



Green Sanctuary
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Congregational Stewardship Services
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108
617.948.4251

Application for Green Sanctuary Candidacy

Congregation Information

Congregation Name
Unitarian-Universalist Church of Silver Spring

Address
10309 New Hampshire Ave,
Silver Spring, MD 20903
(301) 434-4050

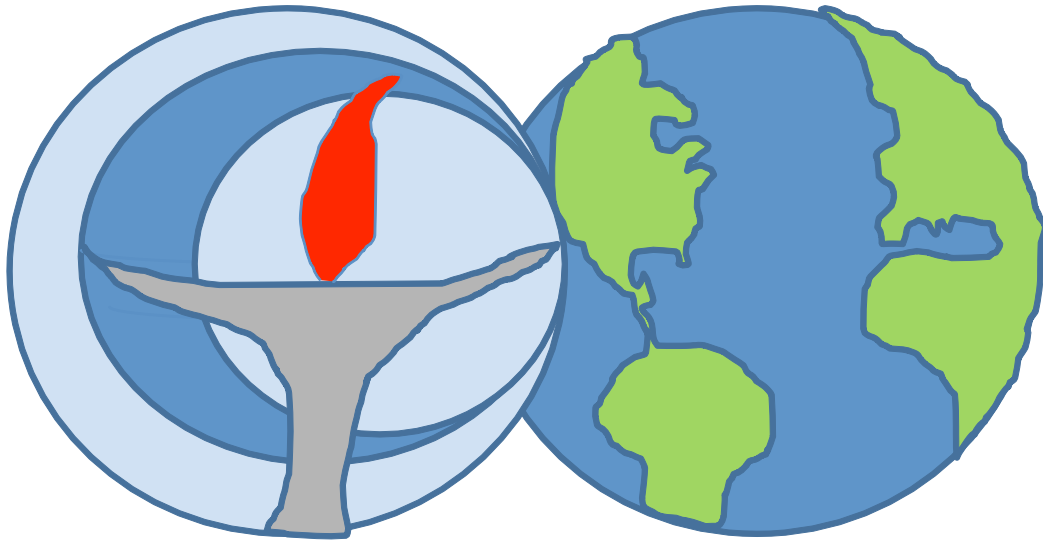
Web site
www.uucss.org

Green Sanctuary contacts
Bob Geiger
1027 Carson Street
Silver Spring, MD 20901
(301) 593-3319
Bobandcath@prodigy.net

Doneby Smith
4113 Tulare Dr.
Silver Spring, MD 20906
(301) 949-3509
Dmiley2952@aol.com

Minister or Congregation Leader
Rev. Liz Lerner Maclay

UUUCSS



Green Sanctuary Application

1. Church profile

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring is a church with about 300 members located in a Maryland suburb of Washington, DC. Over the last several years, our church has worked on a variety of service and outreach social action endeavors including ESOL classes, LGBTQ Marriage Equality Task Force, Global Warming Study/Action Group, Shepherd's Table and So Others Might Eat (two once-a-month commitments to serve meals to people who are homeless), and partnering with Beacon House to tutor inner-city elementary children among other activities. In 2007, the church developed its first strategic plan. The section of the five-year plan entitled "Transforming Our World" calls for the church to focus on two social action issues: environmental sustainability and LGBT Marriage Equality. The plan notes that support for these issues was "voiced loudly and often" by members of the congregation during the development of the strategic plan. The plan states that UUCSS will "identify specific and appropriate social action activities that can be carried out by different church groups as well as church-wide and that focus on environmental sustainability and LGBT Marriage Equality." In June 2009, at the congregation's annual meeting, church members voted to have UUCSS pursue Green Sanctuary status. The work of UUCSS's Global Warming Study/Action Group and the Green Sanctuary Committee thus fit within the context of our church's involvement in social action activities and are bolstered by our strategic plan and broad support within the congregation.

