



Commit2Respond: A Religious Response to Climate Change

UU involvement in the People’s Climate March in New York City on September 21st marks the launch of an exciting new UU initiative.

By Irene Keim, UU Ministry for Earth Board Chair, UU Church in the Pines, Brooksville, FL

Commit2Respond is a faithful initiative to expand climate justice efforts among Unitarian Universalists and other people of conscience. We know that climate justice takes faith, and it takes collective action. Ours is a collective movement to accelerate the shift to clean, renewable energy; grow our capacity for climate justice; and advance the human rights of marginalized communities in the face of climate change.

Commit2Respond is a collaboration of the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, the UU College of Social Justice, UU Ministry for Earth, and other UU groups.

UUMFE has signed on as a Sponsoring Organization to encourage our members and friends to think in larger terms about the commitments we can make to climate justice, sign-on to those commitments by Earth Day 2015, and to follow-through into 2017. Individuals, families, small groups, congregations, and community organizations are all invited to participate.

In preparation for pledging action, UUMFE has highlighted several resources that are available to assist in accessing the possibilities within your congregation and beyond. In particular, the curriculum ‘Our Place in the Web of Life’ will help you explore the dimensions of ecological justice and the linkages in your community (see page 5).

Commit2Respond is a movement of UUs living our faith by taking action for climate justice. A website has been opened for you to sign up for the



latest information from the Commit2Respond team. Sign up to stay informed at <http://www.Commit2Respond.org>.

Visit the UUMFE website for excerpts and links to the latest publications about **Commit2Respond**, including the Standing on the Side of Love team, the UUA Multicultural Growth & Witness team, UU Service Committee and others. Also, UUMFE will post the latest information on Facebook and in distributions of the UUMFE eNEWS. Join the UUMFE eNEWS mailing list on the UUMFE website at <http://uuministryforearth.org>. ♦

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Unitarian Universalist
Ministry for Earth

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ABOUT UUMFE

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profit organization whose
supporters envision a world
in which reverence, grati-
tude, and care for the liv-
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lives of all people. As a
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Message from the Board Chair

Help arrived in the mailbox today. I have been struggling to express the blend of work for justice for human neighbors near and far and the work for justice for all on Earth that is not human. The statistics on human economic, health, and safety abuses are staggering. The loss of beauty and the rates of extinctions are also alarming. My home is surrounded by wilderness area that renews and delights, and I connect and am supported by a wonderful human community down the road a bit. How do I evaluate my various justice efforts?

Then, I read Kathleen Dean Moore's entry in the September-October issue of *Orion* magazine (orionmagazine.org), 'The Rules of the River.'

"On the Toklat that night, the physics of the river played out right in front of me. A chunk of dirt and roots toppled from the bank, tumbled past me, and jammed against a mid-river stone. The current, dividing itself around the rootball, wrinkled sideways and turned upstream. It curled into pocket-eddies behind the roots. Even as I watched, the pockets filled with gravel and sand. A willow could grow there, and its roots could divide and slow the river further, gathering more gravel, creating a place where new life could take root.

"I shoved a rock into the river. The sudden curl of current made me grin. Yes, we are caught up in a river rushing toward a hot, stormy, and dangerous planet. The river is powered by huge amounts of money invested in mistakes that are dug into the very structure of the land, a tangled braid of fearful politicians, preoccupied consumers, reckless corporations, and bewildered children—everyone, in some odd way, feeling helpless. Of course, we despair. How will we ever dam this flood?

"But we don't have to stop the river. Our work and the work of every person who loves this world—this one—is to make one small deflection in complacency, a small obstruction to profits, a blockage to business-as-usual, then another, and another, to change the energy of the flood. As it swirls around these snags and subversions, the current will slow,



This crane was part of a family that visited – and still visits – last June. The hog hunters have a corn feeder out back and the cranes walk the full length of our property every day to check out the feeder.

lose power, eddy in new directions, and create new systems and structures that change its course forever. On these small islands, new ideas will grow, creating thickets of living things and life-ways we haven't yet imagined.

