



Guardian of the Future Award Recipients Are Eco-Justice Super-Heroes

Irene Keim, Chair, UU Ministry for Earth Board

The 2013 UUMFE Guardian of the Future Awards for outstanding Environmental Justice work were presented to Chad Tolman, Donna González, and Tim DeChristopher at the UUA General Assembly in Louisville, KY in June 2013. Chad and Donna were named Eco-Heroes by their First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, Delaware on Earth Day and nominated for this national award in recognition of actions with major results in their area. Tim was nominated by the board of UU Ministry for Earth to honor the impact of his actions on our national environmental justice movement.

Chad and Donna are honored for multiple innovative and inclusive projects, but especially in helping to form an Interfaith Power and Light chapter in Delaware. In case you have not looked at an elevation map lately, Delaware is extremely susceptible to sea level rise that is the result of climate change. Both Donna and Chad are guided by their learning and faith in this work. Chad wrote, "I see the closely coupled issues of energy and climate change as the greatest scientific, economic, political and moral issues of our time . . . By sharing in this sacred work I have found meaning and value in my life . . ." Donna wrote that this work "has helped me to see life more holistically, that everyone and everything matters." Chad also made extensive contributions to the very



Donna González and Chad Tolman

meaningful UUA Statement of Conscious on Global Warming Climate Change that was adopted in 2006. He worked for months on a committee organized by UU Ministry for Earth to develop a Statement that was challenging, controversial, and frightening. Also, Chad was the major author for the supporting document "The Science Behind the Threat of Global Warming and Climate Change." June 2013 marked the seventh anniversary of the adoption of that

Statement. You can refresh your connection to our commitments we made in 2006 though a link to the document on the UU Ministry for Earth website. UUMFE is very grateful for Chad's long-time membership in this organization.

Like many of you, Chad and Donna are activists that have not turned away from their fears for Earth and their future families. Instead they connect to their sense of place, roll up their sleeves, and work to make meaningful change. They connect the dots, if you will, of place and multiple oppressions with all of their volunteer contributions. We are rooted in our communities and appreciate those who dig in and make a difference.

Rev. Josh Snyder, Sr., Minister of the First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, accepted the awards for Chad and Donna at the UU Ministry for Earth Annual Meeting. *cont'd on page 3*

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Unitarian Universalist
Ministry for Earth

Unitarian Universalist
Ministry for Earth
NEWSLETTER

is published three times
per year by
UU Ministry for Earth
1034 SW 13th Ave.
Portland, OR 97205

The points of view
expressed by contributors
are their own and not neces-
sarily those of UU Ministry
for Earth (UUMFE).

Subscriptions are available
through membership in the
organization. The printed
version of this newsletter
uses 100 percent
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Ministry for Earth is a non-
profit organization whose
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in which reverence, grati-
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From the Board

Have you noticed . . .

The **change in the seasons** is approaching very soon, if not already begun in your area. This time of year is a turning in the church year for many of us – increased programming, migration of seasonal members, planning for major events and holidays both religious and secular. We watch for signals from both human activity like the beginning of the school year and the natural world like lowering of temperatures and changes in plant activity.

But, **out in the community**, many people have worked through the mile-stones, flowing seamlessly from the 2013 UUA General Assembly in June to 350.org Summer of Heat and Draw the Line events, building the number of cities and numbers of participants in public witness about the need for change. At GA in Louisville, many people were talking about eco-justice in workshops and in the exhibit hall, plus thousands showed up at the public witness event to support the regional UU congregations and Kentucky Interfaith Power and Light in their efforts to bring justice to the victims of the continued mining and use of coal for power generation. The event was held at a park in downtown Louisville on a very hot day with ozone alerts, and still the people showed up to make the witness the largest gathering of citizens against the injustices of mountain-top removal and coal-fired power plants in Kentucky.

Now, we are noticing **more connections online**, too. Over the summer, UUMFE has experienced quite a growth in the number of 'likes' on our Facebook page. The 'reach' we see some weeks is astonishing. Given the interest in connecting, inspiring, and learning from one another and thanks to the vision of Peter Bowden from Massachusetts, UUMFE and the UU United Nations Office are participating in the launch of the UU Climate Action Network Facebook group discussion site. The group is a space for UUs to express and experience our shared faith as we continue to grow our climate action and justice community.

