DIET DISCUSSION GROUP:** This is the latest of six discussion groups led by members of the OUUC congregation as follow-ups to the Global Warming Café that we held in April 2008 (See Carbon Footprints in Sustainable Living Section of this report).

**MENU FOR THE FUTURE:** This is the second time that this Northwest Earth Institute discussion class has been offered at OUUC.

**NATURE & HUMAN NATURE:** Led by a retired business executive, this discussion group will view videos of four lectures from a conference with the same title and discuss the relationship between humans and nature.

**REUSABLE HOLIDAY GIFT BAGS TO SEW:** an evening workshop offered by a member of the congregation who is also a member of the American Sewing Guild. In addition to producing attractive gift wraps, participants will learn how to conserve resources and reduce holiday waste.

**Timeline for Completion:** Ongoing: Two sessions of Adult Education programs are offered per year: September – December and January-May. The class length varies between one session to weekly throughout the period.

**Outcomes:** The first Menu for the Future class, hosted by the Green Sanctuary Committee in winter 2008, had a dozen members and led to the formation of the OUUC Ethical Eating Work Group. The Work Group organized a film series on food issues last winter, a worship service on ethical eating, and this class. (See Project on Ethical Eating). The Low Carbon Diet Discussion Groups have led households to closely examine their carbon footprints and find ways to “lose 5000 pounds or more of carbon output.”

**Lead:** There is an ongoing Adult Committee which solicits class offerings twice a year, but this “project” does not require a lead. There is a consistent widespread interest in presenting classes related to the 7<sup>th</sup> principle in our congregation and community.

*Environmental Justice (2 required, 1 long-term that actively promotes justice for those affected by environmental injustices and creates relationships)*

### **Project Title: Repair and Improve the *Out of the Woods* Family Shelter**

**Project Description:** Shortly after construction of our church building in 1993, the congregation realized that we would need more space. We had the opportunity to purchase the adjoining property - which contained a small residence - at a reasonable price and so we did. In the next decade the house served primarily as supplementary classroom and meeting space. It was well known that the building was not well constructed or insulated, but we did not occupy it for many hours at a time.

In the last decade the building has gradually evolved into a full time shelter for homeless families. While the administration of the shelter has been spun off to an affiliated non-profit organization, Out of the Woods, maintenance of the building has remained with the OUUC Building and Grounds Committee. Over the last two years, the committee has taken on several substantial projects to improve the comfort and energy efficiency of the shelter. The heating furnace was replaced in 2009; the roof was replaced in August 2010. An energy audit called a “Homeprint” by our regional private power company has been completed this fall. The cost of the audit was subsidized by the non-profit Thurston Energy Program. Having the Homeprint qualifies the building for assistance from Thurston Energy contractors and may qualify it for rebates and grants. Participants at the Energy Fair held at OUUC in early October 2010 signed up to help with weatherization work parties, which will start addressing the building’s weatherization problems in the near future. Shelter residents are invited but not required to participate in these work parties. OUUC has a long term commitment to maintaining the Out of the Woods shelter, and anticipates continued volunteer work parties to do necessary maintenance.

**Timeline for Completion:** A weatherization workparty is scheduled for January 2011; more work is expected in the future.

**Outcomes:** Warmer, drier, more comfortable housing for the shelter guests and greater energy efficiency. Involvement of more members of the congregation in weatherization projects, and occasional personal connections made with shelter residents.

**Lead:** Adam Harris, Building and Grounds Chairman

### **Project Title: Window Insert Workshops**

**Project Description and Action:** One of the activities offered at the October 2010 Energy Fair that we sponsored at OUUC with the local non-profit Thurston Energy was a Window Insert Workshop. The young man who led the workshop had received a grant from the City of Olympia to offer the workshops for free to low income families and at cost for others. The session at our Energy Fair was a

demonstration workshop, and built two insulating storm windows for our minister's office, as well as some for other workshop participants.

The leader met with the Green Sanctuary Committee after the Fair and told us about his need for a location for his grant funded workshops this winter, and his hopes of finding an organization to continue the workshops in the future. OUUC has agreed to provide a home for the pilot series of workshops this winter and volunteers to assist at the future sessions. We have also secured a two months' share of OUUC's 2011 Share the Plate Program receipts to fund workshops next fall and winter.

