



Earth Day 2014: Working Towards Sustainable Communities

Cindy Davidson, UU Ministry for Earth Board member

For Earth Day 2014, UU Ministry for Earth continues to focus on the challenges and opportunities inherent in building sustainable communities in our climate-changing world. Using an integrative justice-seeking lens, we consider environmental justice and eco-justice concerns, and the range of UU religious responses in our society today. We hope to inspire you, as congregations and individuals, to raise your voices and take meaningful action in your communities around Earth Day – and every day.

This year, UUMFE's Earth Day resources focus on three new topic areas:

1. Waste and Consumption;
2. Disaster Preparedness; and
3. Socially Responsible Investing.

Each topical Call to Action section contains three parts – framing the issues, web links and resources for more information, and suggested actions to consider. We'll also include additional resource listings of books and films we find important and inspiring. As always, our Earth Day materials will include resources to help you engage your community through press and publicity.

To start your Earth Day planning, in early February go to www.uumistryforearth.org and click on "Take Action" then "Earth Day 2014." Be sure to register your events before Earth Day (April 22) – your ideas may inspire others and your congregation will

be entered in a drawing to win a \$50 gift certificate from the UUA Bookstore! On the website, we will also maintain an updated table of Earth Day events as congregations register so you can see what others are doing.

After Earth Day, please share your stories, using the same registration form, and send your photos to

office@uumistryforearth.org. We would love to post them on Facebook, share highlights with our UUA, and include stories in upcoming newsletters.

Each year, UUMFE invites congregations to honor an Eco-Hero with our special certificate to show appreciation of his or her accomplishments and dedication to your congregation's Earth Ministry. We will list your Eco-Hero's name, along with a one-sentence description of the work, on the UUMFE website. And, we hope you will nominate your Eco-Hero to be recognized as an UUMFE Guardian of the Future. Full details online!

As always, you will also find materials to use in planning for worship services near Earth Day including an order of service cover, an insert about UUMFE, and links to many UUA resources. We remain most grateful to those congregations who use their Earth Day services as an opportunity to publicize and support the work of UU Ministry for Earth through a special shared or designated plate collection.

Best wishes for a just and moving 2014 Earth Day! ♦



Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth
Earth Day 2013-15: Working Towards Sustainable Communities

Photos (left to right): Flickr/CC, Lyndrae, Pexels/H West 2009, Miami-Dade County, FL, Flickr/CC, Corey Tompkins, Maine Farmers Market, knikkon rems, Salmon Habitat, Whirlwind, Where's the Dress?

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Unitarian Universalist
Ministry for Earth

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ABOUT UUMFE

Unitarian Universalist
Ministry for Earth is a non-
profit organization whose
supporters envision a world
in which reverence, grati-
tude, and care for the living
Earth is central to the lives
of all people. As a 501(c)3
organization, contributions
are tax deductible to the full
extent of the law.

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Message From the Board Chair

Stars in the Sky

A clear, crisp winter sky at night is a sparkling wonder – more than my cell phone camera can capture. But, there is a place to see great photos of all manner of wonders in the sky – and with much detail – at a NASA site: <http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html>. While browsing through the great variety of perspectives on the NASA site, I am reminded again of the grandeur to which we are connected.

We Are Connected

We are connected to grandeur and we are connected through history and places. As the wheel of the year turns, UUMFE is publishing materials for your use to celebrate the 44th Earth Day in April. Forty-four years – Wow! Let's make this an especially good one.

Perhaps your local area has a robust engagement in Earth Day or perhaps your congregation has an opportunity to start or enhance your community events. To assist your programming, UUMFE is expanding on the theme of 'Sustainable Communities' begun in 2013 with focus on our opportunities to provide support, action and inspiration in our local communities.



NASA: Spitzer's Orion

Grounding Our Connection

As you and your congregation move out into the community, the newly revised curriculum 'Our Place in the Web of Life' will be helpful to grow awareness of justice issues, define the target areas in the community nearby, and begin planning for outreach activities. We are grateful for the input from early adopters and reviewers as we produced this Second Edition. If your congregation is embarking on the UUA Green Sanctuary certification program, this curriculum is designed to strengthen your justice action planning.

Connecting Across the Country

For those of you who yearn to reach out in a big way, the Great March for Climate Action (climatemarch.org) gives you an opportunity to connect from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. AND bring inspiration to your local congregations. Check out our description of the March and Michael Dowd's work in our newsletter article. Michael is available to speak at your congregation or event as the March progresses. Your contribution is valuable, whether you choose to march, support the marchers, host a speaker, or volunteer for the campaign.