UUMFE has noticed all the productive activity and would like to share the good news about the 2013 Guardians of the Future. *Chad Tolman* and *Donna González* were named Eco-Heroes by their First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, Delaware and nominated for the national Guardian award. The UUMFE Board nominated *Tim DeChristopher* from the First Unitarian Church of Salt Lake City, UT. We hope you congratulate them and are inspired by their actions.

This Newsletter contains content you have requested as you grow your faith and action: programming aids reminders early in the church year, description of the coming Earth Day resources, and news you can use from the UUA General Assembly, including the buzz around investment divestiture from fossil fuels. UUMFE is listening; please keep the connections open and lively.

We very much appreciate your support as we strive to provide the tools and encouragement of our faith-full growing.

– Irene Keim, Chair, UU Ministry for Earth Board ♦

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Guardian of the Future . . . from page 1

Tim DeChristopher is another who has not turned away, as is shown in the movie *Bidder 70*, which was presented at the Annual Meeting. The film chronicles the story of Tim, the young adult UU from Salt Lake City, who acted upon the courage of his convictions by derailing a widely protested federal oil and gas land sale, bidding millions of dollars to save thousands of pristine acres surrounding U.S. National Parks – with no intention of paying. He has just been released from two years in prison and, after a summer of kayaking and canoeing, has begun his studies at Harvard Divinity School.

The Guardian of the Future award was presented to Tim by Nancy King Smith, who also gave Tim copies of multiple petitions and letters written on his behalf by the UUMFE Board during his trial and time in prison.



Tim speaking at the UU Young Adults for Climate Justice workshop at GA.

The UUA Holmes-Weatherly Award was also presented to Tim at the UUMFE Annual Meeting. This award is given to an individual or organization whose life-long commitment to faith-based social justice is reflected in societal transformation. A \$500

cash prize accompanies the recognition and previous recipients have included Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev. Richard Gilbert, Planned Parenthood, and Rev. Marie Fortune.

The award panel was moved by Tim's extraordinary commitment to environmental and social justice grounded in his Unitarian Universalist faith. His actions to present the case for urgent action on climate change have inspired countless youth and elders to take a stand for climate justice. ♦

Plan to Screen *Bidder 70* at Your Congregation This Fall

Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board member

UUMFE will continue to offer the film *Bidder 70*, which chronicles Tim DeChristopher's inspiring story, for congregational screenings

through this fall and as long as there is interest. To date, over fifty congregations have taken advantage of UUMFE's licensing agreement with the filmmakers, Gage and Gage Productions, to screen the film in their communities at a greatly reduced licensing fee – \$75 for congregations under 150 members and \$100 for those over 150. Here are some of their comments:

"It was a moving and very positive movie. Too often our environmental films are devastating leaving us without a sense that we can make changes that impact more than personal and institutional changes. Thank you, UU Ministry for Earth, for making it possible to share this film."

– *Cynthia McAuliffe, UU Fellowship in St. Augustine*

"We felt it was one of the best films we have shown. It generated much discussion and our audience was very moved."

– *Margaret Wilson, UU Church of Santa Paula*

"Thank you for providing us with this important and inspiring film of Tim DeChristopher's courageous actions to help bring attention to climate change. Kudos to Gage & Gage Productions for this powerful and moving documentary!"

– *Nancy Litchfield, UU Fellowship of Northern Nevada*

"It went well! We had a discussion afterwards and it was clear that folks were moved by it. We're organizing a regular environmental movie series now at our church."

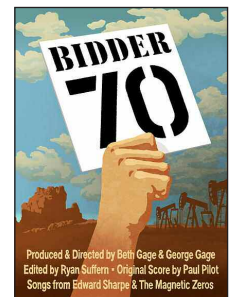
– *Nick Laiacona, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church*

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. ♦

Environmental Justice (EJ) in the Spotlight at GA 2013 in Louisville

Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board member

Although the 2012 GA in Phoenix was the official "Justice GA," Louisville turned out to be an unofficial "Environmental Justice GA" through the extraordinary number of EJ-focused activities. Between the Kentucky/West Virginia Minister's Association, UUA Witness Ministries, UUSC, UUMFE,



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and others, GA attendees were exposed to many opportunities to learn about environmental justice and related issues. Here's the impressive list of workshops and events! These titles may inspire programs/ events in you own congregation or district.

