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## Earth Day 2011: Sacred Waters Congregational Highlights

Every year, the UU Ministry for Earth provides resources for congregations to celebrate Earth Day. For Earth Day 2011, Unitarian Universalists (UUs) celebrated the sacred waters that sustain us all and to committed to actions that will make our world more just. Congregations across the US and Canada engaged in the 40/40 for Earth Challenge, with **40** participants (or 40% of average worship attendance) making a commitments to small and large daily actions over the course of **40** days.

Here are a few of the highlights. Please share your stories and photos with us by emailing [environment@uua.org](mailto:environment@uua.org).

### COMMITMENTS

- “We are taking ‘Earth Promise’ – commitments to the earth, either a sustainable or spiritual daily practice...Folks are writing their ‘Earth Promises’ on paper poppy petals and then paste on a board with many ‘stems’ to create a field of poppies.” (First Unitarian Church of Orlando)
- “The congregation participated in a ‘Witness to Wholeness’ event in which members were given the opportunity to commit themselves to take action for water justice.” (UU Congregation of Greater Naples)
- Our program council members have endorsed this and are promoting it in their committees and have agreed to participate themselves.” (UU Metro Atlanta North)

### COMMUNITY

- UU Church of Fresno’s annual Earth Day Event expanded into the community for a second year, boasting a coalition of 56 partner organizations. (UU Church of Fresno)
- “Multigenerational Earth Day Celebration...a fundraiser for a local Edible Garden at the Evanston Township High School to purchase hoop rows to extend the growing season of their farming project.” (Unitarian Church of Evanston)
- ‘Water Justice: Our Well Being, Our Rights, Our Responsibilities’ is a regional conference sponsored by the Cape & Islands Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Cluster, the Cape & Islands UU Growth Council, UUSC, the Cape Cod and the Islands Group Sierra Club, and GreenCAPE. (Unitarian Church of Barnstable)
- Showing new documentary, “Code Blue: Water in the Mountains,” at public library. Discussion following movie led by UU & filmmaker David Weintraub. (UU Fellowship of Hendersonville)
- “We are including [in the 40/40 Campaign] the Toastmasters group that meets at the church and attendees at a film series we are hosting for the Vancouver Watershed Council.” (UU Church of Vancouver)



## CREATIVITY

- “One of our artistic members has been designing an art piece to draw attention to the number participating and their actions.” (Auburn UU Fellowship)
- “We will also be performing a ‘skit’ or play in the service which will focus on the polluted waters in the Washington, DC area and how this exacerbates the environmental justice issue of water quality.” (All Souls Church, Unitarian)
- Performance of “The Climate Monologues” (Unitarian Church of Marlborough & Hudson)
- “Exhibit of photos and other artworks depicting or inspired by water in our Social Hall” (First Parish in Lexington)

## CLASSES & CONGREGATION LIFE

- “To support those taking the 40/40 Challenge with water, we will be running the UUSC ‘*Right to Water*’ module paired with water films in our Green Adult Religious Education track.” (First Unitarian Church of Orlando)
- “*Our Grandchildren’s Water*: Seven-week series presents information you may not be aware of and discusses their ethical implications.” (UU Hinsdale)
- “Our covenant groups are being asked to dedicate a session in May to the topic of water, using the covenant group materials created by UUSC.” (First Parish in Lexington)
- Middle School class exercise on Fiji Island bottled water. (UU Church of Kent)
- “We are also planning on following the campaign with the UUA Tapestry of Faith curriculum *Gather the Spirit* as an Intergenerational Summer Course. (First Jefferson UU Church)

## ISSUES

- “We will specifically learn about the benefits of local agriculture and the potential deterioration of our water supply due to hydraulic fracturing.” (UU Church of Greeley)
- Beach Cleanup at our Adopt a Beach site. (UUs of Southern Delaware)
- “We’ll be planting native and Florida-friendly plants donated by congregation members.” (Spirit of Life UU)
- “The Green Sanctuary committee is co-sponsoring a bicycle collection for Bikes Not Bombs, and we are finishing a postcard campaign to support the new Bottle Bill.” (First Parish of Watertown UU)
- “[We are] working with the state and local leaders of the UU Pennsylvania Legislative Advocacy Network (UUPlan) to put together materials to educate the public on critical water issues.” (UU Church of the Restoration)
- “[We will] include an update on proposed legislation now under consideration by the Tennessee legislature to ban mountaintop removal (MTR) in the state and a report on a recent fieldtrip by eight members of TVUUC to a MTR site in Kentucky to plant trees.” (Tennessee Valley UU Church)

## WORSHIP

- “Both services on Sunday, April 17 were led by our youth in recognition of Earth Day. Children of the Earth sang, danced, and engaged the congregation into environmental issues and solutions.” (First Universalist Church of Denver)



- “Related slide show presentations at the beginning of each service throughout the months of April and May.” (UU Church of Elgin)
- “Earth Day Tenebrae service of readings and chants exploring themes of loss and destruction in our natural environment.” (First Parish in Lexington)
- “Interfaith Mississippi Gulf Coast Seder to mourn the loss of human and animal life wrought by the Oil Rig Disaster and to celebrate all those who have worked to restore our coastal waters and community life.” (Gulf Coast UU Fellowship)
- “Five members of the congregation will speak to how their connection with the Earth influences their creativity, their food choices, their parenting, their activism, and their contemplative life.” (UU Congregation of the Upper Valley)

### SUCCESS

- “Although UUCR is one of Philadelphia’s most active social justice houses of worship, we are a small church—only 85 members, some of whom are retired, living in nursing homes twenty miles away, and seldom able to come to church even on Easter. However, WE MADE IT! Not quite 40 signers, but 40% of 85 equals 34, and that’s exactly how many signed up!” (UU Church of the Restoration)
- “We began the Sacred Waters 40/40 Campaign on April 17 with 58 people taking the pledge. We had a few reports immediately from people who said they were already doing 6-9 of the suggested 40 and were planning on doing more. Fifty-eight people in a congregation our size is an exciting number.” (First Jefferson UU Church)

### 40-DAY FOLLOW UP

- “As last year, our committee will be following up with phone calls to see how individuals were able to complete their pledge or discuss impediments, results of which will be shared in the congregation.” (Anchorage UU Fellowship)
- UU Church of Southeastern Arizona shared the campaign with the public at two farmers markets’ Earth Day celebrations. They’re hosting public wrap-up parties at the library and the Community Y at which participants will be encouraged to tell what did and did not work. (UU Church of Southeastern Arizona)
- “Our goal is to get 200 persons to sign up for the 40/40 Challenge and thru feedback surveys confirm they did something to conserve/clean water and document it and announce it at a later service.” (All Souls Church, Unitarian)
- “At the end of the 40 days, we plan to hold a celebration party, where we will share the stories of our various actions and what we learned from this challenge and will continue in our lives.” (Morristown Unitarian Fellowship)
- “Challenge participants will receive a 20-day support email.” (Unitarian Society of Ridgewood)

**Please share *your* stories with us! E-mail stories and photos to [environment@uua.org](mailto:environment@uua.org).**