"This is the work of disruption. This is the work of radical imagination. This is the work of witness. This is the steadfast, conscientious refusal to let a hell-bent economy force us to row its boat. This is much better than stewing in the night."

So, all our justice work is needed. We honor the many thousands of us on the streets of New York City for the People's Climate March and many more active on September 21st back home. Our Young Adults for Climate Justice were there and also led a "Raucous and Reverent" young people's interfaith worship service the evening of September 20th, at 4th Universalist Society in NYC. Others of us will be in Washing-ton, D.C. on November 1st at the conclusion of the Great March for Climate Action that started in California last spring. And, I take hope from the many more of us who are working in our com-munities for the justice, beauty, and connection that the web of life deserves and provides.

In gratitude, Irene Keim, UUMFE Board Chair ♦

People's Climate March Makes History – UUs Help!

Editors note: UUMFE delayed publication of this newsletter to bring you news and photos from the March. UU photographer extraordinaire, Peter Bowden, shares his photos of the March here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/116378748@N03/>. Commentary from two UU attendees follows.

Commentary by Rev. Peggy Clarke, Minister, First Unitarian Society, Hastings on Hudson, NY, Sept. 22, 2014

What a phenomenal experience the Climate March was! The official number just came out (9/22) – there were 400,000+ in the march and more than 1,500 of us were UUs. When I



Patently waiting to march with thousands of others in the Interfaith group. Photo by Bruce Knotts.

arrived before 9:00, our staging area was empty and the street was still open for cars. It occurred to me that after months of planning, things could really fall apart with just a few details being overlooked. But they closed the street at 10 and by 11 the space was very full and the pagans were drumming and the Jews were blowing shofars and the energy was rising. By noon it was crowded and by 1 there were so many of us it was getting uncomfortable. We were waiting and waiting because all the other staging areas had gotten so full as well – the numbers had far exceeded the expectation. It was a good problem to have.

Once the gates were open, it felt like a party. Hundreds of thousands of people on the streets chanting and dancing and cheering.

I had been at the conference at Union on Friday and Saturday, so after the March, I went to worship at Saint John the Divine, which was open to the public but designed as a closing ritual for conference



Tim DeChristopher with Bruce and Terry Wiggins. Photo by Peggy Clarke.

attendees. It was glorious, culminating in some pretty serious commitments made publicly by international religious and environmental leaders to up our game and fight for climate justice.

All in all, I can't imagine how things could have been better. OK, if the UN Secretary General announced the institution of a carbon tax, that would have been better. So, it was near perfect. ♦



Young climate activist promotes the UU initiative, Commit2Respond. Photo by Peter Bowden.

Commentary by Molly Hauck, Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda, MD, Sept. 22, 2014

The march was very uplifting because it was huge and the spirit very positive. The final count is 400,000! Fifteen hundred UUs registered to go and I even met Peter Morales. We sat around for three hours at the beginning because the interfaith groups were near the end and there were so many more people than expected. I couldn't hear the interfaith service because the speakers weren't adequate. Once we started marching, it was exciting. There was music and people chanting and everyone was upbeat.

There were so many people who aren't part of the usual environmental movement. Here was the lineup:

1. Frontlines of crisis, forefront of change – the people first and most impacted are leading the charge. Indigenous, environmental justice, and other frontline communities.

2. We can build the future. Every generation's future is at stake; we can build a better one. Labor, families, students, elders, and more.
3. We have solutions. A just transition is possible. Renewable energy, food and water justice, environmental organizations, and more.
4. We know who is responsible. Let's call out those who are holding back progress. Anti-corporate campaigns, peace and justice, and more.
5. The debate is over. The facts are in! Taking action is a moral necessity. Scientists, interfaith, and more.
6. To change everything, we need everyone. Here comes everybody! LGBTQ, NYC boroughs, community groups, neighborhoods, cities, states, and more.

There is more focus on the economic system that is contributing to climate change, and divesting from fossil fuels. Today a lot of people are planning to be arrested on Wall St.

There were people from all over the country, probably every state. Four hundred buses transported people. There were more people of color than at most environmental events. All ages were there and there were quite a few young people. There were a few people in wheelchairs. You can see photos and videos on various news articles online. Everywhere I could see people were marching.



