

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST MINISTRY FOR EARTH

GREEN PAPERS ON ENVIRONMENT & JUSTICE

INTRODUCTION

The fate of Earth urgently depends on humanity's ability to imagine and build a world in which all beings are treated justly and live to their fullest potential within a self-sustaining web of life. How do you imagine such world? What ethics, theology, or values fire that vision? No matter our separate histories and experiences and no matter the source of our moral grounding, our separate paths are converging toward a common understanding that human flourishing and planetary well-being are inextricably linked. Increasingly we can agree that our common future depends on the capacity of all humans to:

- Honor the integrity and interdependence of Earth's natural systems,
- Recognize that every form of life has worth and contributes to the whole
- Affirm the inherent value, dignity and potential in every human being
- Build communities that are fair, participatory, and peaceful
- Affirm the right of all people to access enough of the Earth's abundance for:
 - Sufficient, safe and healthful food
 - Sufficient clean water
 - Clean air
 - Healthy, fertile soil
- Ensure universal access to health care
- Provide universal access to education, including the knowledge and skills needed to live sustainably
- Create sufficient, meaningful and ecologically responsible livelihoods for all
- Insure sustainable, fair access to renewable resources
- Use nonrenewable resources sparingly, mindful of future generations
- Attend to the beauty and mystery of Earth and practice reverence.

THE GOAL OF THE UU MINISTRY FOR EARTH GREEN PAPERS

Our goal is to invite all Unitarian Universalists to both deep reflection and bold action. It is time to give our heads, our hearts, and our outstretched hands to a new kind of justice-building - one that rests on securing and sustaining the web of life which makes us one.

In an ongoing UUMFE discernment process we are learning that the approaches to environmental and social justice work are multi-dimensional, touch on nearly every arena of human activity and concern. Each path leading towards the convergence of justice and environmental issues has its own rich history, leaders, and literally hundreds of books, documents, and journals. Each path is built upon the experiences, expertise, and spiritual inspiration of many men and women.

The first Green Papers give an overview of some of this wealth of knowledge, wisdom and experience. Our aim has been to create a context for stimulating dialogue among readers and inspiring UU lay and religious leaders to share their knowledge and reflections in subsequent Green Papers. These first papers only touch the surface, but give us a starting point for our onward journey.

Subsequent papers will focus on the justice implications of specific environmental concerns: climate disruption, environment and health, and animal welfare. Over time, our vision is that new

papers will be contributed, each helping UUs to expand their understanding of new, related topics, for example: What can we learn from ecofeminism? How does humanist thinking interpret the relationship between justice and environmental issues? How do we connect social justice to biodiversity and species extinction? and How do we insure environmental equity while addressing global poverty?

WHAT IS A GREEN PAPER?

A Green Paper is used in some countries to lay out specific information in the hope that it will lead to discussion on an important issue and to a subsequent call to action. Usually a green paper does not attempt to persuade, but instead tends to insure that all sides of a specific topic are considered. A green paper invites further discussion and, we hope, to action. (We also like the idea that these papers are green in the environmental sense of reducing our footprint by being available to you online!)

HOW TO USE THE GREEN PAPERS?

READ. Each paper is available to read online or download to your computer without cost. You will be given an opportunity of making a donation with each download to help support Unitarian Universalist environmental justice work.

SHARE. Is your congregation a Green Sanctuary or a Green Sanctuary candidate? Organize a series of discussions using the Green Papers to build understanding of the environmental justice component of your Green Sanctuary work. Not engaged in Green Sanctuary work? Organize a discussion group using the papers.

RESPOND. Each Green Paper includes some questions for reflection and/or discussion. Share your comments, questions, and opinions at the end of each paper by simply logging in. Help start a denominational dialogue. Or, if you are reading the papers as part of a group, enter a group response for other readers to consider. In addition, if you wish to add a missing perspective or offer commentary, you are welcome to post it within the limits of length permitted.

ACT. As we learn and our understanding grows, our Unitarian Universalist principles elicit in us a dance between spiritual reflection and action in the world. How can you take your new knowledge and religious values out into the world to build Earth justice? What steps can you and your congregation take to make real your vision of a just and sustainable future? What bridges of understanding can you build in your community to link justice work with your Earth ministry?

WELCOME TO THE DIALOGUE. TOGETHER MAY WE DEEPEN OUR EFFORTS TO BUILD A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE EARTH.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The content and conceptualization of these Green Papers is the result of the work of many people.

Foremost, we recognize the work of Rev. Katherine Jesch who completed a draft document for UUMFE entitled "Environmental Justice: A Guide to Understanding and Action" in the Spring of 2009. That document has served as the foundation content for many of the Green Papers that follow.

We are also extremely grateful to a cadre of Unitarian Universalist volunteers who gave their time and energy in the summer of 2009 to review and add content. In particular we acknowledge the work of:

Sally Breen
Dr. Carmen Buford-Paige
Rev. Peggy Clarke
Chris Conklin
Betty Dabney
Jan Dash
Rev. Devorah Greenstein
Joan Gregory
Rev. Mark Hicks
Rev. Lora-Kim Joiner
Robert Keim
Rev. Gary Kowalski
Kat Liu
Ellen McClaran
Michael Mielke
Rev. Robert Murphy
Robin Nelson
Vince Pawlowski
Chloe SchwabePam Sparr
Vicky Talbert
Charlie Talbert
Ingrid West
Rev. Jackie Ziegler

Steve Maier and Claudia Kern have shepherded this process and woven the many strands together. UUMFE is grateful for their time, energy, and love for Earth.