Stay Connected to UUMFE Volunteers and Staff

UUMFE offers you these services thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers, an inspired consultant, and one creative part-time staff member. All are enabled by financial support from our donors and grants from the Cedar Tree Foundation and the UUA Funding Program. We hope that you will continue to give generously.

We believe for UUMFE's offerings to be meaningful and effective, we must stay connected. To become involved with UUMFE or offer your comments and suggestions, send an email to us at office@uuministryforearth.org.

In gratitude, Irene Keim ♦

News From UU Ministry For Earth

“Our Place In the Web of Life” Second Edition Now Available



In Spring 2012, UUMFE debuted its five-session introduction to environmental justice curriculum. Using feedback from the many congregations that offered the curriculum, we revised it to make it even better. We have also greatly

improved information about the curriculum on our website, to include more videos and background materials. Watch for fall webinars in our e-News and learn more about the curriculum at <http://uuministryforearth.org/EJ-Curriculum>.

A Seasonal Liturgical Calendar for Unitarian Universalists

Kat Liu, UUMFE Board member

Editor’s note: Kat Liu was a Fahs Fellow for Innovation in Spiritual Practices at Meadville Lombard Theological School in 2013, the first year of the program. The Fellows are global tinkers and curriculum innovators in faith development. The liturgical calendar was part of Kat’s project and was first presented at the Liberal Religious Educators Association Fall Conference. You can watch the same talk presented later at Meadville Lombard at <http://www.meadville.edu/Fahs-fellows>. During the coming years, UUMFE plans to develop complementary materials to support UU seasonal celebrations and make them available on our website.



Screen shot from the Meadville Lombard link above.

There were several motivations for a proposed Earth-based liturgical calendar. First, many Unitarian Universalists are longing for more overtly spiritual practices that reflect and reaffirm our UU values. Second, observance of the solstices and equinoxes is something that most cultures do, and therefore allows Unitarian Universalists from various cultural backgrounds to participate and potentially bring their own family traditions. And third, if we are to learn to live sustainably and in harmony with our Mother Earth, then we need to be more aware of the seasons.

Our modern, globalized society tends to mask awareness of seasonal variations. Not only do central heating and air-conditioning shield us from the cold of winter and the heat of summer (if we have homes and can afford to pay utilities), but fruits and vegetables

are mass-produced and then shipped around the world such that most popular items are available nearly year round. On the surface, it may not seem like a bad thing to be able to eat strawberries in November. But if we look more closely, we see that those strawberries were shipped in from elsewhere, often thousands of miles away, which means burning fossil fuels and generating CO₂ waste.

Moreover, large-scale monoculture farming is unsustainable, requiring more fertilizer as the soil gets depleted and more pesticides as pests concentrate in the mono-cropped area over time. Farm workers are often underpaid, mistreated, and exposed to the pesticides. Even when farming practices are “organic” they are still energy intensive. And lastly, when we buy our produce from large transnational corporations, we give them more and more control. Food is too essential to let it be controlled by a few transnational corporations, whose bottom line is shareholder profit.

Therefore, one of the most spiritual practices we can adopt to keep in harmony with our Mother Earth, and one of the ways we can most radically resist economic globalization and the injustices it creates,



News From UU Ministry For Earth

is to reclaim as much as possible of our food supplies. Decentralize. Buy locally. Eat seasonally. Support small, local, family farmers. If possible, grow some of your own food. Even urban dwellers can grow food, whether in patio containers or community gardens. And even if you can't, support fellow community members who do.

These were some of the aims I had in mind as I created the proposed seasonal liturgical calendar for Unitarian Universalists. In addition to observing the seasons, I tried to include rituals that provide community support for local farming, such as the 'Blessing of the Seeds' and the 'Blessing of the Loaves.' I also tried to reinforce awareness of us as part of the interdependent web across space and time by honoring our ancestors from whom we come, and our children who will carry on after.

The seasonal liturgical calendar is on the Web at: <http://www.wizduum.net/seasonal-calendar>.

Note that this calendar is not meant to be set in stone. It's meant to be lived and tested and revised by the Unitarian Universalist community. Please use what's here as best fits your needs, and share whatever changes/additions you might make. ♦

Honor Congregations – Thanks!

Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board Treasurer

UU Ministry for Earth gratefully acknowledges our Honor Congregations. These congregations have given generously to support the work of UUs caring for Earth through budgeted gifts, split-the-plate offerings, and donations beyond the requested congregational level of \$100. The following congregations gave these special donations between January and December 2013. Thank you!