We are all connected – children behind the banner are from First Unitarian Society of Westchester in Hastings, NY. Photo by Peter Bowden.

Amy Goodman spent her whole "Democracy Now!" program on the March and interviewed famous people. You can hear it later today or listen on her website.

The night before, the NY Society for Ethical Culture had an excellent program with many excellent speakers: "A Global Climate Treaty: Why the U.S. Must Lead." I hope that they recorded it because they were inclusive – people not usually part of the environmental movement. There were several black speakers from NYC, including Annie Willis, an eighteen-year-old whose house in the Rockaways, a poor area in Queens, was destroyed by Sandy and who is dedicating her life to climate change. I heard that the NYC chapter of 350.org organized the program so maybe they will make it available too.

This was a historic march and I was glad that was part of it! Everyone who I talked to was excited by it. ♦

Report from Rev. Peggy Clarke, Minister, First Unitarian Society, Hastings on Hudson, NY

Leading up to the Climate March was an invitation-only conference at Union Theological.

Religious and environmental leaders from around the world were invited to think together about the need for a changing paradigm and the moral imperative our faith leaders must bring to the urgency of climate change. Because religious leaders are not part of the United Nations Summit, so the conference served at the place these voices can be heard.

Of the two hundred people invited, there were five Unitarian Universalists. They were Rev. Fred Small, Rev. Eric Cherry, Tim DeChristopher, Pam Sparr, and Rev. Peggy Clarke. Tim DeChristopher facilitated a panel on "Engaging Ecological Grief and Despair" and Peggy Clarke spoke on a panel entitled "Environmental Racism and Climate Justice Initiatives."



**Religions
for the Earth
CONFERENCE**

the world were invited to think together about the need for a

The weekend closed with a powerful multi-faith worship service during which Al Gore and luminaries like Jim Wallis and Terry Tempest Williams recommitted themselves to environmental leadership while challenging all participants to increase their own work in response to a growing emergency.

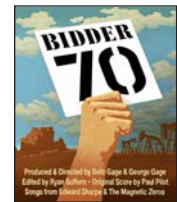
The UU participants are planning to debrief publically in the next few weeks so as to enlarge the conversation started at Union and begin the work of creating the bold leadership needed for these challenging times. ♦

Take Action for Climate Justice

By Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board Member, First Unitarian Church, Portland, OR

Inspired and energized by the very successful People's Climate March, now is the perfect time to plan a full year of activities related to climate justice. Following are a few ideas.

Film Screenings. UUMFE is continuing to offer *Bidder 70*, Tim DeChristopher's amazing story, at a much reduced licensing fee through our website at <http://uuministryforearth.org/Bidder-70-film>.



Disruption, the story of the build-up to the People's Climate March, is available online at <http://watchdisruption.com>. Check out UUMFE's Environmental Film Library for recommendations: <http://uuministryforearth.org/Environmental-Film-Library>.

Our Place in the Web of Life: An Introduction to Environmental Justice. Offering UUMFE's EJ curriculum is the perfect way for your congregation to learn about climate justice issues in your own community. More information on our website: <http://uuministryforearth.org/EJ-Curriculum>.

Reading Groups. We have reading lists for most of our Earth Day topics, especially the past two years. Click "Take Action" on our website to get started. Published just this month, Naomi

Kline's new book, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*, is sure to challenge and inspire.

Northwest Earth Institute. Participate in NWEI's annual EcoChallenge from Oct. 15-29. Categories include water conservation, energy efficiency, sustainable food options, alternative transportation, trash reduction, and civic engagement. Or offer one of their excellent discussion courses like *Change by Degrees: Addressing Global Warming* and the newest offering, *Seeing Systems: Peace, Justice and Sustainability*. See <http://nwei.org>.

10-Day Local Food Challenge. A new event organized by Vicki Robin (author of *Your Money Or Your Life*) that was inspired by the experiences chronicled in her latest book, *Blessing the Hands That Feed Us: What Eating Closer to Home Can Teach Us About Food, Community, and Our Place on Earth*. Learn more at <http://localfoodchallenge.org>.



