



Application for Green Sanctuary Accreditation

Congregation Information

Congregation name: Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Address: 1301 Gladewood Dr., Blacksburg, VA 24060
(Mail - P.O. Box 10116, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0116)

Web Site: www.uucnrv.org

Green Sanctuary Contact: Dick Bauman

Address: 3605 Deer Run Rd., Blacksburg, VA 24060

Phone: (540) 629-0497

Email: uuduo2@gmail.com

Minister: Rev. Alex Richardson (Interim)

Congregation Profile

We are located in a residential section of a university town in southwest Virginia. Virginia Tech has 28,650 undergraduate and graduate students and is centrally situated in the community, with a number of faculty and staff members among our congregation as well as a few students. Our membership now stands at 179 adults, and our average attendance is 146, including children. Our members live in Blacksburg and neighboring towns Christiansburg and Radford, Montgomery County, with some from Floyd County, which is about a 30 minute drive, and Giles County. We have a wide range of age groups, with many young families, middle aged and seniors, including singles. We became a Welcoming Congregation in 2004, and have GLBT members and friends.

Our minister of 12 years, Rev. Christine Brownlie, retired on June 30, 2011, and we are now served by a full-time interim minister, Rev. Alex Richardson, who will be with us for two years. Our Search Committee is preparing to find a settled minister. Other salaried staff are our part-time Administrator, Lisa Evanylo; our Director of Religious Education, Karen Hager; pianist Jared Gibbs; a bookkeeper and a sexton. We also have a volunteer Treasurer, Linda Powers. In governance, our Executive Board comprises our President, Past President, President Elect, Treasurer, with four Members-at-Large and our Minister, DRE and Administrator as ex-officio members. Of course, there are numerous support committees and action groups. We are in the process of reorganizing our committee structures into a more efficient table of organization.

Our congregation was founded in 1956 with seven families, and chartered October 8, 1956. Meetings were held in various locations on the VT campus until growth at the university brought young, liberal faculty, which in turn brought growth to the Fellowship and enabled it to purchase property and build a meetinghouse, which was completed in December, 1967. Various part-time ministers served the Fellowship, and further growth led to purchase of adjoining property and construction of a larger building, completed in May, 1992. Half-time ministers served until our first full-time minister, Rev. Brownlie, was called in August, 1999. Effective July 1, 2003, the congregation's name was changed from the "Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the New River Valley" to the "Unitarian Universalist Congregation", and we adopted the following Mission Statement: "We are a caring and diverse community bringing spirit, love, justice, learning and reason to our congregation and to the larger world."

Following a very successful capital campaign, a new sanctuary and RE rooms were added to the building, enabling us to move from two Sunday services to one, and to convert our former sanctuary to a fellowship hall. The first service in the new sanctuary was a Water Service on August 31, 2008, and the addition was dedicated September 7, 2008.

A survey of the Congregation in January, 2007, found that the two issues of highest concern were the environment and peacemaking, in that order. Therefore we embarked on our Green Sanctuary Program and established a Peacemaking Committee under the auspices of the Social Action Committee. A general survey of the Congregation was conducted in February and March of 2009, with one of the questions "Should we become a Green Sanctuary?" In response, 28.8% strongly agreed, 50% agreed and 13.5% disagreed, with the remainder undecided. This survey had a 74% completion rate, and was a valid representation of the Congregation.

The Green Sanctuary logo is on the home page of our web site, and leads to general information about the program.

Congregational Vote: Approved at the Annual Congregational Meeting on May 13, 2012.

Completion of Action Plan

WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION PROJECTS

Project Title:

1. "Ethical Eating" Sermon Series:

- **April 6, 2008: "Do We Care Enough to Share?":** Excerpts: "I know that many of us are carefully examining the way we live and making changes that will reduce our 'footprint' on the planet". It addresses the dilemma of population control while feeding and healing the hungry and the sick. "We must act boldly with commitment and determination, caring and sharing so that the web of life can continue and even heal." | [Link](#)
- **October 5, 2008; "Ethical Eating":** Sermon content included

environmental concerns and concerns about animal rights. What moral guidelines, if any, should govern food production? Our goal is to "Support sustainable agriculture and farmers' markets" and to "encourage organic community gardening", as well as to "become an advocate for social and economic justice." | [Link](#)