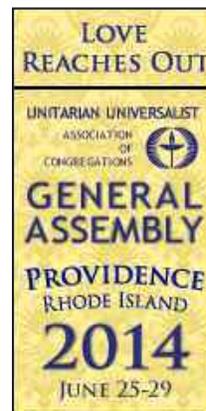
Honor Congregations:

Bull Run UUs, Manassas, VA
Emerson Unitarian Church, Houston, TX
First Parish of Lexington, MA
First Unitarian Church of Cleveland, Shaker Heights, OH
First Unitarian Church of Portland, OR
Olympia Brown UU Church, Racine, WI
UU Church in Reston, VA

UU Church in Springfield, VT
UU Church of Davis, CA
UU Church of Palo Alto, CA
UU Community Church of Washington County, Hillsboro, OR
UU Congregation of Milford, NH ♦

Save the Date for Providence GA

The theme of General Assembly 2014 is "Love Reaches Out." UUs will gather in Providence to examine and renew our covenant to our faith, one another, our congregations, and the larger world. We will worship, witness, learn, and work together – and leave GA grounded in our faith, energized for justice, and with resources to bring the work home to our congregations. UU Ministry for Earth will be there – join us!



NWEI Continues to Support UUs In Their Environmental Justice Work

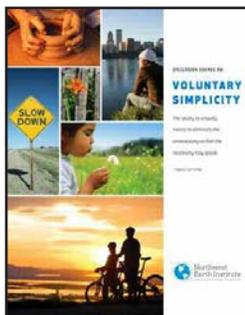
Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board member

UU Ministry for Earth members and other UUs in the Green Sanctuary and Environmental Justice movements just love discussion courses from Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI). No wonder – the small group format and the meticulously researched and easily accessible materials address issues we care about deeply and appeal to our learning-style preferences. They even have courses that support three of our Statements of Conscience (SOC).

Choices for Sustainable Living (rev. 2012) and *Voluntary Simplicity* (rev. 2011) support the 2001 SOC "Responsible Consumption Is Our Moral Imperative." These two are particularly relevant to our current Earth Day Materials, "Working Towards Sustainable Communities."

News From UU Ministry For Earth

Menu for the Future (rev. 2013) and *Hungry for Change: Food, Ethics, and Sustainability* (2011) support the 2011 SOC "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice."



These have been extremely popular with congregations. The newly revised *Menu for the Future* contains much new material and is worth offering again if you have done it before.

Change by Degrees: Addressing the Climate Challenge (2013) supports the 2006 SOC "Threat of Global Warming/Climate Change." This course combines the original *Global Warming: Changing Course* from 2007 (newly revised) and *Powering a Bright Future* (2012), creating a very useful guide to current issues.

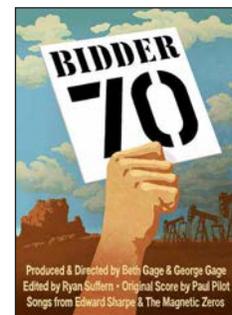
Order these and other courses at <http://nwei.org>. Please choose UU Ministry for Earth in the "affiliation" section of the order form at checkout and NWEI will donate a small percentage of the fees to us. ♦

Screening *Bidder 70*

About this time last year, through a licensing agreement with the filmmakers, UUMFE began making this important film available to congregations at a reduced fee (\$75 for congregations under 150 members and \$100 for those over 150). Since then, over seventy congregations have taken advantage of the offer and been inspired by Tim's remarkable story.

We will continue to make the film available as long as there is interest. For details, please see the UUMFE website at

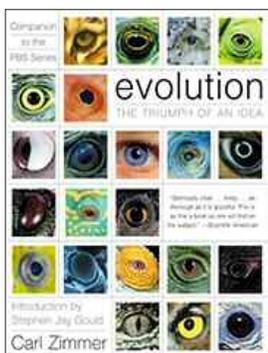
<http://uuministryforearth.org/Bidder-70-Film> or contact UUMFE Office Manager Sabrina Louise Harle at office@uuministryforearth or 503-595-9392.



News & Commentary From Members and Congregations

Book Review – *Evolution: The Triumph of an Idea*

Bob Keim, former UUMFE Board member



"If the 4 billion years that life has been on Earth were a summer day, the past 200,000 years – which saw the rise of anatomically modern humans, the origin of complex language, of art, religion, and trade, the dawn of agriculture, of cities, and all of written history – would fit into the

single flash of a firefly just before sundown." This passage from *Evolution: The Triumph of an Idea* taught me two lessons – one, life is unimaginably fleeting and two, time is unbelievably important.