This has brought us into contact with the Northwest Eco-Building Guild, which offers skilled carpentry for worthy green projects. Participation in these workshops this year and next winter bring our OUUC volunteers in direct contact with the people who need assistance in warming their homes and conserving energy.

**Timeline for Completion:** Our first workshop was held December 1, 2010. Ten window insulating inserts were built in three hours. Several more workshops are scheduled for January and February 2011. We expect this to be an ongoing project.

**Outcomes:** Energy conservation and reduced carbon emissions for the homes that get window inserts. Direct service to people who need weatherization assistance.

**Lead:** Joe Joy

### *Sustainable Living (4 required, 1 that addresses energy conservation)*

#### **Project Title: Green Building Our New Re Wing And Remodel.**

**Project Description and Action:** Our congregation built and moved into our church building on the cul de sac at the end of East End Street in 1993. The congregation had been founded in 1952 with the name the Unitarian Fellowship of Olympia (UFO). When we were ready to move from a 19<sup>th</sup> century church building that we had bought from the Methodists for very little money, we lacked a credit rating that would allow us to borrow much money. So we build the largest building we could afford, knowing that we would outgrow it soon. The Religious Education classrooms were filled from day one, and the need to expand was often discussed.

Serious discussions on what areas needed to grow began in earnest early in this century. Evaluations of our needs were followed by development of a several phase master plan, development of a financial plan and selection of an architect. The Green Sanctuary Committee participated in the discussions throughout this period. The criteria for selecting the architect included expertise in green building design, although there was agreement among the committee (known as Space 3.0) that we wanted as green a building as we could afford, but we would not be seeking a LEED rating.

The first part of the Building Expansion and Remodel Project was completed in the spring of 2010. The square footage of the building has been doubled from 5,000 to 10,000 feet, tripling the size of the foyer (now known as The Commons), adding a new classroom wing to the building, and remodeling existing offices and classrooms. The Space Committee reports the following Green Building Components were incorporated in the design of the new wing:

- The building makes liberal use of large insulated windows to bring in natural light, to connect the occupants to the green forest outside the building, to keep out drafts and to save energy used to heat the building. Solar tubes in the new Religious Education wing hallway also collect natural light and help us conserve electricity.
- The building design orients the building to a southern exposure for the future addition of roof mounted solar panels. Upgraded building code requirements have required us to better insulate the new addition and to install heat pumps to save electricity for both heating and cooling.
- Attention was paid to the selection of green materials for this construction project. The rock aggregate floor in the old foyer was ground and polished to a granite-like finish. So instead of replacing the floor, we recycled it to a new use. We poured the new concrete floor of the extended foyer, and included rocks which were then polished to match the old floor. Thus, we used local products, rocks, concrete and the existing floor to create a new durable, easy to maintain, low-cost floor for the new Commons.

- The interior paints were selected for no VOC (volatile organic compounds) content and the exterior for low VOC. The flooring for the hall and the new classrooms is a green product - Marmoleum, trimmed out with wood and vinyl. Products for the cabinets are Wheatboard, Paperstone and Formica, all green products with no VOCs. The new carpet for the minister's study is a green product - unsprayed wool over a pad certified as a green product.
- Outside the building, permeable paving stones now encircle the building, permitting increased on-site drainage of rain water. Also, landscape plantings are comprised of native species and drip irrigation has been installed to save water.
- The metal selected for the roofing material matches the existing roofing material and is long-lasting, has reflective qualities to lessen heat absorption, and is engineered to accept solar panels.
- Furniture made and purchased for the new space, such as chairs, tables, kiosks, bookshelves and desks, has been selected from materials that have lower out-gassing of chemicals, and are washable and durable as well as aesthetically pleasing.

**Timeline for Completion:** May 2010

**Outcomes:** Healthy indoor environment for our religious education programs; healthier work space for our congregational staff; congregants who are happy with the new classrooms, enlarged commons, beautiful indoor space, and sustainable visual transition to our surrounding forestlands.

