

UUSA Working Toward a More Sustainable Community

As a Unitarian Universalist congregation we support a sustainable world through our commitment to our Seven Principles. Our principles work toward sustainability particularly through their encouragement of inclusion, diversity, democracy, equality, justice and environmentally sound practices. We are one interconnected and interdependent web of existence. Within our society our committees each work for a sustainable congregation and a sustainable larger world in many ways. The following are brief summaries of some of the ways this is currently happening. The Sustainable Community Initiative (SCI) hopes to encourage more understanding and focus on the issues of sustainability.

Adult Education Committee: The Adult Education Committee is committed to developing informative programs that address topics relating to sustainable living. Experts will be invited to speak on global economics, medicine, education and religion with the hope that by learning more about these topics participants will feel inspired to take what they have learned into their communities outside the congregation.

Caring Committee: The Caring Committee's mission is to help the minister with pastoral care. Each member of the caring committee is responsible for checking in on 10-20 members and friends of the UUSA. The committee organizes and presents workshops on a variety of topics including: late-life issues, transportation and housing for elderly and emergency preparedness.

Finance Committee: The Finance Committee considers the resources of the UUSA and develops balanced budgets that strongly and fairly support the Society's programs and paid staff, while reflecting wise, responsible use of these resources. We also report regularly on the budget, recommending adjustments and doing long-range planning to promote the financial health of the UUSA. Finally, we encourage the establishment of a new, permanent investment subcommittee to study the endowment and make thoughtful recommendations about investing it to help sustain the world at large as well as our own Society.

The Green Sanctuary Committee: From its inception, the Green Sanctuary Committee has been working towards creating a more sustainable society by promoting environmentally sustainable living practices in our building and in the congregation. Some of our current activities include the annual Connecticut River Cleanup, circulated petitions in support of Clean Water Action's campaign and educating the congregation about the waste and health risk of plastic water bottles and the exploitation of local water resources by the water bottle industry. We try to keep the congregation informed about events held by local and regional groups working to establish a more socially just and environmentally sustainable future. We are currently revising the Earth Stewardship Pledge Form which over 40 households signed last year. We will be offering a study course on *Sustainability* developed by the Northwest Earth Institute.

Hospitality: Social Hour after the services at the UUSA is a time for every friend and member to converse and get to know one another better. Newcomers are welcomed and given the chance to ask questions. We serve fair trade coffee and tea. It is also a time for other committees such as the Social Justice and Green Sanctuary to educate the congregation, set up tables for letter writing campaigns and circulate with volunteer sign-up sheets.

Library and Archives Committee: Our library contains a number of books on various aspects of sustainability, which we encourage the congregation to borrow and read. Some examples are: "Do Americans Shop Too Much?" "Earth Prayers from Around the World: 365 prayers, poems,

and invocations for honoring the earth" "Grace at the Table: ending hunger in God's world" "The Seven Principles in Word and Worship" "Golden Rules: the ten ethical values parents need to teach their children" "The Simple Living Guide." We acquire new books each year and welcome suggestions pertaining to the sustainability initiative!

Long Range Planning Committee: We are looking to move past the current limits that our physical plant sets on meeting our mission and furthering our vision.

Meeting House and Grounds Committee: This committee works to: conserve resources by prolonging the life and beauty of the facilities that we have through weather stripping and insulation work, furnace maintenance, window repair and maintenance. Environmentally benign cleaning and paint materials are used wherever possible. The building has been made accessible for people with disabilities by the addition of ramps and microphones. We work to support community safety within a safe facility.

Religious Education Committee: The Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism encourage people of all ages to work for a healthier, environmentally sound and sustainable world. Specific examples of how RE works towards a more sustainable world include: fundraising and donating specific goods for Jesse's House, participating in the Guest at Your Table campaign, discussing homelessness and the work of the Amherst Survival Center, donating food to Not Bread Alone and working on cleaning up and beautifying the meeting house.

Safe Congregation Committee: This committee promotes a safe, inclusive community and free and fair discussion by providing guidelines for appropriate behavior in services and meetings, by helping staff and congregants set appropriate boundaries for relationships and professional behavior, by checking references, criminal backgrounds of all adults who work with children, by training all RE adults in basic safety and reporting procedures.

Social Justice Committee: The Social Justice Committee encourages people to work towards creating a sustainable society for ourselves and others by writing letters and signing petitions to our federal and state representatives on important federal, international and local social/political issues, by helping provide a meal once a month for the Northampton Cot Shelter guests, by collecting food for the Amherst Survival Center and by preparing and serving food at Not Bread Alone Soup Kitchen. We also sell fair trade coffee, tea and hot chocolate. We also facilitate discussion and commitment to resolutions pertaining to important national issues such as our Society's "Resolution on the Nuclear Weapons Danger."

Sunday Services Committee: Our committee strives to produce quality moving worship services in order to foster a living community within which congregants are able to feel a togetherness and an openness of thought that goes beyond the individual. We work to provide a balance and diversity of speakers who can inspire and inform the congregation on different topics and spirituality. With quality worship services we are promoting the quantitative and qualitative growth and sustainability of this congregation.

Welcoming Congregation: This committee helps the UUSA support diversity by the welcome inclusion of the GLBT community. We represent the UUSA in the Northampton Gay Pride Parade. We organize letter writing and/or petition signings for GLBT issues including Gay Marriage to ensure the rights of all members of our community. Our activities also include occasional participation in worship services and sponsoring films and or lectures regarding GLBT issues.