



Green Sanctuary
The Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth
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Application for Green Sanctuary Candidacy

Congregation Name: Heritage Universalist Unitarian Church

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Congregation Profile

Heritage Church was originally established in 1827 as the First Universalist Society of Cincinnati. You will notice that although we are part of the Unitarian Universalist Association, ours is a “Universalist Unitarian” church. We are proud of our Universalist heritage.

In 1985, ground was broken on our current site on Newtown Road, and the first service was held there on December 7, 1985. With this change in location, a new name was chosen to reflect our history: Heritage Universalist Unitarian Church. Currently, the congregation numbers more than 160 adult members and friends, and about 75 children and youth are enrolled in the Religious Education program. The church is growing and many issues have come to light with this growth. This growth also gives the congregation great opportunities to affect the “eco-footprint” of the church.

The church has a very active social action committee which includes activities addressing such issues as homelessness through the interfaith hospitality network, AIDS through the yearly Pridefest, and gay and lesbian issues. The church is a Welcoming Congregation and has an Interweave chapter. Many members have interests in environmental issues and several work in fields related to environmental issues. With the “green” steps that the church has already taken, becoming a Green Sanctuary is a logical extension of the members’ efforts to date.

Green Sanctuary Committee

Green Sanctuary Charter

Structure: A committee chair, a steering committee, committee members at large, a liaison to the Board of Directors.

Mission: To achieve and maintain Green Sanctuary certification under the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth; and to bring activities and policies into alignment with the UU Seventh Principle - “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

Objectives:

1. The Green Sanctuary program includes goals for the congregation in four focus areas: worship and celebration, religious education, environmental justice, and sustainable living.
2. The Green Sanctuary program strives to:
 - Build awareness of societal environmental issues among members;
 - Generate commitment for personal lifestyle changes;
 - Motivate members to community action on environmental issues;
 - Build connections between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness; and
 - Build awareness of and rectify environmental injustices.

Officers: The Steering Committee will choose its chair every two years, with the exception of the first chair who will, if possible and for the sake of consistency maintain the position until the congregation receives full accreditation with the UUA.

Membership & vacancies: The Steering Committee will consist of 3 to 5 regular members. Each individual project will have a project leader, who may or may not be a Steering Committee member. The project leader will report to the Steering Committee, and will coordinate and oversee the tasks of group members required for each project. Membership at Large is open to the congregation.

Members Biographies:

Kathy Dunsmore is currently serving as the chairperson of the committee. She has a MS in Biochemistry and currently works as a research assistant at Cincinnati Children's Hospital and a mother of two young children, Abby, 6 and Amanda, 3. Kathy has long been interested in environmental issues and has taken many steps with her own household.

Nancy Applegate is a retired Spanish teacher and a longtime environmentalist who currently volunteers at the Cincinnati Nature Center leading school groups who visit as part of their curriculum. She helps the environment by cleaning up trash through various organizations. She is a member of the Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy, and a dedicated supporter of Wilderness East (Highlands Nature Sanctuary) and a member of the Social Action committee at HUUC.

Louise Lawarre has been involved with a local ecological education organization for ten years. She earned a MA in Culture and Spirituality with a focus on bioregional spirituality. She is passionate about learning to live sustainably, so that we humans live in mutually enhancing relationships with our planetary family.

Jim Palmer is retired. He has 34yrs. experience in market research and for the 15 years prior to his retirement he was an owner operator of an automotive aftermarket business. He has been involved in Boy Scouts at the local, district, and council level. He is currently involved with The Cincinnati Nature Center's school group program, several other volunteer positions and in the monthly roadside clean-up there. At HUUC, he is the co-chair of the Outdoor Committee, a member of the Music Committee, the Social Action Committee, and the Green Team.

Environmental Assessment

Preamble

In preparing this environmental assessment, the Green Sanctuary Committee consulted with the church's staff, the director of religious education, and the volunteers taking lead responsibility in areas covered by the assessment. In addition, a survey was conducted of the congregation to assess the congregation's level of eco-awareness.