Wednesday

- With UUMFE and Kentucky Interfaith Power and Light, three Environmental Justice bus tours of Louisville for adults, youth, and young adults

Thursday

- Building a Young Adult Environmental Justice Network (UUMFE workshop)
- Covenant of Gratitude: Our Commitment to the Earth
- Connecting Extraction Industries to Rural and Urban Devastation
- Choose Compassionate Consumption: Personal Choice to Collective Action
- Just and Sustainable Appalachian Community Transitions (UUMFE workshop)
- Locavores and Congregations Coming Together for Good
- The True Cost of Coal: A Visual Narrative
- Climate Change: Civil Rights for All Ages
- Justice and Jazz: Moving to Commitment as Improvisation (Ethical Eating)
- The Climate Change Challenge to Faithful Investing
- Evening Worship followed by Public Witness: "Where Is Our Energy? Witness for Earth, Our Communities, and Our Future," both featuring Wendell Berry and Tim DeChristopher
- UUMFE Annual meeting and screening *Bidder 70*



Promoting UUMFE's screening of Bidder 70 at the Public Witness: Nancy King Smith, Ann May, Cindy Davidson, and Ellen McClaran.

Friday

- Cheap Eats. Just Eats.
- Our Covenant with Gaia: Networking With UUs

Saturday

- A Theology of Eco-Justice: Appalachia and Beyond (UUMFE workshop)
- Our Covenant with Gaia: Networking with Partners

Sunday

- Sunday Morning Worship: "Tasting the Wine of Astonishment," Rev. Dr. William Schultz; special collection raised \$33,958 for Kentucky Interfaith Power and Light
- Delegates approve an Action of Immediate Witness calling for congregational discussion about divesting from the fossil fuel industry

Comprehensive coverage of GA can be found online. For a summary, check out the UU World blogs at <http://blogs.uuworld.org/ga/category/ga13/>: the Fossil Fuel Divestment AIW and Sunday Worship, page 1; The Climate Challenge to Faithful Investing, Public Witness/clean energy rally, link to Flickr photostream, page 2; and EJ bus tour, page 3. Watch video of the Worship and Public witness (Plenary III) debate on divestment AIW (Plenary IX); and Sunday Worship at <http://www.uua.org/ga/2013/>. We are in the process of posting additional GA coverage on the UUMFE website.

UUMFE's booth was a hit this year and we had many conversations with enthusiastic supporters. We look forward to seeing many of you in Providence next year. Stop by and talk to us about how we can assist you and your congregation on your environmental justice journey. ♦



UMFE booth in exhibit hall: (left to right) Irene Keim, Ellen McClaran, Sandy Kurtz, Nancy King Smith, Cindy Davidson, and Bob Keim

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An Eventful Summer for UU Young Adults for Climate Justice

Curtis Murphy, UUMFE's UUYACJ Intern



Under Jennifer Nordstrom's direction, UUMFE's Young Adult Network sponsored a workshop, "Building a Young Adult Environmental Justice Network," at General Assembly 2013 in Louisville, KY this past June. The fifty attendees of all ages heard from several young adult activists, including Jennifer, Elizabeth Mount, Sarah Caine, and Tim DeChristopher. Rev. Sonya Sukulski, former director of the "SALT" program ("Spiritual Activist Leadership Training") in CA shared best practices for empowering UU justice leaders. Young Adults also participated in an environmental justice bus tour of Louisville, which we organized.

Another summer highlight was OPUS, the continental gathering of UU Young Adults, which took place August 7-11 this year at Unicamp near Toronto, Ontario, with the theme "Fragile Strands, Strong Web." Jennifer served as Social Justice Coordinator for the conference, and she and I worked together to facilitate a smooth transition of leadership for the Network. The schedule featured a full day of environmental justice workshops, including Campaign Organizing 101, and education around the Keystone XL pipeline. Elizabeth Mount also led us in an exploration of techniques for direct action, and training in how to facilitate effective meetings.