The Great March for Climate Action. This is the other major march this year, which left CA in March for a cross-country trek that has been energizing and educating everyone all along the route (see extensive coverage our Spring newsletter: <http://uuministryforearth.org/newsletters>). The march ends in Washington, D.C. on Nov. 1 with a celebration and a week of climate actions. Check <http://climatemarch.org/dc/> for updates.

Earth Day and Commit2Respond. UUMFE will be developing materials to support both events next spring. Watch our eNews for updates (sign up on our home page: <http://uuministryforearth.org>). In the meantime, click "Take Action" tab on our website to find lots of ideas for Climate Justice actions.

General Assembly in Portland. Mark your calendar now for June 24-28. The Public Witness and numerous workshops will focus on Climate Justice, to tie in with Commit2Respond. Stay tuned! ♦

Something's Happening Here . . .

What it is ain't exactly clear.

There's a man with a gun over there,

Telling me I've got to be aware.

– Buffalo Springfield, "For What It's Worth" 1966

By Rev. Earl W. Koteen, UUMFE Board member, Berkeley Fellowship of UUs, CA

I was going to write this column about Richmond, California, and the amazing Our Power convening in August. It was the first time that this pale, male, and stale environmental justice activist attended a major conference where the presenters and the participants were predominantly of color. Then came Ferguson.

Jim Reeb was my youth minister before he was murdered in Selma, Alabama. Some of us who grew up UU in the 1950s and 60s experienced very diverse Sunday schools and LRY (the high school group of the time). We were both concerned and surprised when returning to UUism as adults to not find the diversity we grew up with.

Let's face it. Today, UUs are predominately white, upper middle class, middle-aged or older, and (self- or formally-) well educated. As an environmental justice minister, I have been learning and preaching about how differently environmental issues are

seen in disadvantaged communities. In the process, I have learned that it is not

only environmental justice but also other forms of justice, such as reproductive justice, which are understood and experienced among those who don't share our privileges.

It was a joy to be at the Our Power convening in Richmond California. There were people from frontline communities throughout the United



States and even representatives from South America and Africa. The importance of environmental justice was never a question. However, I did learn that many of them view climate change as a symptom, and economic injustice as the cause.

I do see a growing movement to integrate environmental justice and environmentalism into ecological justice. This growing movement recognizes that all injustices are interdependent and important, that we must address each, and yet we must form networks of mutuality that acknowledge our interdependence.

In the midst of this reflection came Ferguson. It was and is horrible. We join in grieving the losses and indignities suffered by this community.

Our Power gave me hope. Possibly surprisingly to you, so does Ferguson. The injustices being perpetrated have become so blatant and so outrageous as to call all people of goodwill to arise.

On September 21, hundreds of thousands of people participated in the People's Climate March in New York City. Out here in the Bay Area, parallel activities were organized for those who could not make it to New York City. We hope you planned something in your area.

Yet know that this was not a one-day event. It is likely to be a lifelong struggle for most of us. Change will come. Time to hop on board and live your faith, acting your way into a different way of thinking/believing. Don't wait to think your way into a different way of acting. ♦

On the Move – Young Adults Look Back, Move Forward

By Curtis Murphy, outgoing UUYACJ Intern; Intern Minister, First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto

As the summer draws to a close, UU Young Adults for Climate Justice (UUYACJ) takes pride in its recent activities, and in being well poised to move forward into its third year.

Looking back to the beginning of the summer, we had several highlights at General Assembly in Providence. Perhaps the biggest highlight is one we share with many others: seeing the delegates vote overwhelmingly in favor of the motion to divest the UU Common Endowment Fund from the fossil fuel industry. Several young adults spoke eloquently in support of the resolution, and we all felt proud of our faith at that moment.



Curtis Murphy (second from left) and UUMFE board mentor Cindy Davidson (far right) with members of UUYACJ at GA in Providence.

I also convened a well-received workshop at GA, "Singing for our Lives," on the role of song in social movements. Our initial dismay at being assigned a cavernous hall in the convention center was assuaged when over 300 people showed up to listen to and learn from the music and stories of Tim DeChristopher and folk duo Emma's Revolution. Many attendees said they left feeling energized and inspired. Encouraged by the positive feedback and success of this workshop, I offered a similar one at OPUS 2014, a five-day spiritual retreat and summer camp experience for UU young adults held in mid-August in Ohio.