2. Committee profile

The UUCSS Global Warming Study/Action Group was founded 2006 to research the issue of global warming, and to promote action to address climate change within the households of UUCSS members, in our church facilities and operations, and within the larger world. The group took on an advocacy role with regard to state and federal legislation, taking advantage of our proximity to both Annapolis and Washington, DC. In the past year, it has further expanded its work by introducing and promoting the idea of our congregation becoming a Green Sanctuary. After the congregation approved the initiative to pursue Green Sanctuary status, the Global Warming Study/Action Group was transformed into the church's Green Sanctuary Committee. Its core members include:

- Bob Geiger, founder and co-chair, who is a member of our church's program council and chairs the UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland's Global Warming Task Force,
- Doneby Smith, co-chair, who is the long-time coordinator of Gaia Circle, UUCSS's pagan group, and as such is interested in grounding our environmental efforts in our spiritual beliefs so that not only our outcomes but our efforts can be sustained over the long haul,
- Dale Stephens who is interested in energy efficiency and is a member of our Adult RE committee and the Property Committee,

- David Levy who has a special interest in the political aspects of environmentalism,
- Elaine and Marvin Wunderlich who have been active in our Global Warming group since its inception and have participated in several rallies on the capital mall. Marv is co-chair of the Global Warming Action Group at their retirement community where they have chosen to live, in part, because it allows them to reduce their carbon footprint,
- Bob McGaughy, who worked for the Environmental Protection Agency for 35 years on health hazards of environmental chemicals, is currently chair of UUCSS's music committee. He also volunteers at Habitat for Humanity constructing affordable, energy-efficient housing and with the Audubon Naturalist Society monitoring water quality. He has become an official Weed Warrior for Montgomery County, because he is concerned about the proliferation of invasive weeds on our church property and in our parks.
- Maud Clarke, who is past president of our board of trustees, also assists with our RE Social Concerns Sundays.
- Doug Weisburger, who is currently serving a second term on the Board, works at the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection. His special interests are greening office operations and exploring the linkages between our consumption and environmental degradation.
- Jean Sickle, who has previously been active on our Worship Committee,
- Mark Ferrenz, who is chair of the our Building Restoration and Planning committee, which will be overseeing our newly created Charles Schnetzler memorial fund of \$125,000 which is dedicated to maintaining and improving our buildings and grounds. He also volunteers as a community organizer for Organizing for America in the MD eighth congressional district, [and](#)
- Laura Nelson, who is interested in smart growth issues and conserving high value land, has also been an RE teacher and serves on the outreach committee as webmaster.

Our committee now has two primary roles: acting as the Green Sanctuary steering group and providing information and leadership on climate change legislative initiatives at all levels of government. (The latter fits within the Earth Justice arena and relates to our 11th project listed in our Action Plan below.) In both roles, we intend to act as a resource to help energize and inform our congregation on environmental issues.

3. Environmental assessment

In preparing this environmental assessment and the accompanying action plan, the Green Sanctuary Committee consulted with our Global Warming study/action Group, minister, minister of religious education, music director, property committee chair, former property committee chair, former sexton, worship committee, music committee chair, program council, members of the board of trustees, coordinator of Sunday support teams, building review committee chair, and other members of the congregation through an open

event at coffee hour. In addition, we have recruited church members to lead each of our proposed actions as noted in our action plan below.

Energy Usage and Conservation

In March 2007, Allison Fisher of Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light conducted an energy audit of our church. She filed a six-page report, which later in 2007 was appended to our church's newly adopted strategic plan.

Among the report's recommendations were:

Heating and cooling: Thermostats in the sanctuary are not communicating properly with the heating and cooling system. Have a professional diagnose the problem and re-program the thermostats. Replace old individual air conditioning units in the administration building.

Lighting: Replace all incandescent lights that are not on dimmers with compact fluorescent lights. Replace all exits signs with LED exit signs.

Weatherizing: Weatherize all doors. Use shrink wrap-type insulation for single pane windows.

Other electricity conservation: Place computers on power strips and turn off all power overnight.

To date to address heating and cooling issues, we have replaced three furnaces in the administration building and community hall with units that are more fuel efficient. We have reprogrammed our thermostats in the sanctuary building and attempted to monitor their settings to ensure efficient operation. However, we have noticed that the settings continue to be altered by a variety of users and, thus, do not operate in an efficient manner. At one point, the air conditioning was operating around the clock, seven days a week, during the heat of the summer. We need to replace the thermostats with another model capable of being programmed in such a way that the program settings cannot be changed without authorization. As this is not a trivial matter, we are in the process of hiring a professional energy consultant to oversee this project.

In regard to lighting, we have replaced incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent lights on the ground floor of the Administration Building and the Community Hall, where a preschool operates during the week. We have also installed CFLs in the main room in the Community Hall. About half the emergency lights have been replaced with LEDs. We have also replaced the majority of the fluorescent lights on the ceiling of our sanctuary with more efficient fluorescent lights that use about 33 percent less electricity.

We have added weather-stripping to five doors, but a few others remain to be addressed.