- **October 12, 2008; "Food, Feast and Famine":** Excerpts: "Like you, I worry about this issues of sustainability, the treatment of farm workers, and the living conditions of animals that supply the eggs, mild and meat that I consume. I'm uneasy about pesticides, hormones and other additives." The sermon quoted Michael Pollan's book "The Omnivore's Dilemma", in which he "encourages us to seek full consciousness of what it took to create this meal." | [Link](#)
- **August 10, 2010; "Radical Nourishment: Food for the Soul":** Excerpts: Quoting Michael Pollard, "We eat by grace of nature, not industry." "What we take in is the body of the whole world." (Sermon by Rev. Karen Day) | [Link](#) (MP3 audio file)
- **March 11, 2012; "On the Pleasures of Moral Righteousness":** Excerpts: This sermon focused on the Ethical Eating program, with a handout, "Ethical Eating - Food and Environmental Justice", which was an outline summary of this CSAI with reference to the websites social witness@uua.org, social justice@uua.org and CSAI@uua.org as well as resources such as Daniel Coleman's book "Ecological Intelligence". Our monthly Community Lunch following the service was designated as a vegetarian meal for the potluck. | [Link](#) (MP3 audio file)
- **April 22, 2012 – Earth Day Service:** A presentation on the congregation's Application for Accreditation as a Green Sanctuary was made in preparation for our annual meeting, and the sermon emphasized the need for church community effort under the leadership of the Executive Board to accomplish our goals in support of the environment. Rev Alex spoke of his personal experience as a member of a team, accepting the leadership of others.

2. Sermons on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Living:

- **March 15, 2009 - "UUC Justice Sunday: The Right to Safe Water".** Excerpts: "How many times a day do you turn on the tap in a sink and have instant access to safe, clean water? ...Not everyone enjoys what we take for granted. How can we address the justice issue of safe water and sanitation as a basic human right?" | [Link](#)
- **April 5, 2009 "When is Enough Enough?"** Excerpts: Reference is made to the Hebrew spiritual practice of Dayenu: it is enough, we were given what we needed. Consumerism produces stress in our lives, the "over-heated and relentless attempt to create an artificial 'need' and that persistent itch of want that will never be quieted...For the sake of those who live in grave poverty and for the health of the planet, we need to get off the crazy carousel of consumption that has been promoted so heavily for the past few decades. | [Link](#)
- **August, 2010 - Sunday Water Service:** Our annual service recognizing the role water plays in our summers. This particular service focused on the volume of water that is consumed in our daily living. Music Director Goldie Terrell calculated the water she would use in a typical day, doing

laundry, using the bathroom, eating food dependent on water for its growth and production, brushing her teeth (!), showering, washing dishes, for an estimated total of 74 gallons.

Timeline for Completion: The sermons were completed on the dates noted.

Outcomes: Information presented to Congregation raising awareness of need for respect for natural gift of water, and recognition and restraint of consumer consumption of resources.

Lead: Rev. Christine Brownlie; Goldie Terrell (Water Service), Rev. Karen Day (Radical Nourishment), Rev. Alex Richardson (Moral Righteousness)

3. **EarthSpirit Celebrations:**

- December 21, 2008 - Winter Solstice: This was a Sunday service connecting the Congregation with the changing season, return of longer days and celebrating our relationship with the natural world. Music included "Here Comes the Sun", "Rise Up O Flame", "You Gotta Sing", "Deck the Hall", and "Let the Sun Shine In", accompanied by piano, bells, chants and drums.
- March 20, 2009 - Ostara Ritual celebrating the Spring Equinox.
- April 10, 2009 - Celebration of the full Windy Moon.
- June 20, 2010 - Solstice celebration.
- October 16, 2010 - Journey Dance; "Weaving simple guided movement sequences and free exploration, JourneyDance reconnects you with your inner state of joyous well-being"
- October 29, 2010 - Celebration of Samhain; "Under the full moon light we dance, spirits dance, we dance."
- December 19, 2010 - Sunday service Winter Solstice Celebration, intergenerational service for the whole family.
- April 17, 2011 - Pink Moon celebration, with ritual theme of "Harmony".
- June 10, 2011 - Ritual and Blessingway.
- December 18, 2011 - Sunday Service, A Winter Solstice Celebration
- December 21, 2011 - BIG Wednesday Solstice Celebration (There are weekly Congregational gatherings at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays, with a meal)
- February 7, 2012 - Celebration of full moon
- March 9, 2012 - Celebration of full moon

Timeline for Completion: Completed on dates shown. Ongoing.

Outcomes: Congregation participation in celebration of the natural world.

Lead: EarthSpirit Sisters - Darla Bray, Laureen Blakemore, Susan Coleman and group. "The EarthSpirit Sisters group is a loving, laughing sisterhood. We are spirited women who honor many earth-based traditions." This group is UUC-based and led, but open to all women.

Project Title: Environmental Concerts

Project Description and Action: We hosted in our sanctuary a concert by "Walkin' Jim Stoltz, singer-songwriter and environmentalist, which was open to the community. Jim walks the wild country of our nation and writes and sings about the beauty he sees in the plains, forests and mountains, and his vision of preserving the

wild lands.

Outcome: No specific action resulted from the concert, though there was an enhanced appreciation for nature as seen through Jim's eyes.

Timeline for Completion: The concert was held March 15, 2009.

Lead: Rev. Christine Brownlie

Project Description and Action: Another concert on May 14, 2011 featured James Durst and Jim Scott in our sanctuary, open to the public. James is a world-traveling guitarist, singer and composer, and according to his web site uses his "role as minstrel to communicate global and social concerns common to us all, such as our environment, world peace and greater human understanding...." James created Hue Manatee as a spokesperson for the environment, and his songs mix humor and insight to reveal environmental degradation.