We are very grateful to Jennifer, whose hard work and dedication helped get this network off the ground over the course of the past year.

Labor Day weekend was the annual Young Adult Camp, held at Camp DeBenneville Pines in the Pacific Southwest District. A group of twelve young adults participated in a two-session stream entitled "Place and Possibility: Doing Climate Justice as UUs." We traced the origins of the fossil fuels used to heat Camp DeBenneville and reflected on how this places us in relationship with other communities and with the web of life as a whole. In the second

session we explored possibilities for action, including action to oppose fracking in California's Monterrey Shale formation, as well as fossil fuel divestment.

Once again, UU Young Adults have proved themselves to be passionate and engaged, with a deep sense of individual and collective responsibility toward some of the most pressing issues of our time.

Looking ahead, we are forming a UU contingent for Powershift in Pittsburgh October 18-21, where over 10 000 young people from across the country will gather to dream, organize and strengthen the movement for a just and sustainable future. In addition, we are planning the first continent-wide teleconference of UU Young

Adults for Climate Justice for later this fall. If you are,



or know, a UU Young Adult who may be interested in attending Powershift, or participating in any of the Network's other activities, don't hesitate to get in touch, at uuyacj@gmail.com. We are only just getting started, so stay tuned! ♦

Fossil Fuel Divestment Update: GA and Beyond

Cindy Davidson, UUMFE Board member

Climate activists in the UU denomination and others continue to promote the divestment of fossil fuel stocks from institutional and personal investment portfolios as an urgent and sound strategy to address climate change. Supporting and dissenting views surfaced in May's "Divestment Forum" held in Boston and in published position statements in the Summer 2013 issue of UU World by Rev. Fred Small and UUA Treasurer Tim Brennan.

The topic continues to generate much discussion, including amongst panelists, organizers, and delegates who attended General Assembly 2013 this past June.

The Socially Responsible Investing Committee held a workshop, "The Climate Change Challenge to Faithful Investing." On behalf of UUMFE, I was honored to share welcoming remarks and set the tone for civil discourse on what can



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sometimes be a hotly debated issue. Committee chair Rev. Glenn Farley (now former chair), Rev. Jim Sherblom, and UUA treasurer Tim Brennan then shared philosophical viewpoints of the value of shareholder engagement/advocacy, details of recent accomplishments, and concerns about divesting the Common Endowment Fund. Conversations in response to questions from the floor rounded out the session.

Speakers Wendell Berry and Tim De Christopher, in their addresses preceding the GA's Public Witness Event (a clean-energy rally), both endorsed the call for divestment in their own words. Berry urged listeners to "understand that fossil-fuel energy must be replaced not just by clean energy, but also by less energy." He admonishes us to consider that "If we're not in favor of limiting the use of energy, starting with our own use of it, we're not serious. If we're not in favor of rationing energy, starting with the fossil fuels, we're not serious. If we have the money and we're not willing to pay \$2 to keep the polluting industries from getting \$1, we're not serious. If, on the contrary, we become determined to keep the industries of poison, explosion, and fire from determining our lives and the world's fate, then we will steadfastly reduce our dependence on them and our payments of money to them. We will cease to invest our health, our lives, and our money in them."

Meanwhile, an Action of Immediate Witness (AIW) titled "Consider Divestment from the Fossil Fuel Industry" was one of three proposed AIWs admitted to the plenary floor. The proposed AIW, crafted under the leadership of Terry Wiggins, was then



From Occupy.com

amended during a mini-assembly, and later presented for vote, where it was passed nearly unanimously. The AIW calls upon delegates "to begin a denomination-wide conversation within their congregations about divesting from fossil fuels or exercising shareholder influence" and suggests actions for discussion. (See also: "UUs Push for Fossil Fuel Divestment," Fall 2013 *UU World*,

page 36, or a longer version, with links, at <http://www.uuworld.org/news/articles/286876.shtml>.)