UU Young Adults for Climate Justice were among the historically large crowds (over 400,000!) in New York City for the People's Climate March on September 21st. Not only were we marching, but we also hosted a "raucous but

reverent” worship service at 10pm the evening before, Saturday, Sept. 20th, at the 4th Universalist Society of New York (160 Central Park West, NYC). It was a space to honor our grief and celebrate our resilience as we continue the fight for climate justice and a livable world. We hope you were in New York, in body or in spirit! ♦

Note from board member Cindy Davidson, First Parish in Lexington, MA: I am most grateful, as are all the UUMFE Board members, to Curtis for the time and energies he has devoted to shepherding the UU Young Adults for Climate Justice network through its second year. The skills, experience and enthusiasm he has brought to the programming this past year have meant that many young adults received training on environmental and climate justice issues and organizing; that UUs of all ages were “singing for our lives” at the workshops he organized at General Assembly and OPUS; and that young adults and adults of all ages were united in their climate activism convictions by working together, side-by-side, to advance fossil fuel divestment in our denomination. It has been a pleasure having Curtis among us, and we wish him well in his ministerial internship at the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto! We look forward to keeping abreast of his ministry.

Looking forward, we welcome Alyssa (Aly) Tharp of Plano, Texas, as the new coordinator for



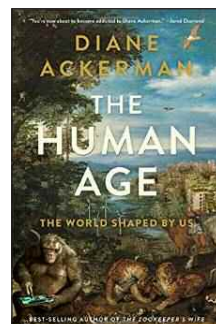
our UU Young Adults for Climate Justice network. She has been active as a climate justice organizer with the “Tar Sands Blockade” for the past two years, and has risen through the ranks of youth and

young adult leadership in the Southwest District. Her education in Environmental Studies and Community Service and Policy and her on-the-ground skills will be a definite asset to our work! Welcome aboard, Aly!

Gaia In a Temper

By Bob Keim, former UUMFE Board member, UU Church in the Pines, Brooksville, FL

Intersections can be so brightly lit and yet threatening. Diane Ackerman’s latest book, *The Human Age: The World Shaped by Us*, in the chapter “Gaia in a Temper,” relates the tale of the Yup’ik people of Newtok, on the coast of western Alaska. Having lived in this region as fishermen and hunters for centuries, their very ways of life have become threatened by what Rob Nixon called “**slow violence...a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all.**”



Or what we know as Climate Change.

Ackerman reports that “**Any day now the whole village and many neighboring indigenous communities will sink into the melting permafrost, as if it were white quicksand...**” Meanwhile, U.S. and international law define refugees as only those “**...fleeing violence, war or persecution,**” while federal disaster relief programs only grant money to repair infrastructure and damage in place, not to relieve personal suffering.

Compounding the situation are Alaskan state policies. As The Guardian’s American environmental correspondent Suzanne Goldenberg reported, in 1959 Alaska state government required that, in order to build a school, the Yup’ik had to move their villages from historical roots inland to coastal areas such as Newtok, where it was less expensive to ship building materials.

Now the Yup’ik have nowhere to go and no support or assistance in creating new communities; it will be their fate “**...to join the realm of polar bears and narwhals in the rich seams of**

Eskimo lore,” absorbed into the edges of towns and cities such as Anchorage or further south, and likely faced with the increased stresses of being economically disenfranchised and facing cultural and environmental adjustment.

Meanwhile, 370 miles to the north, on an island five miles off the mainland, the Inupiat people of Shishmaref, Alaska face a similar future – with no place to go and no one to help. As reported in the cover story of the UUMFE Newsletter in Fall, 2007, Shishmaref faces the dual impact of melting permafrost and coastal erosion. The UU Church of Palo Alto, led by Ben Hammett of the Green Sanctuary Committee spoke out for the plight of the community to the US Congress then, and the Inupiat leaders their message directly to Washington this year – all to no avail. There is no federal money to help them move in the face of a problem that they did little to create.