After analyzing the energy audit from Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light, the church's Global Warming Study/Action Group conveyed these recommendations to the board of trustee's strategic planning committee:

- 1) The church should review and implement the recommendations of the energy audit.
- 2) The church should make an annual investment in energy efficiency in its budget. We should establish a designated fund that would be used for making energy-efficiency improvements.
- 3) We should start with those energy-efficiency items that offer a quick payback.
- 4) We should eventually make all energy-efficiency investments with a payback of 5 years or less.
- 5) We should strive for energy conservation in our everyday church operations: turning out lights every time we leave a room; planning activities in a way that requires less energy.
- 6) We should purchase certificates for wind power to cover 100 percent of our electricity use.
- 7) The board should consider energy savings when making church decisions and church policy.

These recommendations were also included in the appendix of the church's strategic plan.

The board has reviewed the energy audit. The expenditures noted above for new furnaces and lighting replacements were approved, as was the purchase of six months of wind power renewable energy certificates, using a county-subsidized program. Also as noted above, the board is in the process of hiring a professional energy consultant to oversee the thermostat project in the sanctuary. This consultant will also analyze overall energy usage patterns, look for savings opportunities, and generally advise us regarding energy-efficiency. However, the other systemic recommendations from the Global Warming Study/action Group have not yet been adopted by the board.

Recycling

The church, because of the small size of its staff, is exempted from county recycling requirements. However, the church does recycle paper, cardboard, glass, metal, and plastics. The sexton now collects the recycling, separates it, and transports it to a recycling collection station in College Park, MD. The church has obtained four new recycling containers for its office spaces during the last two years. However, much more remains to be done. For instance, there is only one recycling container for the entire ground floor of the sanctuary, which on most Sundays houses three classrooms. In the main room of the community hall, there is one recycling container, but it is unclear what type of recycling materials are supposed to be placed there. None of the recycling containers on the campus have signs on them indicating what types of recycling materials are supposed to be placed in them.

We need more recycling bins, separate bins for paper products versus mixed recycling, and better signage indicating where recycling bins are available and which materials should be placed in them. We also need to explore if College Park is truly the most efficient place to drop off the recycling.

Church policies on purchasing and investing

The church has no formal policies related to the environmental impacts of our purchasing or investments. We purchase fair trade coffee for our coffee hour. We have tried using recycled paper in our copying machine, and found that the machine will not tolerate the paper. At some church events, Styrofoam is still used. We are moving in the direction of purchasing green cleaning products. Our church has a tiny endowment and very minimal investments. We need to complete our transition to green cleaning products, and we need to halt the purchase of Styrofoam.

Landscaping policies relating to native species and landscape chemicals

The church does not have any overall policies directing the use of native plants, regulating landscape chemicals, or governing water use in landscaping. The church has a variety of gardens and plant areas that are not well-maintained. They were planted at a time when more volunteer resources were available for gardening. The church is in the process of rethinking and reworking its landscaping so that it can be properly maintained with much less volunteer time.

Religious Education programs related to the environment for both children and adults

The church has offered a children's religious education mini-course on the seventh principle in 2009. Middle school and high school RE classes watched "An Inconvenient Truth." Middle school students have traveled to Annapolis to help lobby lawmakers on global warming legislation and wrote a letter to U.S. Rep. Chris Van Hollen urging that Congress address global warming.

Our adult RE offerings have included screenings of "An Inconvenient Truth" and "A Crude Awakening: the Oil Crash," followed by discussions sessions with experts on climate change and the oil industry. We also screen "Kilowatt Hours," a film that looks at the consequences of getting power from coal, and alternatives to reduce one's carbon footprint. We held a workshop on energy efficiency at home, and a county expert explained how to use the county's program to obtain rebates for the purchase of renewable energy certificates or wind energy.

Despite a lot of offerings related to climate change and the seventh principle, we have not offered sustained classes in these areas or provided a organized longer-term curriculum for members interested in these areas.

Worship and Music Program practices integrating the seventh principle

Environmental responsibility and the seventh principle are often mentioned or referenced at our church's Sunday services. Our Gaia Circle has hosted services celebrating seasonal pagan holidays. Our Global Warming Study/Action Group held a service focused on climate change. Another service focused on sustainability. Our minister has a deep interest in nature, which is one of the two focal points of her current Sabbatical, and she often refers to nature or incorporates nature into her services. Seven beautiful quilts, with most of them including nature themes, adorn our sanctuary.

Our music director has a passion for protecting the environmental, and several music events have focused on green issues. In 2008, we staged Missa Gaia, an Earth Mass. In 2010, our church's annual Suite Treat music performance fund-raiser had an environmental focus and served as the kick-off event for our Green Sanctuary initiative. We occasionally sing nature-oriented hymns at Sunday services.