Outcome: The audience greatly enjoyed the music of these two men, and gained more perspective of environmental risks and consequences.

Timeline for Completion: The concert date was May 14, 2011.

Lead: Pat Traynor.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROJECTS

Project Titles: (Youth)

1. **Trees for Life:** "Teaching your children how to plant and care for trees." UUC RE Middle School students planted 33 trees in Heritage Park March 29, 2008, as part of a Community Service Project. "Participants will receive training in basic tree planting/maintenance and forest ecology..." The number of 33 trees coincidentally equaled the 33 Virginia Tech students and faculty who were killed in the mass shooting on campus.

Timeline for Completion: Completed March 29, 2008.

Outcomes: Education of youth as to replenishment and sustenance of natural growth, and the addition of 33 trees to absorb carbon dioxide.

Lead: Holly Lesko

2. **Land Conservation:** RE classes on February 24, 2009 were visited by Beth Obenshain, Executive Director of the New River Land Trust (founded by UUC member Lesley Howard), who spoke of the important work of the Trust in preserving land as green and open space. Children asked questions and participated in discussion.

Timeline for Completion: Completed as above.

Outcomes: Education of children as to retention of open space.

Lead: RE Director, Kristine Reid.

3. **Humane Society Collection:** RE and Social Action Committee jointly sponsored collection of donations for the Montgomery County Humane Society.

Timeline for Completion: Completed April 17, 2011, and again April 1, 2012.

Outcomes: Support for animals at local shelter.

Lead: RE Director Karen Hager and SAC Co-Chairs Polly Stimson and Pauletta Copenheaver.

4. **Animal Care:** RE class taught by member Claire Moran, a veterinary technician, with assistance from Beth Lyman and Joe the Dog. The class covered safety information about dogs, positive training methods and animal careers.

Timeline for Completion: Completed August 28, 2011.

Outcomes: Students learned respect for and care for our treasured pets.

Lead: Claire Moran, Beth Lyman, and Joe the Dog.

5. Project Linus' National Make a Blanket Day. This was a joint social action project for the RE and Social Action Committees, inviting children and adults to make blankets for children "who are seriously ill, traumatized, or otherwise in need." The blankets were to be "distributed locally to children in need at hospitals, homeless shelters, and wherever they can provide love, a sense of security, warmth and comfort."

Timeline for Completion: Completed February 18, 2012.

Outcome: Twenty blankets were made and distributed.

Lead: RE Director Karen Hager, SAC Co-Chairs Polly Stimson and Pauletta Copenheaver.

Project Titles: (Adult)

1. **Sunday Circle:** This is a program on the first and third Sunday mornings before the church service, attended by adults, that covers a variety of topics presented usually by members of the Congregation and occasionally by visitors. Following are the sessions related to the environment.

A. "Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet". A review of Mark Lynas's description of the effects of global warming of 1 to 6 degrees Celsius in stages, culminating in the elimination "of most life on earth, including much of humanity."

Completed: January 11, 2009

Outcome: Information presented as to the impact of global warming.

Lead: Gloria Heath

B. "Capturing Solar Energy": Presenter Dean Mook, retired professor of engineering at Virginia Tech, spoke about the various ways to gather solar energy, including panels, mirrors focusing sunlight on molten salt to boil water for steam generators, towers with strong updraft from solar heating to drive turbines. Dean had a power point presentation to illustrate his talk.

Completed: October 5, 2009.

Outcome: Education as to potential extension of our current minimal use of solar energy.

Lead: Dean Mook

C. "Mountain Top Removal": Presenters Darla Bray, Keith Lester and Joe Powers led "a discussion about the impacts of surface coal mining on the lives of the people who live in the region as well as strategies and actions being taken by various organizations to end this practice."

Completed: April 17, 2011.

Outcome: Raised awareness of our regional exposure to the fallout from this coal mining practice. (Darla had attended the Renewcollective's Alternate Spring Break March 5-11, 2011 at Natural Tunnel State Park. This issue will be further reviewed as a project under "Environmental Justice".)

Lead: Darla Bray, Keith Lester, Joe Powers

D. " Saving Sunlight": Member Glenn Skutt spoke about his professional work in designing and producing a method of storing solar energy for use during off-

peak hours. The first version of the system has just been installed in Sacramento, California.

Completed: May , 2011

Outcome: We learned about an exciting and promising way to convert sunlight to stored energy. The practical effect will be to have a constant flow of converted solar energy available during hours of darkness.

Lead: Glenn Skutt

E. "Nature's Services": Presenter Marquita Hill, PhD in biochemistry, taught environmental courses to engineers at Virginia Tech. She discussed our dependence on the natural world, preservation of undeveloped land, the role of the tree canopy which slows rainfall and allows it to percolate into the soil, the value of deep-rooted grasses and undeveloped wetlands, biomass fuels, worms as soil cultivators and other gifts we receive from nature.