Looking ahead, UU divestment proponents are organizing to present a Business Resolution at GA 2014 to divest the UUA's Common Endowment Fund, with an allowance for minimal direct holdings for shareholder advocacy purposes and increased investments supporting a transition to clean energy. The proposed resolution is in the final draft stage, and organizers will be collecting required signatures this fall to meet the filing deadline. For more information, join the uudivestment yahoo group by emailing Wes Ernsberger (wesernsberger@gmail.com) or Nick Laiacona (nicklaiacona@gmail.com).

UUMFE has assembled resources on socially responsible investing and the fossil fuel divestment campaign, available on our website. We encourage readers and congregations to make use of them to guide your discussions and actions in these important areas this coming year.

A version of this article is included on our Fossil Fuel Divestment and Socially Responsible Investing page and includes many links to documents and actions noted above – go to <http://uuministryforearth.org/fossil-fuel-divestment-and-socially-responsible-investing>.

As always, please help us offer the best resources possible by contributing resources you might have developed or found useful, your best practices and success stories. If you have a specific request, please let us know! Contact me at cynthiadavidson@verizon.net. ♦

Program Ideas for the Church Year

Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board member

As the new church year kicks into high gear, many congregations are searching for program ideas for their Religious Education offerings as well as Green Sanctuary projects and other activities. UUMFE can help! We have many resources available for download from our website as well as links to resources from other organizations, so go online and take a look around the site. Following are



From Green America.org

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some familiar favorites as well as new initiatives.

Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI): For many years congregations have offered the organization's wonderful discussion courses. They are so popular that we have been told that UUs are NWEI's best customers.



This is a win-win for us, since we receive a percentage of sales when you choose UU Ministry for Earth in the "affiliation" section of the order form at checkout. NWEI currently offers nine courses, all of which touch on environmental justice issues. Learn about each one at <http://nwei.org>.

Each fall NWEI invites its community to participate in the annual Eco-Challenge from Oct. 1-15. Sound interesting? Go to <http://www.ecochallenge.org/>.

Environmental Film Library: Whether you already offer an environmental film series, or would like to, or just want one great film to show at a special event, this is the resource for you. Created as we were developing the 2013 Earth Day materials, we selected the best films in several categories and added links to reviews, trailers, interviews, and more to help you find the perfect films. This is a work in process and we will be adding to the library as we work on the Earth Day resources for 2014. Find the film library at <http://uuministryforearth.org/Environmental-Film-Library>. E-mail the office if you have suggestions for new film listings: office@uuministryforearth.org.

Our Place in the Web of Life: Developed by Pamela Sparr and Dr. Mark Hicks, UUMFE debuted this five-session introduction to environmental justice curriculum in Spring 2012. Since then, many congregations have used the curriculum to discover what environmental justice means to their particular community and within their church. Green Sanctuary candidates have



found the curriculum to be particularly useful. Watch for fall webinars in our e-News and learn more about the curriculum at <http://uuministryforearth.org/EJ-Curriculum>.

Bidder 70 Film: We continue to offer congregations a reduced rate on the screening fee to show this film chronicling Tim DeChristopher journey as a climate

activist. See the article on page 3 of this newsletter and learn more at <http://uuministryforearth.org/Bidder-70-Film>.

Green Sanctuary Resources: As you know, UUMFE conceived, nurtured, and managed the Green Sanctuary program for many years before gifting it to the UUA in 2008. We developed resources for both adults and children to support Green Sanctuary accreditation candidates and still offer them in print and CD form.



Ann May, a former board member, offered to update all the resources and convert them to a format that can be downloaded directly from our website. We hope to have everything posted in October. In the meantime, check out the descriptions of the resources at <http://uuministryforearth.org/Resources-Publications>.