Truth is I found my copy at a thrift store; it was published in 2001 to accompany a PBS series. See, I

loved Physics in school – not Biology – and my understanding of Charles Darwin and evolution was sketchy, so I thought I would do some "light reading."

I found more Darwin, more science, more humanity, and more hope than I ever imagined.

Throughout this book, author Carl Zimmer is keenly aware of the deep work of scientists engaged in further understanding evolution, and treats their commitments with a sense of kinship that recognizes the best of science – the quest to understand reality and the challenge of building a community of respectful difference. He also takes into account the audience he is writing for and works to shape his prose accordingly, providing a rich history of both scientific advancement and the merits and challenges of other approaches (i.e., intelligent design). And all of this is laid out in recognition of the impact of the idea on the individual at the heart of it all. **"As Darwin was putting together his theory of natural selection....He sometimes jotted his thoughts in a notebook, but he did not dare make them public."**

News From Members and Congregations

Zimmer also recognizes the intersection between biological and cultural evolution – the emergence of such things as tool-making, art, music, religion, philosophy, other cultural events and a deep sense of historical reference. And his work envisions many of the possibilities open to our world today – opportunities that can help to continue our own evolution: **“In time, our culture may become an intimate stranger to us, a symbiotic brain. The lions on the walls of Chauvet will begin to dance.”**

Evolution: The Triumph of an Idea is a profound journey through the march of both an idea and the world around it. The book reminds us that one person *can* make a difference, that our willingness to engage the world around us is important and our ability to step forward can take us to places we never imagined. This book charts a path – one that has played an incredible part in the growth of both our understanding and our culture, and is the road ahead for the emergence of new possibilities.

I highly recommend this book – even if you liked Biology way back when. It will move you in unexpected ways, and awaken your mind to new possibilities, new dreams. Curl up with some warm tea and enjoy the moment. The journey will be profound. ♦

It's Politics and the Economy

Rev. Earl W. Koteen, UUMFE Board member

As it becomes increasingly evident that our industrial civilization is not only non-sustainable, but possibly ecocidal, the questions that continue to run around my brain are the following:

- Why aren't we doing more?
- What more can we do?

Why aren't we doing more?

The economy, stupid.

*– James Carville, campaign manager,
Clinton's 1992 campaign*

There are many answers to this question; more than I have time to cover in this article. However, I do believe that one of the root causes is growing economic and political inequality. When I asked myself why we are accelerating toward a cliff that we can already see is crumbling, the increasing maldistribution of

wealth and power seems to be the brick tied to the accelerator pedal.

It's easy to blame greed and the 1% for this situation; however, I believe we achieve more by looking at systemic and values-based dysfunctions in civilization. Thinking of these things, I was reminded of the James Carville quote to the left. When I looked it up, I found that it was one of following three principles he had for the campaign:

1. Change vs. more of the same
2. The economy, stupid
3. Don't forget health care.

For a while, I have been thinking that it's the environment and environmental justice that should be at the center of our political and justice campaigns. After all, the threat of extinction would seem to trump our other concerns.



Of course, I was wrong. Most people are more concerned about loved ones, health, and jobs than climate change. So I switched my focus to the health and economic consequences of continuing environmental degradation.

That strategy proved only partially effective because most people are, not surprisingly, more present-than future-focused. Imagine our Unitarian ancestor, Paul Revere, shouting: “The British are coming. The British are coming. In 50 years.” Most people would not get out of bed to rally for such a cry.

So I switched from climate change to climate justice to environmental justice. However, the movement still wasn't getting the traction we were hoping for. That caused me to internalize how much political and economic inequality was an obstacle to improving health and justice and to saving the biosphere.

I also learned a new word that I should have acquired in seminary: “intersectionality.” This feminist sociological theory arose from the study of the intersections between multiple systems of oppression. For example, “womanism” is a social theory deeply rooted in the racial and gender oppression of black women. Its authors felt that white feminists who were not adequately representing their concerns.

While it remains critical that we continue the fight for justice on many different fronts, I believe that our efforts would benefit from a more holistic approach.

News & Commentary From Members and Congregations

I am now working with activists in the Bay Area who are designing a path to a just and sustainable society. If you are doing such work in your community and wish to dialogue, please drop me a line at earl.koteen@gmail.com.