Completed: September 4, 2011.

Outcome: Raised awareness of the need to protect and preserve natural resources.

Lead: Marquita Hill.

F. "Justice for Palestine": Presenter Morton Nadler, leader of the "UUC Justice for the Middle East" group that will be reviewed later in this report under

"Environmental Justice". This discussion included reference to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over land, housing and water rights, among other issues related to this Middle East tragedy.

Completed: November 6, 2011.

Outcome: Information presented on the injustice perpetrated on the Palestinian people as to their rights to land and water. A delegation made a trip to Washington, D.C. to speak with Congressional representatives. Local meetings were held, open to the public, to discuss and debate this issue.

Lead: Morton Nadler

G. "Ethical Eating": Presenters Cynthia Luke and Pauletta Copenheaver. Cynthia is the leader of the group working on the current UUA declared Congregational Study and Action Issue. This was an introduction to that Issue, and the kickoff to a Task Force meeting monthly, using ideas from the Congregational Resource Guide.

Completed: December 18, 2011.

Outcome: Startup of our series of meetings and action on Ethical Eating.

Lead: Cynthia Luke and Pauletta Copenheaver

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROJECTS

Project Title: Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice

Project Description and Action: Our congregation has undertaken this Congregational Study/Action Issue as one of our projects, following the presentation described above at our Adult Education Sunday Circle class led by Cynthia Luke and Pauletta Copenheaver. A Task Force has been formed, and its goal is to lead our UUC to healthier practices for ourselves, our fellow beings and our planet in our consumption of food.

Outcome: The Task Force met January 9, 2012,

On March 2, 2012, they presented a video "Forks Over Knives", which was "about the

health benefits of a whole-food, plant-based diet. On March 11, 2012, Ethical Eating was the subject of the Sunday service as noted under "Worship and Celebration", with the service followed by a vegetarian version of our monthly Community Lunch.

Project Title: Oppose Mountain-Top Removal for Coal Mining

Project Description: Our neighbor state, West Virginia, has seen many of its mountain ridges decimated by mining operations, with the residue dumped into valleys and streams. This has deeply affected the residents of the "hollows". According to Robert Kennedy, Jr., in a Washington Post article reprinted in the Roanoke Times July 12, 2009, "Mining syndicates are detonating 2500 tons of explosives every day ... to blow up Appalachia's mountains and extract sub-surface coal seams. They have demolished 500 mountains - encompassing about a million acres - buried hundreds of valley streams under tons of rubble, poisoned and uprooted countless communities, and caused widespread contamination to the region's air and water." The people in these communities are often poor and powerless to stop the destruction of their environment."

Various organizations are opposing these operations, including the Natural Resources Defense Council. Their website, www.NoMoreMountaintopRemoval.org, includes action suggestions which we would implement, including pressure on Congress and the Obama Administration to enact legislation and regulation to prohibit this destructive practice. It will require a concerted and ongoing effort to counteract the power of the mine operators and their supporters.

The local New River Valley Group of the Sierra Club is part of the effort to prevent further damage to the Appalachian Mountains, in conjunction with other groups such as Mountain Justice. Our intent is to work with these groups and the NRDC.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing

Outcome: In addition to the Sunday Circle presentation described above, Darla Bray attended the Mountain Justice Spring Break in Duffield, Virginia, in 2011 with a "first-hand look at the destruction of Black Mountain, and an opportunity to talk with people whose lives are affected by mountain-top removal every day." She brought to us this message in her presentation to the Sunday Circle on April 17, 2011.

Lead: Darla Bray and Joe Powers

Project Title: Job Squad (Formerly ReHabitat: Restoration of Housing for Low-Income Families, as described in the Application for Candidacy)

Project Description: At the outset, several members of our congregation worked with the Blacksburg Presbyterian Church to renovate and restore trailers and other homes for low-income residents of our community to make them more habitable and comfortable. The project has evolved into the UUC Job Squad, which received repair requests from the RSVP unit of the United Way. Member Dick Kates has served as the Volunteer Coordinator and Program Coordinator of the New River Valley Emergency Home Repair, under the auspices of United Way.

The original guidelines of the Job Squad included the requirement that the recipient or United Way provide the materials for the work, since we had no budget. However, funding has dried up, and we have changed our policy so that we will do work for our congregation's members and friends, for a freewill donation. The proceeds of those donations will be used to buy the materials for repairs for those who cannot afford them. We also recently received over \$700 from our 4th Sunday special collection for the UUC Social Action Committee, which will provide ample funding. We will be soliciting work projects from local community organizations.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

Outcome: We have fourteen members of the Job Squad. In addition to the work done as ReHabitat, the Job Squad has helped a family move, cleaned a trailer for a

woman released from a mental institution (in conjunction with another local church), cleared out unusable furniture and furnishings from the trailer of a disabled woman, re-stained a deck and fences for an elderly woman with a heart condition, and assembled office furniture for an elderly couple of our congregation.

