



# Earth Day 2011: Sacred Waters

40 Days of Commitment,  
40 UUs in Your Congregation



## 40/40 for Earth Challenge – Sample Actions

Choose one or more of these 40 actions for your 40-day pledge, or create your own adventurous 40-day lifestyle change, for the sake of the Earth and all who live here. (\*) = Actions that are particularly suitable for young people.

1. (\*) Bottle your own water! Say “yes” to tap water and “no” to disposable bottled water for 40 days (or forever). If you’re not sure about your tap water, have it tested some time during the 40 days and install a filter if needed or use a pitcher with a filter for your drinking water. Watch the eight-minute video *The Story of Bottled Water* to learn why (<http://storyofstuff.org/bottledwater/>).
2. Time your shower and cut its length in half for 40 days. Shortening a shower by 5 minutes can save 1,000 gallons of water (5 gal/min. for older showerheads x 5 min. x 40 days – *Planet Green*). To save even more water, install low-flow showerheads or sink aerators during the 40 days.
3. (\*) Turn off the water after you wet your toothbrush for 40 days.
4. While shaving, fill your sink with a little water and rinse your razor there instead of letting the faucet run, for 40 days.
5. For 40 days, Every time you drink a glass of water, take a moment of gratitude for the abundance of water in your life.
6. (\*) Trade sugary sodas for plain water for 40 days – donate the money you save to a water justice organization.
7. If you eat fish, use a sustainable seafood guide to make your choices for 40 days (<http://montereybayaquarium.org>).
8. Celebrate “Meatless Monday” or become a “Weekday Vegetarian” for 40 days. “If all U.S. residents reduced their consumption of animal products by half, the nation’s total dietary water requirement in 2025 would drop by a savings equal to the annual flow of 14 Colorado Rivers.” – Sandra Postel in *Yes! Magazine*.
9. Over the 40 days, wash your fresh vegetables and fruits in a pot of water – use it to water your plants.
10. Only run full loads in your dishwasher and washing machine during the 40 days – fewer loads mean more water saved. If you’re ready to upgrade, make plans and install low-volume or dual flush toilets in your congregation or your home during the 40 days. Water-efficient dishwashers and washing machines can also save lot of water.
11. During the 40 days, do a water audit to check for leaks, then fix them – a dripping faucet can waste 20 gallons a day and a leaky toilet can use 90,000 gallons a month (*Planet Green*). Organize several teams to do audits in a few houses each – make it fun! And audit at least 40 houses.
12. If practical in your household, adopt the “Selective Flush” (term coined by *Treehugger* also known as “if it’s yellow let it mellow; if it’s brown flush it down”) for 40 days and save a *lot* of water.
13. To really save water, consider installing a modern composting toilet during the 40 days. According to *YES! Magazine*, Americans flush 4 billion gallons of treated, drinkable water down the toilet each day!
14. (\*) Set up a toilet tax in your home or in your congregation for 40 days! Donate the money collected to an organization that promotes clean water and sanitation (<http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/gatherspirit/workshop4/workshopplan/149528.shtml>).
15. For 40 days, stop and think before sending something down the drain or toilet – toxic cleaning products and medicines can sometimes end up back in your drinking water!
16. Post a picture of water on Facebook or on a blog every day for 40 days and reflect on water justice issues and the blessings of water in your own life.
17. (\*) Every day for 40 days, read at least one page of a website, magazine, or book to learn more about water justice at home and around the world and/or organize a screening and discussion of a movie related to water justice. See the UUMFE website for a summary of the issues and a resource list.
18. Reduce the plastics in your life. The creation, use, and disposal of plastics leads to chemicals seeping into the environment. This most often affects low-income communities and people of color.
19. For 40 days, be vigilant in recycling everything you can, particularly plastic. “Right now, millions of pounds of trash are floating in the Pacific Ocean to form an ‘island’ at least twice the size of Texas – 90 percent of that trash is discarded plastic.” – from the film *Flow*.
20. During the 40 days, keep up with water news online at Circle of Blue (<http://www.circleofblue.org/waternews/>).
21. Do you really need all that water-thirsty lawn? During the 40 days, convert part of your lawn to hardy water-wise native plants or let it go dormant