We continue to uncover such stories of Ecological Justice – intersections of communities, both human and natural grounded in place, with the world we have constructed in “the human age.” In doing so we find ourselves on one of two sides: those who continue to hurtle through such intersections and those caught in the middle – people **“...who have done the least to contribute to our climate crisis facing such dramatic consequences of climate change.”**

Slow violence walks among us; witnessing to its effects and addressing it is something we Unitarian Universalists should be about.

Now!

What do you think? ♦

UU Cool Congregations

*By Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board Member,
First Unitarian Church, Portland, OR*

In July, Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) announced its first twenty Certified Cool Congregations. This new program recognizes congregations that are responding to global warming by reducing their

CO2 emissions. The four categories of recognition are: Gold (40% reduction); Blue (30%); Red (20%); and Green (10%). Congratulations to these five UU congregations (one-fourth of total!) that received certification:

- Unitarian Universalist Church, Bloomington, IN – Gold
- First Unitarian Church of Cleveland, Shaker Heights, OH – Blue
- Thomas Jefferson Unitarian Church, Louisville, KY – Red
- First Universalist Church of Rockland, Rockland, ME – Red
- First Unitarian Church, Louisville, KY – Green



The Cool Congregations program encourages projects focusing on renewable energy, energy efficiency, climate-friendly grounds, and water conservation. This is similar to the Sustainable Living component of our own Green Sanctuary program. Of note, all five UU congregations are also certified Green Sanctuaries. This is what “walking the talk” looks like!

The Rev. Canon Sally Bingham, IPL president, described the stories from the twenty congregations as both practical and hopeful and said, “These congregations are leading the way. They are putting their faith into action and bringing moral responsibility to the forefront of the movement to protect the climate.”

Learn about becoming a Cool Congregation at <http://www.coolcongregations.org>. The site also has good congregational and household carbon footprint calculators and lots of project ideas that might be useful if you participate in the Commit2Respond to Climate Change challenge next spring (see page 1). ♦

The Giving Garden – Social Justice, Ecology, Community Building

By Art Unger, Mt. Diablo UU Church, Walnut Creek, CA

Looking for a project that provides fresh fruit for the poor, captures carbon dioxide, and engages the community – all at once? All it takes is some



Photo: Mike Kirwan

land, water, volunteer energy and money. The site could be at a church, a school, or other public property. Here is the story:

The Mt. Diablo Unitarian

Universalist Church in Walnut Creek, CA (MDUUC) partnered with a local non-profit, The Urban Farmers (UF), to plant fruit trees. The UF is principally engaged in gleaning excess fruit from homes and orchards using volunteers, and giving the fruit to those in need. MDUUC and UF agreed that the church would provide land, water, and money; the UF would provide expertise and labor.

Members of the church contributed \$100 per tree, which covered the cost of bare root trees, terracing, fencing, irrigation system, and mulching. Individual contributions ranged from \$10 to \$300. The original goal of 50 trees quickly grew to 80 trees planted. The UF volunteers included students from a local high school and college.

Urban Farmers and MDUUC volunteers will prune the trees annually, and in three years they will begin harvesting the fruit (pears, apples and

plums). They will also weed, though drip irrigation will minimize weeds.

The project beautified the church by replacing a hillside that required disking with trees. In a few years the orchard will provide hundreds of pounds of fruit to those in need. The collaboration of the church with a community group brought around 60 students to the church campus, working with our own volunteers. As an added bonus, the orchard will improve the environment by capturing CO₂. If you don't have land available, look around for another site for a Giving Garden.

Details including newspaper coverage and video can be found at <http://mduuc.org/social-justice/giving-orchard>. Email contact: orchards@mduuc.org. ♦



UUMFE Board members at their post-GA meeting in Providence. From the left: Kat Liu, Earl Koteen, Ellen McClaran, Frances Sink, Irene Keim, Cindy Davidson. Not pictured are new Board members Mel Hoover and Ellen Paul. Mark you calendars and plan to join is at GA 2015 in Portland, OR!

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Portland Oregon

JUNE 24-28

2015