Lead: Shelley Fortier (ReHabitat), Dick Luke, Dick Bauman (Job Squad).

Project Title: Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East

Project Description: "This is a national organization affiliated with the UUA. It is devoted to education and action around the issues raised by the occupation and settlement of the remaining land by the state of Israel." Our local chapter, the UUC UUJME, as been active for about six years. As described by its leader, "The UUJME sees its role as primarily educational, taking no stand on the one-state vs. two-state solutions to the dilemma. Of course, individual members are free to take any position on the issues they feel offers the best chances for a permanent and just peace." At stake in the occupation are land and water rights for the Palestinians. Their environment has been severely affected by the Israeli occupation and building on unauthorized occupied territory.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

Outcome: The UUC UUJME has "been responsible for several services and pulpit editorials as well as public meetings at the Blacksburg Public Library, the YMCA, and the town Senior Center. In 2010 they "held a well-attended joint meeting with the Blacksburg Friends Meeting." Also, on October 19, 2011, our minister, Rev. Alex Richardson, Morton Nadler and George Lally traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet on this issue with congressional aides for Foreign Affairs for congressman Morgan Griffith and our two senators, Jim Webb and Mark Warner.

Lead: Morton Nadler.

Project Title: "To Our House"

Project Description: This is a community ecumenical effort to provide shelter and dinner for homeless men during winter months. The men are referred to the program through local social services, and are housed in various churches in the community. They are bused from a collection point in Christiansburg in late afternoon to one of the shelters, where they are provided dinner, companionship, a packed lunch for the next day and a bed for each week. This program was initiated in 2011, and our UUC Social Action Committee participated in providing meals during that period as well as this year.

Timeline for Completion: For the current year, March 3, 2012.

Outcome: As described in our electronic newsletter, "From January 21- 24 (2012), our congregation provided food and other volunteer support for TOH, which was hosted by Luther Memorial Church. Sixteen people from the UUC volunteered their skills in a variety of ways: by driving, cooking, serving, cleaning up, making lunches and providing conversation and companionship to the participants." This service was repeated during the week of February 25 to March 3, 2012. A range of 6 to 11 homeless men have been housed and fed each night.

In addition, for our 4th Sunday collection in December 2011, we collected \$177 for this program.

Lead: Polly Stimson

Project Title: Blacksburg Interfaith Food Pantry

Project Description: This is an ecumenical program organized and staffed by volunteers from local churches to provide food to qualified persons in need. The low-income recipients are screened by New River Community Action to determine that they qualify and are residents of Blacksburg. Beneficiaries include some foreign

students at Virginia Tech as well as homeless persons and families. As stated on the Food Pantry web site, "Food and monetary donations come from local church, civic clubs, local schools and businesses, several VT fraternities and sororities, various food drives (including the annual Postal Drive), and the generous bakery and produce donations of the University Kroger and North Main Food Lion." Members of UUC staff the Pantry Monday nights, and we have periodic collections of food for the Pantry. Our congregation has been encouraged to "plant an extra row" in home and church grounds gardens to donate fresh produce to the Pantry.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

Outcome: About 700 individuals are served monthly. They receive basic food supplies once a month which are valued at \$100 to \$200 each depending on family size and food availability. Three of our UUC volunteers work at the Food Pantry every 4th Friday and 5th Monday evening to stock shelves, distribute food and record the recipients. We also have two to four that weekly bring produce from local grocery stores to the Pantry, and are first in line to substitute for volunteers on summer vacation. There are 30 volunteers on our listserv, and about half of those are active. In addition to volunteering service, we donate about \$100 worth of food monthly from our food drives, which includes food collected by our RE classes. Additionally, we hold an annual food drive at Halloween named "It's Scary To Be Hungry", that RE students conduct during church and at the local Kroger. In October of 2011, that resulted in two minivans full of food for the Pantry, valued at about \$600.

Lead: For the UUC, Debbie Keighton.

Project Title: Church World Service CROP Hunger Walk

Project Description: As stated in the Church World Service website, "CROP Hunger Walks are community-wide events sponsored by Church World Service and organized by local congregations or groups to raise funds to end hunger at home and around the world." Volunteers walk together on a designated date for a specified distance, receiving pledges from supporters for completing their walk. This is another ecumenical effort by local churches in Blacksburg.

Timeline for Completion: This is an annual event, and the UUC has participated in recent years.

Outcome: At the most recent CROP Hunger Walk on October 16, 2011, the UUC Walkers Team included 10 adults, 3 children, 4 dogs and a crossing guard disguised as Tigger. They had raised \$755 as of the publication of our November, 2011 newsletter.

Lead: Pauletta Copenheaver and Alison Armstrong.

Project Title: Montgomery County Christmas Store

Project Description: As described in its website, "The MCCS is an all-volunteer, community-wide, non-profit organization which assists low-income families in Montgomery County during the Christmas season by providing a shopping experience characterized by choice and dignity. Serving families with children is our first priority." New and used clothing, food, new household goods, bicycles, toys, school supplies and books are purchased or collected at various stations throughout the community, and families and individuals in need are given "credits" according to family size to use for shopping at the store.