- during hot weather until the rains return. If you must water the lawn, reduce loss to evaporation by watering only during the cool part of the day over the 40 days.
22. Even better, during the 40 days, plant a water-efficient Permaculture fruit and vegetable garden that will hold water, keeping it out of storm drains when it's rainy and saving water when it's dry.
  23. For 40 days, be vigilant about keeping harmful objects and substances – lawn fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, motor oil, trash, etc. – from washing into storm drains and on to streams and rivers, headed for the ocean.
  24. (\*) Over the 40 days, learn about your local watershed and what is being done to protect it. Participate in a watershed clean up or start your own. Pick up trash whenever you see it!
  25. Rainwater is a terrible thing to waste. Over the 40 days, take steps to keep it on your property by putting rain barrels on your downspouts and using the water for irrigation. Or install rain gardens, swales, or porous pavement to catch and absorb rainwater.
  26. (\*) During the 40 days, begin the UUA Tapestry of Faith curriculum *Gather the Spirit*, an eight-session, multigenerational program that teaches stewardship with a focus on water (<http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/153473.shtml>).
  27. During the 40 days, encourage the covenant groups in your congregation to use UUSC's *The Right to Water: Five Covenant Group Gatherings* ([http://www.uusc.org/content/covenant\\_group\\_-\\_right\\_water](http://www.uusc.org/content/covenant_group_-_right_water)).
  28. Use the Water Justice Taize Ritual in a worship service or other gathering some time during the 40 days ([http://www.uusc.org/content/water\\_justice\\_taiz%C3%A9\\_ritual](http://www.uusc.org/content/water_justice_taiz%C3%A9_ritual)).
  29. Identify a local concern of water justice. Work with others to make real improvements in people's lives over the 40 days. Collaborate with local organizations working for water justice.
  30. Call up other congregations in your community and see if their members are concerned about water in your community. Collaborate on local water justice issues during the 40 days.
  31. During the 40 days, learn about the post-Katrina Gulf coast. Contact a local organization and make a plan to start a partnership.
  32. Reflect on the BP Oil Disaster of April 2010. Go 40 days without driving. If you don't drive anyway, see if you can go 40 days without getting into a car.
  33. Wear a button that says "Ask me about water" for 40 days and talk about water justice issues.
  34. Call your members of congress to ask for full funding for the Senator Paul Simon Water For the Poor Act. Call once at least once a week over the 40 days.
  35. During the 40 days, call your local water utility to ask what their water shut off policy is and how they protect seniors, people who are disabled, and children – if they have a lifeline rate for water.
  36. Find out who makes policy about water in your city sometime during the 40 days. Write them a letter about your views on water policy – it can be simple! Use the UUSC *Water Justice Praxis Research Guide* to help you ask questions of your utility ([http://www.uusc.org/content/water\\_justice\\_praxis\\_study\\_action\\_reflection\\_guide](http://www.uusc.org/content/water_justice_praxis_study_action_reflection_guide)).
  37. During the 40 days, find out what the water sustainability plan is for companies in which you own stock. If they don't have one or they don't have a human right to water policy, urge them to do a shareholder resolution to ask them to begin.
  38. More than 2,000 miles of streams that supply drinking water for the people of Appalachia have been buried under billions of pounds of coalmining waste. Find out if your energy comes from mountaintop removal coal (<http://www.ilovemountains.org>). If it does, write a letter to your energy company every day for 40 days (or get friends to help!), asking them not to buy coal from companies that use mountaintop removal mining practices.
  39. Indigenous peoples' rights to their natural resources, and their stewardship of water and the environment, are first impacted and last considered in many communities. During the 40 days, see if there are recognized or unrecognized tribes, like the Winnemem Wintu in CA, who are working to save water for future generations and support their effort.
  40. Come up with your own 40/40 ideas!

**At the end of the 40 days, gather together to celebrate your successes during this 40/40 for Earth Challenge!**

At the start of the 40 days, be sure your congregation registers its Earth Day plans (<http://uuministryforearth.org/Event+Registration>). After your congregation has completed the challenge, we'd love to hear all about it so we can share your story on the website and other media! You may use the same Earth Day registration form to write your narrative. Send photos and/or videos to [envirojustice@uuministryforearth.org](mailto:envirojustice@uuministryforearth.org). This 40/40 for Earth sample actions list was developed in collaboration with the UUA, UU Service Committee, Ethical Eating Core Team, Clean Water Action, and the Coalition for Waste Water Treatment.

The generosity of individual donors and members make the work of UU Ministry for Earth possible. Please consider making a donation to help us continue this important endeavor. Thank you.