**Lead:** Warren Dawes

## **Project Title: Shrinking Our Carbon Footprints**

**Project Description and Action:** In our original action plan, we proposed to “Enlist several families to examine their carbon footprint and share their progress in reducing it.” OUUC had been ahead of the general public in concern for global warming, as we had a monthly program on the subject in 2005. In the spring of 2008, former OUUC Board Chairman, Tim Ransom, organized the family examination of their carbon footprints, and presented the results, with graphics, to the congregation on Earth Day of that year.

In the fall of 2008, OUUC members became involved in a community-wide climate change project, “Cool Thurston County.” In April 2009, we hosted a *Global Warming Café* at our church. This was an evening program that educated the audience on the impacts of global warming, got them talking about their personal concerns about climate change, and enlisted them in discussion groups using the handbook, *Low Carbon Diet, A 30 Day Program to Lose 5000 Pounds*, by David Gershon.

We had an audience of 50 people at our Café, with about one-third being from the general public. Eight people signed up to lead discussion groups of the Low Carbon Diet book. Some of these discussion groups were offered through the OUUC Adult Education Program, in their Fall and Winter/Spring classes. Other discussion groups were held in homes, with the participants being neighbors who were additionally able to reduce their carbon footprints by leaving their cars at home.

The OUUC Green Sanctuary Committee supported the carbon footprint discussions by purchasing the *Low Carbon Diet* book at a bulk rate, and selling them to participants at a slightly lower rate than bookstores. This encouraged people to obtain their own copies and use them for longer term reference.

In the summer of 2009, the Rev. Carol McKinley, a community minister associated with OUUC, formed a community-wide committee to organize a “350.org” event for the Olympia area. 350.org urges global activities to encourage world leaders to commit to lowering carbon dioxide emission to the safer level of 350 ppm. OUUC members were active participants in organizing and presenting our “Walk and Bike for Climate Change Awareness” rally on Saturday, October 24, 2009. We encouraged people to walk or bike to a centrally located park, where popular local elected officials and faith community representatives thanked people for leaving their cars for the day, and participating in the effort to let world leaders know that people care about global warming, and its impact on the vulnerable around the world. The focus was on getting the message to our leaders before the Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen in December 2009.

In early October 2010 we hosted a Sunday afternoon *Energy Fair* at OUUC, offering four workshops to help homeowners improve the energy efficiency of their homes and take advantage of incentives and

rebates currently available through a local non-profit organization, Thurston Energy, and the private power company, Puget Sound Energy, that serves our area. We considered the fair a success when twice as many people attended the fair as had pre-registered, we received many compliments about the expertise of the speakers, and a dozen people signed up for neighborhood weatherization work parties, and a weatherization work party for the congregation's family shelter.

**Timeline for Completion:** These specific projects are completed, but we will continue to address global warming and energy conservation in our activities. (See Social Justice, too.)

**Outcomes:**

- Greater public and congregational awareness of changes we can make in our daily lives to reduce our energy use and carbon output.
- Ongoing interfaith relationships to address climate change.
- New volunteers to work on weatherization projects for low-income and homeless people.

**Leads:** Tim Ransom (family carbon footprint project), Lorie Eaton (Café), Carol McKinley (350.org), Leslie Romer (Energy Fair).

## **Project Title: Managing Invasive Plant Species**

**Project Description and Action:** OUUC purchased its four acre property and built our main church building in 1993. Early volunteer landscapers thought that English ivy would solve our ground cover needs around the building, and invited it to make itself a home here. It naturally spread into the surrounding forested acreage, and climbed up many trees. Early in this decade we recognized the damage that invasive plants were doing to the ecosystem and to the beauty of our forest. So we have held several "ivy pulling parties" each year to remove ivy and other rapidly growing non-native plants that would like to crowd out the native trees and shrubs that make the natural areas of the OUUC properties a feast for our eyes and for local wildlife.

The invasive plants that we have successfully removed – but have continued to monitor and remove whenever they appear - are English holly, Scotch broom, and tansy ragwort. We have successfully removed ivy from the trunks and limbs of the Douglas fir and hemlock in the forest. There are still areas in the forest where the ivy has formed mats of roots. We continue to work to reduce these areas.