1. Energy

What are your energy usage patterns and current conservation practices?

Current Status: Average monthly electric usage (past 12 months.) (Kwh): 3077 kwh/mo. This electrical usage is calculated from the electric bill. The electrical usage includes all the various usages of the building.

For lighting, the building is mostly fluorescent—a combination of standard and (mostly) compact fluorescent, and has been for some time. There is also major day lighting in the sanctuary (half of one wall is entirely glass). The bathrooms already have motion sensors to turn the lights off when not in use.

Electrical appliances—one refrigerator and dishwashers, both could be updated when they need replaced. The congregation is growing so more appliances may be needed. The water heater has been reset from 150 degrees to 120 degrees.

Evaluation: Most obvious energy efficiency considerations have already been made, and so further improvements are likely to be minimal. Energy Star appliances are an option (for the refrigerator and dishwasher), as are renewable energy credits.

2. Recycling

What are the local recycling procedures and what is your level of compliance?

Current status: Our church is served by local waste companies which require recycling. We recycle plastics, glass and paper. We have a paper recycling bin on our site which serves as a fundraiser and the community is able to recycle paper at our site. This bin is able to accept types of paper that the local recycling companies will not such as wrapping paper. We have a compost bin on site and separate food waste that is able to be composted during activities such as pot lucks.

Evaluation: We are doing well in this area; however there are several areas that we could go to the next level. Ideas here include having more recycling bins in the class rooms (currently the bins are in the office) and to have a policy in effect for recycling and composting during rental events.

3. Non-disposable materials

What are the existing policies for use of non-disposable materials, environmentally friendly cleaning supplies, etc.?

Current status: We currently use ceramic plates and cups for church activities such as potlucks and coffee hour. In addition cloth napkins are used.

Currently Routinely Purchased Goods

- Copy Paper: Now – mostly regular paper; can use recycled paper from Staples, Office Depot.
- Stationery, New regular paper; at next reprinting of church envelopes and stationery, will specify envelopes and paper with high percentage of post consumer waste content.
- Paper towels: Now – not recycled content; encourage members to purchase recycled paper towels for building use (as from Seventh Generation.)
- Cleaning Products: Now – 409, ammonia cleaners or comparable brands; encourage use of vinegar, baking soda, hydrogen peroxide or environmentally friendly options such as Method or Seventh Generation.
- Dish washing: Now– Cascade and generic liquid soap; encourage purchase of Seventh Generation-type soap and white or clear liquid soaps such as “Method” or Ivory to avoid artificial colors or fragrances.

4. Purchasing and Investing

What existing church policies govern purchasing and investing decisions? Are your investments in keeping with your environmental and other social values?

There is no formal policy governing purchasing or investing decisions. At committee meetings investing and purchasing in accordance with our environmental values has come up but no action has ever been taken. We have recently formed an endowment so this is an area with some promise for some environmentally sound decision as far as investing.

Some purchasing of goods for the church use has been done in accordance with our environmental values. For example, only fair trade coffee is used at church events and is also offered for purchase by the congregation for personal use. However, there is room for much improvement in the purchasing of goods for the church.

5. Landscaping

Do you have landscaping policies that direct use of native species, landscape chemicals, etc?

Even though there is no written policy, there have been some over-arching guidelines for plantings at the church's present site. When our Memorial Garden was begun in 1988, in honor of long time members who were avid birders and life-long members of the Audubon Society, we purposely planted native materials that would attract birds and butterflies.

The use of chemicals has, from the beginning of the landscape installation, been done very much with earth friendliness in mind. For example, when the sawfly larvae hatch each spring on the pines, a combination of insecticidal soap and rubbing alcohol is used. Very few of the plants have ever needed chemicals. Additionally, very little commercial fertilizer has been used over the years. The confirmed appearance of the Emerald Ash Borer on our property will be of concern as more trees are host to the bug and the trees will need to be taken down.