Thank you for considering this request and for all your good work. ♦

The Great March for Climate Action: Potential Game Changer

Ellen McClaran and Vince Pawlowski, UUMFE Board members

You may have heard about the momentum building around the Great March for Climate Action. Conceived in spring 2013 by former Iowa lawmaker and climate activist Ed Fallon, the



March is an eight-month long 3,000 mile coast to coast moving demonstration to inspire and

motivate the general public and elected officials to act now to address the climate crisis. This will be one of the largest coast-to-coast marches in American history, involving 1,000 people or more.

The Great March starts in Los Angeles on March 1 and ends in Washington, DC on November 1, just a few days before the mid-term elections. For all the details, start at <http://climatemarch.org> then Google "The Great March for Climate Change" for page after page of articles, endorsements, and commentary. You are sure to discover your niche.

Rev. Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow, the "evolutionary evangelists" who have presented at hundreds of UU congregations, will travel with the Marchers several times and will schedule events along the route. Check their itinerary to see if they will be near you: <http://thegreatstory.org/itinerary.html>.

UUMFE will publish stories from the March as it progresses. Miriam Kashia, a UU since 1970, wrote the next article, which was first published as an opinion piece in both the *Iowa City Press-Citizen* and the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* in December. Read it and be inspired! How many steps will you take? ♦

The Great March: Walking My Talk

Miriam Kashia, UU Society of Iowa City, IA

Why would anyone spend eight months walking 3,000 miles across this vast country enduring storms, heat, sore feet and who knows what else? Here's why . . .

My "Top Ten" list:

- 10) Heating of our atmosphere is on a fatal trajectory; climate chaos is producing devastating mega super-storms worldwide.
- 9) Oceans are absorbing heat and slowing the atmospheric rise in temperature, but they are becoming acidic and unsustainable for marine life.
- 8) Polar ice is melting and oceans are rising. Island nations and coastal cities will disappear under water. Glaciers, the only water source for millions, are rapidly disappearing.
- 7) Terrible flooding and increased droughts and fires are devastating large areas and threatening our food supply.
- 6) The planet is populated by over 7 billion people – more than it can sustain – and will reach 10 billion by mid-century.
- 5) One hundred species are becoming extinct per day. Humanity could eventually show up on that list. Everything is connected.
- 4) Tropical diseases are spreading. New viruses and bacteria for which we have no protection are appearing.
- 3) Displaced populations of climate refugees are increasing social unrest, disruption of governments, and regional violence.
- 2) Developing nations, which produce the least carbon, are most vulnerable to these disastrous effects; this is social injustice at it's worst.
- 1) We will persist, like lemmings, toward our own destruction, or we will wake up and use our personal and political will to do what must be done to convert our carbon-based energy systems to solar, wind, geothermal, and other existing, sustainable resources.



Miriam, one of the first registered marchers, is a world traveler

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The Great March: Walking My Talk . . . cont'd



I will walk the *Great March for Climate Action* across America with a small army of passionate folks dedicated to a sustainable future for life on the planet. *"Our goal is to change the heart and mind of the American people, our elected leaders, and people across the world into acting now to address the climate crisis."* Donations supporting this monumental effort can be made on the website and are tax deductible.

Historically, great marches have helped produce dramatic social and political change: Gandhi's march to the sea; the Suffragettes march for women's right to vote; the march on Selma led by Martin Luther King, Jr.; and the Great anti-nuclear Peace March in 1986. But *never* has it been more critical to take immediate action. Many other issues need our attention. But, as one climate scientist has said, "Attending to the many other problems on our planet without changing our direction is like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic." By putting our resources into helping victims of climate disasters without addressing the core

issue – *a lack of personal and political will* – we are throwing a thimbleful of water onto a forest fire.

The Great March for Climate Action will create awareness with our visibility and determination, model sustainability, and collaboration with local groups to present educational events and rallies en route. Ordinary people from thirty-five states and four foreign countries are registered to march for all or part of the journey.

There is nothing more important I can do with my time, energy, resources, and passion than to help bring grassroots awareness of our increasingly catastrophic climate crisis all across America by taking seven million steps to 'walk my talk.'

I will march to demonstrate the power of ordinary people to reclaim the democratic process and create the political will to do what must be done. I will march so I do not fall into despair. I will march so I can come to know all those other amazing Marchers and make a difference.

I will carry a list of my supporters to remind me that I am not alone, and that there exists a great movement to do the right thing for ourselves, our grandchildren, for all life, and for our Earth. ♦