In addition to our ongoing program to address invasive plants, we had a new and more difficult challenge appear on the OUUC property during the time that we have worked on our Green Sanctuary Action Plan. During the summer of 2008 we discovered that Japanese knotweed, a virulent invasive plant which is classified as a noxious weed in the Pacific Northwest, had found a home along the property line and arterial road bordering the corner of OUUC property farthest from our church building. (The weed has horrific growth habits: roots to 7 ft. deep and 30 ft. laterally, shrubs up to 8 feet tall. It spreads both by movement of plant parts and through spreading roots.) We knew when we discovered it that local government authorities would remove the weed from the public right-of-way and would eventually require us to remove it from the rest of our property.

One of our committee members, a retired chemistry professor, volunteered to become our "Japanese knotweed abatement manager" – our expert on removal and manager of the removal process. He contacted the county weed control staff and learned what our responsibilities are as property owners. In the spring of 2010 he contacted the county weed control staff and learned that we would be required to remove the Japanese knotweed that year. We knew that we would need to work with the owners of the adjacent undeveloped property, to have a lasting impact on the shrubs that were growing on the property boundary.

County staff knew the staff of the development company that owns the adjacent property, and told us that they were responsible and experienced in removing noxious weeds from their property. The county weed staff advised us of our choices for removing the knotweed. We could cut the stalks as close to the ground as possible once every week, May 1 to June 14 and gather and take all stalks to the landfill, because they hit the ground growing – or we could use a chemical treatment. The chosen treatment would need to be



repeated as many years as the weed reappeared. When our abatement manager contacted the neighboring property owners about our common problem, they were quite receptive to working with us.

In his second conversation with them, the property owners offered to treat the knotweed on our property when they treated theirs. They offered the service as a donation to our congregation. Our abatement manager and the Green Sanctuary Committee Chair discussed the options with the OUUC buildings and grounds committee and with the president of the church board. Everyone agreed that accepting the donation of limited chemical treatment by a competent applicator was preferable to a long term commitment of volunteers to repeated hand removal of the noxious weed

**Timeline for Completion:** The initial spraying of the knotweed occurred in June 2010. It will be repeated annually as long as necessary. As long as there are sections of the OUUC property that remain in native plantings, we will need to monitor and remove invasive plants. We recognize this as an on-going responsibility.

**Outcomes:**

- A healthier natural landscape and habitat for the creatures that live in OUUC forestlands.
- A good working relationship with the owner of the adjacent undeveloped property.

**Lead:** Bernie Steckler (knotweed), Joe Joy (ivy pulling parties)

## **Project Title: Ethical Eating**

**Project Description and Action:** In the winter of 2009, the OUUC Green Sanctuary Committee offered the Northwest Earth Institute class, *Menu for the Future*. The course is designed like all NWEI classes, with six discussion sessions focused on readings provided in the class text, and a seventh session for celebration and discussion of future actions. The topics addressed in the readings range from the value of organic food to human and environmental health to the injustices of current food distribution systems. The ten participants were a mixture of congregational members and interested local residents, with a wide variety of interests in food. For its last class meeting, the group chose to have a potluck meal, with each dish made from mostly organic and local ingredients. This reflected a significant change in the food choices made by most of the participants.

Later that spring the *Menu for the Future* class was asked to continue sharing information with the congregation as a component of the OUUC's program on Ethical Eating. The congregation has a long history of keeping a pantry of food donations for families in the community that run short, and of participating in the annual CROP walk, to raise funds for local and international food programs. We formed an Ethical Eating workgroup to share the information we had about the links between our food choices and human health, global environmental health and global economic well-being.

The four women in the work group committed to writing monthly articles for the congregation's newsletter, putting on a film series that addressed major food ethics issues, and planning a worship service that focused on their journeys to their current thinking on these issues.

The group developed a schedule of topics and writers for the newsletter, which continued through 2010. They met monthly through the fall of 2009 to review documentary films and select ones that best presented the following themes: a comprehensive review of food ethic issues, organic vs. industrial conventional farming, international water supply issues, fair trade, and genetically modified seeds vs. family farms. The five films that we showed were borrowed, rented, and purchased at a discount for non-profits from a documentary film distributor. Community members from outside the congregation were solicited via fliers, the local newspaper, relevant community groups, and internet sites.