6. Religious Education

What current religious education programs relate to the environment for both children and adults?

Children: Environmental values are occasionally included as part of other topics, but in general religious education for children in past years has not included any specific environmental dimension.

Adults: For adults, we have in the last year shown environmental films such as "Inconvenient Truth," We have an active Pagan Group that celebrates of the festivals of pagan origin such as the solstices.

Evaluation:

The children's RE needs to include more specific environmental issues instead of just general references. From the results of our congregational survey it seems that the congregation has some desire for more information about environmental issues.

7. Worship

How well does your worship integrate the wisdom of the Earth?

Current Status: In the last year, we have had several sermon topics specifically on or closely related to environmental issues and topics. They include the following:

- "Lessons from God's Dog" Aug 12
- "Ingathering Sunday" (included the Water Ceremony) Sept 9
- "Celebrating the Web of Life" Oct 7
- Winter Solstice Celebration Dec 21

Evaluation: We are doing pretty well in this area and simply need to continue.

8. Social Action

How is earth caring a part of your overall social action program?

Current status: The Green Team recently branched off from the Social Action Committee. Although some concerned individuals have taken green steps within the church such as the use of cloth napkins and setting up the composter. Candidacy for the Green Sanctuary Program was considered a few years back however, other programs took precedence. The outcome was that some green practices were put in place over the years but a concrete plan was never in place. Most of our social justice projects have been social issues such as poverty rather than environmental issues.

Environmental Congregation Practices

- Purchasing Fair Trade
- Recycling bins
- Re-using: Bring your left over Christmas cards to trade with others.
- Tree planting memorials for 30 year members
- Using non-disposable kitchen items.
- Composting on site.
- Limiting use of fertilizers and chemicals in the landscape.
- Efficient lighting

9. Other Issues

What other environmental issues come up in discussion groups and adult education classes, in policy proposals for the congregation, and in the local community that might be the basis for a Green Sanctuary program or activity?

In our congregational survey, we learned of several issues that might be the basis for a Green Sanctuary Program. We were made aware that many members would like more information about green choices such as companies to patronize and companies to avoid for their environmental policies. In addition, more information is wanted relating to green choices in the home, green products and composting.

The church is currently exploring options to accommodate our current growth. A committee has been formed to consider different options including a building expansion. The coordination of the expansion of the church with the green sanctuary process leads to the chance for great cooperation between these two committees to the end that the new expanded building will incorporate many “green” aspects.

Action Plan

Worship & Celebration 2 or more

Project 1: To select a plant for placement on the altar

Lead: Robin Wickett

Time-line: spring 2008 and ongoing

Description: To bring a greater awareness of nature to the worship services, the green team will provide a plant to be placed on the altar every week. Presently, there are no flowers or plants on the altar regularly.

Project 2: To lead a worship service: Green Sanctuary Sunday

Lead: Bob Lamb

Time-line: Fall 2008

Description: The Green Team will plan a worship service which will honor the earth and update the congregation on the Green Sanctuary efforts.

Religious Education 2 or more

Project 3: To offer an adult education series from Cincinnati Earth Institute

Lead: Kay Inskip and Tracy Jo Duckworth

Time-line: Fall 2008

Description: Offer an adult course through the Cincinnati Earth Institute

Project 4: To bring a nature emphasis to the existing Summer Club for children

Lead: Tracy Jo Duckworth

Time-line: Summer 2008

Description: The children normally have a less organized curriculum for summer activities. Typically volunteers pick activities for the children. This summer, the leader of the project will organize at least 3 projects over the course of the summer which will relate directly to environmental issues.