There is plenty of energy around environmental responsibility in our music and worship, but there has not been much coordination of this effort, any attempt to plan this integration in a sustained way. The seven principles are printed in the weekly order of service, but there is no mention of the seventh principle in the Chalice Lighting, Congregational Commitment, or Welcoming Statement that begin each service.

Social Action projects or activities relating to environmental justice

We have sent contingents to participate at rallies in Washington and Annapolis calling for climate change legislation. Within our church, to promote legislation to halt climate change, we have conducted letter writing campaigns targeting our state representatives and U.S. senators, signed people up to call the White House, and collected post cards to send to the governor. Our middle school youth have gone to Annapolis to lobby lawmakers for the Clean Cars Act and the Global Warming Solutions Act.

In 2007, as part of its strategic plan, our church chose environmental sustainability and climate change as one of two social action areas for special church-wide focus.

Later in 2007, UUCSS was given the Light Award by Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light, in recognition of our efforts to move toward environmental sustainability within our congregation and within the broader world. Our congregation was one of only two in the metropolitan area so recognized by Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light that year.

For the last year and a half, Bob Geiger, who founded UUCSS's Global Warming Study/Action Group, has served as the co-chair and now the chair of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministries of Maryland's Global Warming Task Force. In this capacity, he has visited other UU congregations in Maryland, speaking from the pulpit and discussing environmental social action with church members after services.

We are holding two monthly social action collections related to climate change. March's collection of more than \$1,200 went to the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland. April's collection will go to Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light.

4. Action plan

Religious Education

Project Title: Seventh Principle Summer Youth RE Program

Objective: Introduce our youth to our Seventh Principle

Plan: We will conduct a summer RE program for youth that will build on the school year examination of world religions by examining "green" influences and practices in other denominations.

Timeline for Completion: by August 2010

Lead: Ellen Jennings, MRE

Project Title: Re-enchanting the Land

Objective: Ground our environmental work in a spiritual connection with the land

Plan: We will conduct an adult RE program that will provide a spiritual exploration of our seventh principle. There will be many small events over the year leading up to Earth Day.

Timeline for Completion: by July 2011

Lead: David Miley

Project Title: Greening Your Life

Objective: Help congregation members assess and reduce their carbon footprint

Plan: We will conduct an adult RE program that will present ways in which individuals and households can reduce their carbon footprint. Leaders will research curricula aimed at adults to tailor classes to our congregation members. Using one of the carbon footprint calculators as a pre-test/post-test tool, participants will be able to see the impact of their actions. We also plan to use Internet resources, and the responses of participants in our "Greening Your Life" RE program, to produce a monthly "Green Tips" column to include in our church on-line newsletter.

Timeline for Completion: Jan. 2012

Lead: Dale Stephens

Worship and Celebration

Project Title: Speaking the Seventh Principle

Project Description:

Objective: To add ritual words to our weekly Sunday services that reflect our commitment to the seventh principle

Plan: The Worship Committee, the Minister, and other interested parties in the congregation will work to make changes to our Sunday services to reflect our commitment to the seventh principle by adding ritual words to some part of our weekly service. The language might be added to our church's Welcoming Statement or Congregational Commitment, both of which are recited chorally by the congregation at the beginning of each Sunday service.

Timeline for Completion: by June 2011

Lead: Bob Geiger

Project Title: Green Music

Objective: To use music to honor and celebrate our seventh principle

Project Plan: The Music Committee, Music Director, Worship Committee, Minister, and the Green Sanctuary Committee will work together to find ways to use music to honor and celebrate our seventh principle. Our church has hosted some major environmentally themed music events, including the Missa Gaia, an Earth Mass, in 2008, and the 2010 Suite Treat, an annual fund-raiser for the church's music program, which this March had an environmental focus and served as a kick-off event for the Green Sanctuary initiative. This proposed "Green Music" project would continue and deepen the efforts already

underway in our congregation. One specific element of this project is to hold a major musical event celebrating Earth Day 2011. We are also considering ways to incorporate hymns that reflect the seventh principle into our services, so that these “Songs for the Earth” become part of our church culture.