We showed the films in the OUUC sanctuary to audiences ranging from 15 to 50, and provided healthy food snacks appropriate to each topic. The audiences made donations to cover the cost of the food. As usual, our audience included community as well as congregational members. Specific topics attracted individuals with particular interest in the topic. These drop-ins usually brought expertise to our discussions that was a valuable addition.

**Timeline for Completion:** Autumn 2010

**Outcomes:**

- Much greater awareness of the environmental, health, and social issues related to food production and food and water distribution.
- Congregational preparation to participate in discussions on the draft Statement of Conscience on Ethical Eating .
- Identification of OUUC as a good place to hold a public meeting on related topics. – We are co-hosting a meeting on “Developing a Local Sustainable Food System” in January 2011.

**Leads:** Janet Pearson and Leslie Romer

*Additional (2 required, these can relate to the program elements of your choice)*

## **Project Title: Carpool System**

**Project Description and Action:** Our 2008 Action Plan included three projects to lead to a functioning carpool system. These three projects were completed by early 2009, and we have continued to refine our system.

The first step was to “obtain useful geographical data from our County Planning Department, to support development of a congregational carpool matrix.” The Planning Department had offered the congregation this information when they had funding to encourage local non-profit organizations to develop localized emergency response plans. They provided our congregation’s leadership with three draft maps, showing the location of members’ homes in the county, the largest city (Olympia), and a large retirement community. Because there were some errors, church leadership had asked for revisions, by then the Planning Department’s project had ended and revisions were not available. The Green Sanctuary Committee thought the maps would be a useful start for a manual project, so we obtained the maps and went from there.

The maps were marked off in grids, so that households could be identified with a small geographical area. The gridlines were coded to start with a letter that identified the map where they were located: T for Thurston County, O for Olympia, PC for Panorama City. Members who are residents of other counties were identified with the initial letters of their counties’ names:. A three character alpha-numeric code was then assigned to each household listed in the latest congregational directory, ranging from A01 for Abad to Z03 for Zickuhr (Some letters of the alphabet had up to 20 names with the same initial letter, so using a three character code was immediately necessary.) As the Planning Department had used small circles marked with an alpha-numeric code to identify household locations, we did the same – using small pastel labels with handwritten codes. Some of the household locations were easy to find. For harder to find addresses, we resorted to free mapping services on the internet. People with only post office box addresses were contacted by e-mail, requesting their physical address, but most chose not to be included.

A transparent vinyl sheet marked with concentric circles is used to identify the four nearest OUUC neighbors for each household. The codes for those neighbor households are added to the record for the initial household.

The following message is sent to each household, letting them know who their OUUC neighbors are:

Dear [first names of the adults in the household]:

Here are the names and phone numbers of your nearest OUUC neighbors:

- 1 [full name and phone number]
- 2 [full name and phone number]
- 3 [full name and phone number]
- 4 [full name and phone number]

Please print and save this information for future use. We hope that you will consider using this information to share rides to OUUC and to OUUC events at more distant locations. Carpooling helps build community, reduces pressure on our parking spaces, and confirms our commitment to sustainable living.

If you have questions or comments about the OUUC carpool system, please contact me.

[name of the carpool coordinator and phone number]

OUUC Green Sanctuary Committee

These messages are sent by e-mail to all the households that have an e-mail address in the directory. It is necessary to send a few by postcard. This information was initially distributed in the early months of 2009. A dozen responses were received – mostly thank yous or corrections. Because the system has remained manual, the next update was distributed a year later, rather than more frequently. Many more responses to the 2010 update were received. Several people reported on carpools that they had formed in response to the message. One unexpected result was a group of choristers who said that they got to choir practice more regularly because they had a commitment to their carpool.

The third part of the carpool system is to identify primary and backup drivers for all congregants needing rides to Sunday services. Like many congregations, we have many members and would-be participants who cannot drive themselves to church. Experience finding a system that would work for the residents of the area's largest retirement community, Panorama City, provided a format for all individuals needing rides.