Timeline for Completion: Annually, the first week in December.

Outcome: Our UUC is a collection point for children's coats, socks and underwear. In December, 2011, our members and friends donated 20 new coats, 9 used coats, 56 packs of underwear, 6 packs of socks, 4 used sweaters, 6 caps, 3 pair of gloves,

5 new toys, 19 stuffed animals (new and used) and miscellaneous items of clothes and used toys. We had about 30 volunteers working at the store, and the UUC Middle School Youth Group provided snacks

Member Pat Traynor, in addition to handling the clothing collection, has organized and operated the Christmas Café at the store for volunteers, serving them food obtained from local restaurants for the volunteers' refreshment.

Lead: Pat Traynor, Pauletta & Jim Copenheaver.

SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Project Title: "Low Carbon Diet"

Project Description and Action: Following the program outlined in the handbook, members of our Green Team presented ideas for reduction of our household carbon output through reduced energy consumption (lowering thermostat settings, installing programmable thermostats, using cold water for washing clothes, unplugging electronic appliances that drain energy even when turned off, etc.) Information was communicated to the congregation by e-mail and newsletter. An artificial tree was located at the rear entry on which members of the congregation can attach leaves showing their carbon-reduction commitments and results.

Timeline for Completion: The initial program culminated on Earth Day, 2009.

Outcomes: Members and friends pledged to discharge 28,185 less pounds of carbon vegetarianism, re-cycling, replacement of a heating and cooling system and unplugging LED lighted electronics. (This total is underestimated because re-cycling is common practice throughout the congregation.)

Lead: Shelley Fortier, Bobbie Littlefield.

Project Title: Electronic Newsletter

Project Description and Action: We formerly produced a monthly newsletter with 280 copies mailed to members and friends of the congregation. The newsletter averaged about 13 pages, using 6.5 double sheets of 11" by 17" paper. We have replaced the paper newsletter with an electronic newsletter sent by e-mail. We surveyed the congregation, and for those 50 who so requested, the paper issue continues to be mailed.

Timeline for Completion: Completed April, 2009, and ongoing.

Outcome: We have a monthly saving of an average of 2665 11" by 17" sheets of paper.

Lead: Administrator Lisa Evanylo.

Project Title: Recycling at Our Building

Project Description and Action: We have a recycling bin, kept in our kitchen, which collects glass, numbered plastics and aluminum. A member takes this material to a county collection area. We also recycle office paper, and we have a compost collection pail in which usable food waste (no meat) is deposited and taken to a compost bin available to members and friends who have plots in our vegetable garden space on church grounds. Yard waste is also deposited. A receptacle for batteries is available for congregants to bring in used small batteries, which are then taken to the local YMCA for recycling. We have also participated in the annual collection of used electronics sponsored by Virginia Tech on campus.

We have two rain barrels to be placed at downspouts to collect water for our

vegetable garden on the grounds, pending repairs to an outbuilding near the garden. ((Incidentally, we use china mugs for our coffee hour after the Sunday service instead of paper or styrene cups, and have china plates and bowls for our meals.)

Outcome: Recovery of recyclable materials and resources.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

Lead: Bill Clarkson, Bob Stimson, Dick Bauman

Project Title: Memorial Garden

Project Description and Action: Following years of planning, circular space was prepared behind our building and a Memorial Garden with a columbarium was created for placement of ashes of loved ones of members and friends of our congregation. Plantings surround the space, with a border for memorial pavers. Ashes may also be scattered in this area.

Outcome: At this writing, there are ten niches in the columbarium which are occupied or reserved, and nineteen pavers in place. This represents an opportunity for members and friends to have a quiet and private space for meditation and remembrance, as well as a substantial saving compared with commercial interment, and a sanctified use of our grounds.

Timeline for Completion: The Memorial Garden was dedicated on April 17, 2011.

Lead: Isabel Berney, Bobbie Littlefield.

Project Title: "Adopt-a-Highway"

Project Description and Action: This is a highway trash cleanup program in which our congregation has adopted a one-mile section of Route 460 By-Pass in Blacksburg. After training by a video, a crew of members pick up trash along the roadway. This has involved 10-15 members. The first event was May 7, 2011, and continues four times a year.

Outcome: There have been four pickup sessions so far, with a resultant reduction in litter along the roadway.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

Lead: Frank DuPont and Bob Stimson.

Project Title: Conservation of Paper

Project Description and Action: In addition to our electronic newsletter, other

programs have been designed to reduce use of paper. Our 2009 Assessment Survey of the Congregation was conducted online, with paper copies available for those without access to the internet. Also, our 2011 Stewardship Campaign entailed a Worship and Brunch service on April 3, 2011, using an eBrochure and eVite for promotion. Stewardship visits were by request only.

