



# Our Place in the Web of Life

An Environmental Justice Curriculum for UU Congregations



**Dr. Mark A. Hicks**

Angus MacLean Professor of Religious Education

**Pamela Sparr**

Environmental Justice Consultant for UU Ministry for Earth



# Welcome!

**Nancy King Smith,**  
Co-President of UU Ministry for Earth

- What is UU Ministry for Earth?
- Why this call?
- Overview of the agenda
- Who is on the call?

# Curriculum Developers

## **Dr. Mark A. Hicks**

Angus MacLean Professor of Religious Education  
Meadville Lombard Theological School



## **Pamela Sparr**

Environmental Justice Consultant  
UU Ministry For Earth

# Centering Reading

Read aloud, in unison:

May we be reminded of our highest aspirations,  
and inspired to bring our gifts of love and service  
to the altar of humanity.

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings  
but connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe,  
to this community and to each other.

Anonymous. # 434, Singing the Living Tradition

# Why Environmental Justice?

There is no **hierarchy** of oppression.  
What affects some of us, **affects us all.**

- Audre Lorde

# **Aims: “Our Place in the Web of Life”**

**Deepen your understanding** of place.

**Deepen the connections** between UU theology, spiritual practices, and the work of environmental justice.

**Explore your congregation’s environmental impact** on your local community & beyond.

# Aims (Continued)

**Build group consciousness** about the ethics, relationships with Other.

**Reinforce your congregational identity** through reflection and action!

**Do serious justice work.**

**Have fun!**

# The curriculum....

- ...is attuned to the culture of diverse congregations
- ...encourages the congregation to reflect AND reach outside its walls
- ...provides a way to talk about potentially complex issues in a supportive “learning container”

# How the Teaching and Learning Works

- Four, two hour units
- Best practices of “transformative learning.” New data while Learning to shift paradigms and do new things
- Addresses multiple learning styles, personality types and dispositions of learners
- Fantastic chance for inter-generational learning (multi-age groups at the same time)

# The Content: Grounding Ourselves

## SESSION 1 -- Learning Objectives:

Create a welcoming community.

Discuss the role of “place” and how it shapes social identity.

Connect identity with values, “place” and our impact.

Homework: explore “accumulation/consumption” in our lives.

# Content:

## What is Environmental Justice?

### SESSION 2 -- Learning Objectives:

- Continue to discuss personal impact on natural resources and the consequences of values on consumption patterns.
- Role of consumerism, competition, efficiency, privilege in creating current environmental crises.
- Explore the spiritual/theological dimensions of why environmental justice is important.
- Launch research teams. Introduce mapping exercise.

# Content:

# Cong. Impact on Environment

## SESSION 3 -- Learning Objectives:

Participants report on the research they have done:  
air quality, land, food, energy, water waste (garbage).

Map congregational impact on the natural  
and human world.

Probe: Where do we see brokenness in the  
web of life of which we are a part?



# Mapping Congregational Impact



# Content: What Do We Do Now?

## SESSION 4 -- Learning Objectives:

### *Discuss and Decide:*

- What do we do with what we've learned? With whom should we share our learnings?
- To whom are we accountable?
- How do we respond spiritually to what we've learned?
- How should we be with each other? Our selves?

# Witnesses from the Pilot

“We offered it to 14 people and it generated a lively discussion. We learned a lot and it was a good way for people to get to know one another.” California

“I'm so glad we did this program. I'm wondering about using parts of this program in the little town I'm living in...it is really good and has powerful possibilities.” New Hampshire

(We're) “Pumped up and ready to take action. This group meets bi-monthly – we intend continue our map discussion at our next meeting and draft an action plan for improvements to our building and grounds as well as a food related community project. Virginia.

# Logistics

- When will it be ready?
- How do we get it?
- Whom do we contact now with questions or comments?
- If we have a problem while teaching the unit, whom do we call?



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Questions, Comments,  
Hopes and Dreams

# **Spread the Word!**

**Next webinar: Oct 15, 1-2 pm EST**

**Coaching Webinars: Early 2012**



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# Thank you!