We polled the people who live in Panorama City: Which service (of two) do they like to attend? Do they drive or ride and with whom? How frequently do they, or would they attend if they had reliable transportation? With this information, a primary and secondary driver was identified for each resident of the community. (Panorama City does have a small bus that is available to give people rides to church, but our church is a mile beyond their limit for church deliveries.)

The church administrator contacts the carpool coordinator whenever she receives a request for a ride to church, or OUUC events at other locations. The carpool coordinator contacts the person requesting the ride to get their location, mobility and any other useful information. The coordinator then finds the nearest OUUC participants and contacts them until she finds someone willing and able to provide a ride.

In 2010, OUUC formed an emergency response committee, which has been exploring ways for members to watch out for each other in a case of a natural disaster, such as an extended power outage, flood or an earthquake. The new committee met with the carpool coordinator and reviewed her maps and system. Our minister is planning a service on "radical hospitality" for winter 2011, which will be followed by updated messages identifying each household's OUUC neighbors. Between now and then we will plan follow-up activities, to encourage more active engagement between our members and their neighbors, to encourage both carpooling and mutual support in case of need.

They also recommended developing a database that could be used for both carpool and other congregational needs. The feasibility of transferring data from the congregation's current database for this purpose will be examined as part of the winter 2011 update process.

**Timeline for Completion:** The next carpool system update – Winter 2011.

**Outcomes:** Greater awareness of carpooling (or other alternatives to cars) as a desirable way to get to church. More awareness of who in the congregation lives near each of us. Interest in making use of the carpool data to build a stronger social network within the Congregation.

**Lead:** Leslie Romer

## **Project Title: Development Of Policies to Improve the Environmental Health and Socially Responsibility of Our Congregation**

### **1) Policy on Socially Responsible Investment (SRI)**

**Project Description and Action:** In 2008, OUUC had a committee working to design an Endowment Program. The Social Justice and Green Sanctuary Committees recognized the need to develop a policy to appropriately guide the placement of those investments.

An active member of the Social Justice Committee researched the policies that were linked to the UUA website at that time, and drafted a policy for our congregation. The draft was presented for review to each church committee that would be affected: Social Justice, Green Sanctuary, Finance and Endowment.

Our policy was structured to provide general principles as guidance, and criteria as recommendations, in response to concerns of the Endowment Committee that they would be too constrained if the criteria for selection of investments were considered to be primary principles of the policy.

**Timeline for Completion:** The policy was adopted by the OUUC Board of Directors in April 2008, but has been recommended for review next year.

**Outcomes:** The current president of the OUUC Board of Trustees is interested in seeing the current SRI policy expanded to consider purchases, as well as investments. As for equity investments, we have found that "socially responsible" is essentially proving to be an unworkable goal. Despite adopting what we considered specific criteria two years ago, we have found that firms which, at their core, would appear to fit into the definition often have some policies that cannot be considered socially responsible. There is new interest in pursuing "sustainable investments", meaning investments in firms that take a long-term outlook rather than concentrating on quarterly earnings and the current stock price. In the end, firms which do things right and insist on sustainable practices are the most likely not just to survive, but to thrive. To date, however, new policy guidelines reflecting this view have not been adopted.

**Lead:** Jody Suhrbier led development of the policy in 2008. The current Board President is Harmon Eaton.

## **2) Grounds Policy**

**Project Description and Action:** The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to those that create and maintain the gardens, plantings and natural environment surrounding OUUC's church building(s) in order to keep the natural habitat and flavor of a Pacific Northwest "esthetic" and to promote environmentally safe and sound gardening practices. The policy covers native plants, water conservation and integrated pest management. All affected committees: Landscaping, Buildings and Grounds and Aesthetics were consulted before the draft policy was taken to the Board of Directors for adoption.

**Timeline for Completion:** The policy was developed and adopted in 2009.

**Outcomes:** The policy has guided restoration of our landscaping after the completion of construction in 2010, and new plantings required by the development.