Outcomes: We received a satisfactory response to the survey, and an excellent response to our Stewardship Campaign. Paper was saved, as well as gasoline in our avoidance of an every-member canvas. Also, our annual Service and Goods Auction for 2011 was advertised electronically by eVite.

Timeline for Completion: Completed as noted. The Stewardship Campaign for this year followed the same format.

Lead: Molly Lazar (survey), Dick Luke (stewardship).

Project Title: Vegetarian Supper Activity

Project Description and Action: This potluck “vegetarian and vegan-friendly” supper group was created for families, including children, for periodic meatless meals together. The first supper was held May 13, 2011. The members have met monthly, with 2-10 people attending.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

Outcome: Vegetarian meals, saving energy and water required to produce meat products, and reducing output of methane gas from cattle - a small step, but a step nonetheless.

Lead: Liz Shooltz.

Project Title: Revisioning our Grounds

Project Description and Action: This project began as an idea to create a habitat on church property for beneficial insects, such as butterflies, and small animals, with a shallow pond. Much interest was generated, and the project has now expanded into an inventory of the plantings on the grounds; with culling, addition to and modification of the plantings with the intention of using native plants that require less or no maintenance with water, fertilizer and pesticides. The proposed Charter for the project reads in part: “Desirable elements of the plan are a comprehensive vision, including but not limited to, education, meditation, inspiration, environmental compatibility, wildlife habitat, and community service. The plan should take into account best design practices including the desire for low maintenance, minimal fertilization, no toxic pesticides, safety, and a minimum of financial outlay.” A meditation walk is an integral part of this plan.

Outcome: There are 24 members of this planning group. Frequent meetings have been held and many ideas exchanged by e-mail. The Charter for the group will be presented to the Building and Grounds Committee and then the Executive Board for approval. The grounds have been surveyed, the meditation walk has been mapped, and there are plans to obtain mulch. Virginia Tech students offer an annual work day in April, and their services were utilized to help spread the mulch. A consultation with Dr. Gordon Grender about his native habitat project was arranged for February 11, 2012.

Timeline for Completion: This will be a continuing project, pending Board approval.

Lead: Marquita Hill, Bonnie Moreno, George Lally, Ben Logan and others.

Project Title: Energy Conservation in Building and Grounds

Project Description and Action: As noted in the Congregation Profile, a major

construction project was completed in 2008. For the addition, we included programmable thermostats for heating and cooling. We had hoped to incorporate geothermal energy, but the cost was prohibitive. The lights in our new sanctuary are dimmable, and the exterior walls are 6” thick, with R 30 insulation. For our original building and our addition, we have York heat pumps with a Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) of 13 as required by federal standards. The construction was managed by a member of our congregation, who before coming to UUC owned a construction business in northern Virginia.

Outcome: Timeline for Completion: Completed August, 2008.

Lead: Scott Myers (construction oversight), Dan Brown (Building and Grounds chair).

Project Title: Computer Exchange

Project Description and Action: At the January, 2012, meeting, the Executive Board approved a computer exchange. As described, "UUC would act as a broker where members could donate unwanted computers/printers and receive an income tax credit. UUC would in turn give or lend the computers/printers to members of the congregation in need of one." The computers would have to be purged of personal information, and volunteers were solicited to do this.

Outcome: In progress.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

Lead: Lisa Evanylo, Administrator.

Project Title: Used Book Collection

Project Description and Action: As in 2011, our congregation participated in the annual book collection sponsored by the Literacy Volunteers of the New River Valley for a book sale held at the New River Valley Mall, February 16 - 19, 2012. The proceeds of the sale will support tutoring of adults in this area. This is a form of recycling with the resultant benefit of increased reading skills for those in need.

Outcome: Twenty cartons, totaling about 600 books, were donated by the UUC.

Timeline for Completion: Completed February, 2012.

Lead: Judy Snoke

Project Title: Recycling of Electronics for International Women in Need (IWIn)

Project Description and Action: This entailed a two-month recycling of electronics on the campus at Virginia Tech and in the community. IWIn provided collection boxes at specific points for electronics such as cell phones, iPods, MP3 players, laptops, DVD players, GPS systems, etc. Proceeds from the sale of usable parts will be used to support... "the work of Peace Corps volunteers in three isolated rural Mayan villages in Guatemala. 'Healthy Homes' is a Peace Corps endeavor to empower 130 families in these villages to adopt sustainable and health improving structures in their homes." The local sponsors of this project were IWIn, The Women's Center, Eco Cell, Recycle First and Downtown Blacksburg.

Outcome: We had a collection box in our coatroom which was filled to overflowing, with electronic devices, requiring a second box.

Timeline for Completion: The collection was from March 1 to April 27, 2011.

Lead: Laureen Blakemore

(Note: This project could also be considered under Environmental Justice.)