Earth Justice 2 or more,

Project 5: To work with ECO and Cincinnati residents to hold air polluters accountable

Lead: Louise Lawarre

Time-line: Spring 2008

Description: Because Earth justice acknowledges that environmental impacts fall first and most severely on those who receive the least of the benefits and are mostly powerless to effect changes, this project will work in solidarity with residents of Cincinnati in the Spring Grove Village area to mitigate the effects of air pollution. We will work directly with ECO, Environmental Community Organization, to support residents who issue complaints against major violators of the Clean Air Act. In partnership with ECO, we will develop and adapt materials to send to residents in areas where toxic odors are a problem. We will meet with residents to understand the problems they face. We will educate ourselves and help to educate others about their rights vis-à-vis the Clean Air Act, how to follow up on complaints, and how to effectively work with their neighbors to hold polluters accountable.

Project 6: Collecting Petition Signatures to stop the nuclear dump in Piketon, Ohio

Lead: Nancy Applegate

Time-line: Fall 2008

Description: "Of all the major Department of Energy sites across the nation that are under order for an environmental cleanup of toxic hazards, Piketon (Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant) is the only site that has never had a Citizens Advisory Board." Southern Ohio Neighbors Group seeks a voice for the community in plans for future uses of the site. One option is a reprocessing plant which would remove plutonium from spent fuel rods. Local residents are concerned that the Piketon plant will simply be a nuclear "dump" "Most of the radioactive material (now stored in Piketon) was shipped from Fernald and Hanford (Wash.) to meet cleanup deadlines at those facilities."

Heritage members will sign petitions to stop the nuclear dump at Piketon. The petitions will be forwarded to the Department of Energy

Sustainable Living 4 or more

Project 7: To offer recycling collection boxes for harder to recycle items

Lead: John Stoy

Time-line: Spring 2008

Description: We will collect items for recycling such as printer cartridges, cell phones, and other electronics for recycling through cartridges for kids (in addition this will serve as a fundraiser for the green team activities). Additional bins will collect items such as batteries and CFLs.

Project 8: To switch the church to environmentally friendly products

Lead: Kay Inskeep and Laura Provard

Time-line: Summer 2008

Description: Switch the products the church uses such as soaps, cleaners and paper products to more environmentally friendly products.

Project 9: To create a webpage on the church website with information about green living

Lead: Jim and Jean Crocker-Lakness

Time-line: Fall 2008

Description: The congregational survey showed that many people would like to live a more sustainable lifestyle if they had the information to do so. So we will create a webpage that will give information and links to help people make sustainable choices in their daily living.

Project 10: To advise the Master Facility Plan Task Force Committee regarding “green” building practices

Lead: Jean Crocker-Lakness and Mark Johnson

Time-line: Summer 2008

Description: The church has recently experienced tremendous growth and has formed the Master Facility Plan Task Force Committee to plan for the future. A report will be developed to guide the task force in green building practices and green resources so that any new building and parking lot can be built as ecologically friendly as possible.

The Green Sanctuary Committee will also serve as an ongoing resource to the task force as the expansion proceeds.

Project 11: To amend the rental policy to include policies to include recycling requirements

Lead: Robin Wickett and Mimi Sinclair

Time-line: Winter 2008

Description: Develop a policy for recycling and composting for groups renting our building space. This will include guidelines on the use of paper products such as paper plates and napkins.

Project 12: To offer a composting course to the congregation

Lead: Kathy Dunsmore

Time Line: Spring/Summer 2008

Description: In response to member requests, a composting course will be offered at the church. This course will be led or coordinated by Bob Booth, church member and master composter.

Communications Plan

Information about the Green Sanctuary Program will be shared with the congregation through several methods as described below.

1. The social action committee bulletin board will be updated with information about environmental issues and sustainable living strategies.
2. Eco-tips will be shared with the congregation through the monthly church newsletter.
3. The Green Sanctuary webpage will include updates about the green sanctuary process and will serve as a resource center for sustainable living strategies.
4. Information about the program and invitations to participate in our programs will be sent out via the HUUCannoc news list, through the social action yahoo group list, through the newsletter and by announcements in the church bulletin.