**Lead:** Jean Phillips and Pat McLachlan.

## **3) Chemical Use Policy**

**Project Description and Action:** Because there are members of our congregation who are chemically sensitive, people involved in painting, remodeling, and cleaning our building have been aware of the need to avoid harsh chemicals whenever possible. The need for a permanent written policy was emphasized by the decision process involved in completing the church's construction project this year. A policy based on a state agency's toxics policy was developed and is currently being reviewed by affected staff and committees.

**Timeline for Completion:** The revised draft chemical use policy is expected to go to the church board for discussion and adoption during Winter 2011.

**Outcomes:** Establishment of guidelines for people who clean, paint, and refinish in our church, to protect the health of children, affected adults and the surrounding ecosystem.

**Lead:** Joe Joy and Pat McLachlan

## **Accomplishment of Program Goals**

### **1. Build awareness of the significance and complexity of environmental issues:**

The work of the OUUC Green Sanctuary Committee has focused on education of the congregation and members of the larger community who have participated in workshops and classes on Global Warming/Climate Change, Ethical Eating, local food production and energy conservation. The development and implementation of congregational policies on Socially Responsible Investment, Chemical Use, and Landscaping (addressing water conservation, Integrated Pest Management and use of native plants) took the discussion of all these issues to the committees, staff, and affected individuals in the congregation. These are very complex issues that have drawn discussion from many perspectives and developed broad awareness of the interconnected web of issues that each title serves to label. We reach members of the congregation who do not participate in classes and workshops through articles in the congregation's monthly newsletter, information on the OUUC website, brochures in the church Commons literature racks and through individual conversations. Because each local jurisdiction has slightly varying waste management practices, there are signs guiding recycling in the OUUC kitchen and restrooms.

Having 7<sup>th</sup> principle values fully integrated into the Children's RE program means that the lessons offered reach the younger generation, and usually their parents as well. We anticipate that a wide variety of earth spirituality and earth stewardship related classes will continue to be offered through OUUC's Adult Education programs.

The Green Sanctuary Committee recognizes that education is an ongoing process as participation in church committees changes, new issues arise, and new participants join in OUUC activities.

## **2. Encourage personal lifestyle changes:**

Discussion series using the Low Carbon Diet book, the Ethical Eating film and discussion series, and the Energy Workshop were all quite effective in changing personal lifestyles. Participants in all three series/events learned ways to significantly reduce their impact on the earth and proceeded to implement changes. They have gone on to share what they learned with other members of the congregation and the larger community.

Providing contact information to congregation members on their "OUUC neighbors" has served to encourage carpooling, when it is feasible. A growing number of congregants carpool to meetings, choir practice, and other congregational events. Senior members of the congregation have regular rides. We may even have had some impact on the ratio of Priuses to vans and SUVs driven to OUUC.

While shade-grown fair trade coffee has been served from the OUUC kitchen for about a decade, locally grown and produced foods (wild salmon, organic produce, baked goods) have been featured at the large congregational dinners for the last two years.

## **3. Engage in community action on environmental issues.**

Our congregation provided leadership and active participation in the "Bike and Walk for Climate Change Awareness" rally on Saturday, October 24, 2009. This was inspired by the 350.org call for events around the globe to let national leaders know that there was public support for strong action at the Copenhagen Meetings on Global Warming in December 2009.

As the principal UU congregation in the state capital area, we are actively involved in Washington UU Voices for Justice. This statewide organization takes a faith-based approach to issues being considered by the state legislature. Environmental justice issues that have been addressed by the organization in the past two years include: funding for alternative energy technologies; funding for energy-saving improvements for our schools and green jobs. The 2011 legislative priorities include: Invest in Clean Water bill, Safe Baby Bottle bill to regulate the materials used in baby bottles, and support for legislation on sustainable agriculture.

Members of OUUC initiated and are actively involved in the local interfaith organization's Earth Stewardship Committee. We meet monthly to share resources (including a shared DVD collection), inspiration and ideas with leaders of earth stewardship efforts in other faith communities in our area. We are currently developing plans for the first Interfaith Earth Day Service in our area, for April 2011.

## **4. Strengthen the connection between spiritual practice and Earth consciousness:**

We strive to raise the awareness in our congregation and our community of the significance and complexity of environmental issues. We have strengthened individual practices that embody love of the earth and taking care of it through ethical eating, organic gardening, management of invasive plants, energy conservation, water conservation, purchase of fair trade products, recycling, carpooling – and many other aspects of our lives.