Timeline for Completion: by Earth Day, 2011

Lead: Bob McGaughy, Music Committee Chair

Project Title: Bringing the Outside In

Objective: Provide visual reminders in our sanctuary of our connection to the earth and her seasons

Plan: We will periodically change our sanctuary to highlight the natural world by decorating it to note the different seasons, using our beautiful seasonal memorial quilts and other means. We will also explore periodic changes to our use of the physical space in our sanctuary that emphasize the spiritual importance of our connection to the natural world, while at the same time retaining a deep and meaningful worship experience. One possibility we are considering would be to re-orient the service approximately twice a year so that the pulpit would be located in the choir loft, such that the congregation will face the large window which looks out onto the natural world.

Timeline for Completion: ongoing, with start in September 2010

Lead: Gaia Circle

Sustainable Living

Project Title: REduce, REcycle, REuse = RESPECT

Objective: review and improve our recycling/reduce/re-use program

Plan: We will improve our recycling/reduce/re-use program by:

- a) improving the percentage of recyclables that are actually recycled by providing more and better receptacles and by working with the county, Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light, and our board of directors to devise a better plan,
- b) setting a goal for overall trash reduction and creating a plan to reach that goal,
- c) transitioning to recyclable ,re-usable, or compostable items at all our events, and
- d) promoting our rummage sale as a way to increase re-use and reduce consumption.

Timeline for Completion: June 2011

Lead: John Robinette

Project Title: Energy-Efficiency Improvements

Objective: Implement recommendations of energy audits to reduce our carbon footprint

Plan: We will contract to have a professional energy audit of our sanctuary building. This audit would include an analysis of our current and recent history of energy use. We will use the results of the energy audit to make efficiency improvements to the heating and

cooling of our sanctuary building and other areas where cost-effective energy savings are indicated. Determine the extent to which recommendations from a previous free energy audit of our whole campus have been implemented, and implement recommendations with a relatively short payback period that have not yet been implemented.

Timeline for Completion: Complete the professional energy audit and make improvements to our heating and cooling operations by Sept. 2010; complete the remainder of the plan by June 2011.

Lead: Mark Ferrenz

Project Title: Green Cleaning

Objective: Set up environmentally friendly cleaning practices for our whole church campus

Plan: Research cleaning products to make sure we use products that minimize our environmental impact. Institute cleaning methods and practices to minimize our impact on the environment.

Timeline for Completion: by Sept. 2010

Leader: Carol Cissel, Property Committee Chair

Project Title: Youth at Work

Objective: Conduct a green hands-on project with youth from our YRUU program to retro-fit their meeting building

Plan: This aging building, the original sanctuary of our church, lacks installed heating, air conditioning or insulation. The building also likely has gaps in its structure that cause heat loss. The youth group uses a space heater. Youth, youth advisers, and other church members, would work to evaluate, retro-fit and upgrade the building in an environmentally sustainable fashion, as our church budget and fund-raising for this project allows. We would also examine our heating source to make sure that it is energy-efficient.

Timeline for Completion: by Dec. 2011

Lead: Eric Windsor

Environmental Justice

Project Title: Paint Branch Watershed Conservation and Restoration

Objective: Work with a local group called the "Eyes of Paint Branch" to preserve and enhance the Paint Branch watershed

Plan: Paint Branch is a local suburban stream that actually has native brook trout thanks to the combined hard work of government and citizens. We will partner with this local organization to assist with education projects, monitoring government and development activities involving the watershed, and stream monitoring and other hands-on activities.

Timeline for Completion: ongoing—start October 2010

Lead: Susan-Marie Stedman

Project Title: Advocates for Our Blue Boat Home

Objective: Advocate for legislation at the state and federal level to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Plan: We will work to mobilize our members to contact their elected representatives in Annapolis and Washington, calling on them to address climate change. We will also work through the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland, and through outreach to other UU congregations, to inspire UUs beyond our congregation to take action. We will work on the state level by lobbying for legislative and administrative decisions to effectively implement the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act passed in May 2009. We will work with the UU Ministry for the Earth to support UU work on climate change at the federal level, with the goal of achieving comprehensive energy and climate change legislation.

Timeline for Completion: ongoing, starting immediately

Lead: Bob Geiger

5. Communications plan

We will continue to attend Program Council meetings monthly to make sure the church leadership is aware of and has input into our projects.

We will continue to use Crossroads Coffee meetings -- a discussion forum that takes place between our two services and is open to all -- to present details of our initiatives and to get input from congregation members.

We will include updates on our projects in UUCSS's monthly newsletter, the Uniter.

We will establish a presence on the church website, posting our action plan and updates on our activities so that anyone can easily access them.

We will use the church listserv, as well as face-to-face meetings at tables during coffee hour, to recruit congregation members to participate in project tasks.

We are experimenting with using a new electronic tool (Google Wave) to coordinate activities within our Committee.