Accomplishment of Program Goals

*** *Build awareness of the significance and complexity of environmental issues:***

Through our Religious Education projects for adults and children, and our Sunday services and celebrations, we have communicated the importance of conservation of resources, the replenishment of natural growth, the value of water, the need to utilize non-polluting and renewable energy sources, the call for justice in land usage, food and shelter as environmental rights, the gifts of the natural world, and the threats to the chain of life. We have also used our newsletter and e-mail listservs to convey information about environmental issues.

*** Encourage personal lifestyle changes:**

Our project to reduce our carbon footprint resulted in commitments to cut back on energy use; we have increased opportunities for recycling, and encouraged conservation of water and consideration of renewable sources of energy. Our "Ethical Eating" project is underway, and the Vegetarian Club is active.

*** Engage in community action on environmental issues:**

Our congregation has participated with other churches and organizations in local programs such as the Interfaith Food Pantry, the "To Our House" shelter project, the Christmas Store - all designed to promote equality in the personal environmental needs of food, housing and household essentials. We have a fledgling project involving the destructive practice of mountain-top removal coal mining, which includes Mountain Justice and the Sierra Club. All of these programs are ongoing.

*** Strengthen the connection between spiritual practice and Earth consciousness:**

In our Sunday services, a series of sermons on Ethical Eating has drawn together our belief system and our daily lives as they impact our environment. Other services have joined the Seventh Principle to our use of water and others' rights to safe water, and our awareness of the effect of consumerism on ourselves and the impoverished. Our Sunday Circle programs have included information and discussion of alternate energy sources and the value of nature's gifts, which must be protected and preserved.

The Earth Spirit Sisters have led Sunday services devoted to recognition of our relation to the natural world, and have held regular observations of that link in their gatherings to celebrate the earth. Music can be a spiritual venue, and we have had two concerts whose themes were caring for the environment.

*** Work to heal environmental injustices:**

Our chapter of the UU Justice for the Middle East program has served to educate and advocate in the community for justice for the Palestinians, who have been deprived of their rights to land and water. We have a pending project to oppose mountain-top removal coal mining, which causes major damage to the lives and living conditions of those living in the "hollows" beneath those mountains. Much work remains to be done in such areas.

In the area of personal environments, we have helped in the community effort to relieve hunger through the Interfaith Food Pantry and the CROP Hunger Walk, and to provide shelter to homeless men in the To Our House program. Our Job Squad has helped to provide cleaner and safer home environments for some members of the community. Again, there are ongoing needs and more work is needed, but we have made a start with the programs in place.

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?**

Our congregation has always had a strong sense of the interrelatedness and interdependence of our lives and the environment, and many of the activities and programs that have been generated by the UUC over the past four years have reinforced that sense of connection. It is a tribute to the congregation that much of

the work described above has arisen spontaneously, without formal direction and at the initiative of concerned individuals and groups.

The Green Sanctuary Program has given us a structure and direction for our environmental activities, as well as guidance. Our participation has helped us focus on local initiatives with other organizations as well as increased our awareness of individual and church practices that affect the environment.

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

In these times of crowded lives and full schedules, it is difficult to sustain long term projects that require protracted effort. It is much less demanding to have clearly defined work projects that require only a brief commitment, and people are more readily willing to volunteer for those projects. There are exceptions, such as the Memorial Garden Committee and the Grounds Envisioning group, but in general, people like to have a job that is limited in scope.

**** 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?***

As written above, our congregation's culture has historically been positive as to care of the environment. The Green Sanctuary Program has enabled us to chronicle the work of that culture, and to provide a structure for evaluating our environmental work. We are moving ahead in education and action on a variety of fronts, including community efforts to improve the personal lives of disadvantaged people so that their home environments are healthier, and the dispossessed in our area have shelter and food. Our Social Action and RE Committees have made strides in environmental justice and education.

Our Sunday services and Religious Education have been enhanced by sermons and meetings charging us to be aware of our blessings and obligations to share resources while conserving our use of those resources, as well as the risks associated with the misuse of and damage to those resources. Our awareness and action have been heightened.

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

Many of the projects and programs described in this report are ongoing. We recognize that achievement of Green Sanctuary accreditation would not mean the end of our commitment to the environment, and our intentions are to continue the work we have begun, and to find new projects and new and better ways of doing our environmental work. We may need to modify some of our goals as circumstances change, but we intend to continue to move forward in the effort to be active advocates for the health of our planet.

**** 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?***

We expect to continue community work in the areas of the Interfaith Food Pantry, the To Our House program and the other local programs in which we have participated. We would also explore new ways of working with other groups as time and energy permit. The project involving mountain-top removal coal mining is a major effort, and will require renewed effort and support for an extended period.

It is difficult to assess how recognition as a Green Sanctuary would affect our

position in the community. We are known as a liberal church in terms of our spectrum of beliefs and political views, and Green Sanctuary status would conform to that recognition. If that status were generally known, we could find more alignment and connections with other groups with similar views on the environment, and amplify our effectiveness in working with them. This recognition, of course, would require some advertisements of ourselves.

Perhaps more importantly, Green Sanctuary status would reinforce our vision of ourselves and how we see our role in the natural world.