We strengthen awareness of this relationship through specific worship services, such as the Greening of the Sanctuary in December, Earth Day Services in April, and incorporation of earth-based and Earth-appreciation readings, hymns and messages in all our spiritual gathering.

## **5. Work to heal environmental injustices:**

Supporting the family homeless shelter that is affiliated with our church is a major commitment of our congregation. Providing a warm, comfortable building for that program while improving its energy efficiency has taken a significant commitment of time and resources over the last two years. This country's lack of attention to the needs of our poorest neighbors relies on faith communities to fill this need.

Our programs, classes, and writing on ethical eating and international public water issues have raised awareness and changed personal purchasing and gardening practices. Purchasing fair trade products,

organic foods and local foods all address improving conditions and markets for farm workers and ethical third-world producers.

UU Voices for Justice works to change state policies that affect working conditions, availability of jobs that are healthy for workers and the environment, improve public water supply, and other related issues.

### **Program Evaluation**

**1) 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?**

The greatest benefit has been exposure to information and ideas that change minds, hearts and lifestyles. We have sponsored workshops and classes on carbon footprints, energy conservation, regional and local food supply, and global food and water issues that have focused on changing personal habits: Children also take ideas home from RE classes that change family habits. Adults learn the impact of their food choices, and move toward more sustainable food supplies and fair trade purchases. They also learn that purchasing healthier foods helps build a market for safer workplaces for farm workers. Carbon diet discussions help couples learn that there are affordable ways to improve their energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.

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

The greatest challenge has been getting people to carpool or share rides. Each household has its internal commitments. Many people don't leave home with only one destination – a series of errands is planned before or after attending worship, a meeting, or a class at OUUC. Since the building expansion has been completed, attendance at our two Sunday services has increased, and cars are parked far down the street from our church. The Green Sanctuary Committee will work with our minister to address this and related issues during 2011.

**3) 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?**

There are many changes, both large and small that have come from our Green Sanctuary activities. The building remodel was accomplished with non-toxic materials and finishes. The new classrooms and the Commons all have windows that frame our adjacent forest, bringing the natural world into our thoughts and discussions. The menus for our community meals now feature local and organic foods. Our Sunday coffee service features fair trade coffee and tea in ceramic cups, served from a kitchen with mixed paper, plastic, metal, glass, and organics recycling. (Organics includes food waste, food contaminated papers and paper towels.) Our landscaping features native plants, Integrated Pest Management, and water conservation via a drip watering system. People feel guilty about not carpooling, and there have been requests for a "Bike, walk or carpool to Church Sunday."

**4) What are your intentions/aspirations for continuing to live out your Green Sanctuary commitments?**

This report is filled with commitments to the future. We had an active Green Sanctuary Program before we applied for candidacy as a Green Sanctuary Congregation, and we will continue to nurture this program. In December 2010 we held the first in a series of Window Insert Workshops – to assist people build insulating window inserts that will help them stay warmer, save energy and reduce carbon emission. In January 2011 the committee will work with our minister, Arthur Vaeni to coordinate distribution of "your OUUC neighbors" carpool information with a Sunday focused on "radical hospitality." We are participating in planning for the first Olympia-area Interfaith Earth Day Service in April, and we will work on having a spring "Bike, walk or carpool to Church Sunday."

**5) 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?**

- a) OUUC is recognized as a leader in the local interfaith earth stewardship community, having been the initial proponents of a local interfaith earth stewardship committee. We serve as resources for other faith communities' efforts. Members of other faith communities participate in OUUC workshops and classes before taking the programs to their own congregations, and sometimes bring their classes to our church, as a hospitable environment. Our congregation provides leadership for Washington State UU Voices for Justice. We expect these roles to continue.

- b) OUUC's recognition as a Green Sanctuary Congregation will give us greater impact in the UU community of our region and among the members of our congregation. We hope that having our congregation recognized as a Green Sanctuary will also increase participation in the activities of UU Voices for Justice, here in the capital city.