Earth Day Resources: Not just for Earth Day! Over the past few years, we have developed in-depth education and action materials that connect the dots between environment and justice in several areas: ethical eating (2010); water justice (2011); immigration (2013); and sustainable communities, focusing on several sub-topics (2013). The 2014 Earth Day resources will continue the sustainable communities theme – see article below. You will find ideas for action projects throughout these materials as well as in the annual table of events that we create when congregations register. Begin your exploration on our Take Action main page at http://uuministryforearth.org/take_action. ♦

Countdown to Earth Day: Spring Equinox through Earth Day 2014 (March 20th - April 22nd)

Cindy Davidson, UUMFE Board member

Keep tuned for the release of selected resources and action suggestions to consider for the period leading up to Earth Day 2014. This year we'll be looking at disaster preparedness for religious communities, energy issues and a just transition to clean energy, and issues of resource depletion, waste, and consumption. ♦



Meditation While Weeding

Laura Emerson, a UU living in the Alaskan Bush – learn more about her life at alaskauu1.blogspot.com

Many harried people I know seem to answer requests with a breathless, "I can't; I have too much to do." But have you ever noticed that the most productive people you know are often both busier and calmer? I think this is because they are often visionary – they can picture a project completed – and, in an organized, deliberate manner, they get things done.

By contrast, the immensity of an endeavor may overwhelm the first group. They don't know where to start so they don't, or they start and stop lots of big projects. I often fit in this group. The second population is more dogged. They aren't deterred by the immensity of an effort. So they start. They slog on through, like untwisting and unknitting a ball of twine. My husband is in this latter category. Some of his long-term projects have been so daunting to me that I would never have embarked on them. Clearing land and constructing a solar/wind/internet power tower 42 miles from the near-

est road? No way! Being able to assemble the construction materials and skilled contractors to build a log cabin and outbuildings I'd actually want to live in? Show me! Starting a business I never thought would work? Twelve years later, still going strong. I thought about the difference between us the other day as I stared in dismay at all the weeds in my yard. (We don't really have a lawn. We just have short weeds.) I realized that they would only spread and get worse; that they bothered me, and certainly nobody else would address them. So finally, one lovely afternoon, I sat down on a soft patch of ground in one section thick with dandelions. I didn't say that I would weed all of our acreage or even that I would start something big. I just said, "I'll weed this area."

The chickens joined me and we spent a pleasant hour in the sun, digging in the dirt, with a light breeze keeping the mosquitoes at bay. It was satisfying to shove the tool into the ground next to the leaves, wrench it around in a conical fashion to cut the strong tap root as well as the skinny side roots and yank up the whole ball. One out. Two. Three.

Timing was good, I hoped, because the adjacent grass was setting seeds, and maybe this little patch of exposed soil would be a receptive spot. Perhaps, foot-by-foot, a grassy lawn could spread. My pile of dandelion leaves and roots piled up high enough that I rolled over the wheelbarrow. "I'll just do a few more," I thought. Another hour passed and I was surprised to find the wheelbarrow almost full. I stood up and surveyed my work, pleased with the result. "That's wasn't so bad," I realized.

Since our rabbits LOVE dandelions (even more than fireweed, fern, and raspberry leaves), I delivered an enormous banquet that they demolished by the next morning. It was fun to watch them chow down on something I had labored to eradicate. One's trash is another's treasure.

That night, it rained, softening the earth. "Ah, I thought. Weeding will be even easier. I'll do a little more."

After the yard dried up, the chickens and I moved onto an adjacent patch in which the broad leaves of dandelions, dock, and plantains deterred grass seeds from finding a future home. In such a bit-by-bit fashion, I scooted around on my butt in the front yard, near the flower garden, the rock lined fire pit, the front porch and dock, stabbing, circling, yanking, and tossing one whorl of leaves after another. These periods each afternoon were so pleasant that I came to look forward to them.

"Come on ladies," I'd call to the hens, "Let's go weeding." ♦



Laura's hand-built cabin.

Advocating For the Rights of Nature

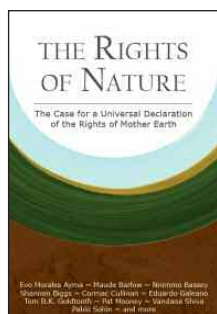
Frey Leigh, *Rights of Nature Group*, part of the *Social Justice Ministry at First Unitarian Church of San Jose, CA*

Note: During an outreach telephone call this summer, UUMFE learned of this inspiring project and requested a description. If you would like more details, contact Frey through the church, fucs@sanjoseuu.org – he'll be happy to help. For an overview and extensive resources, see Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature at <http://therightsofnature.org/>.

We were introduced to the concept of the Rights of Nature when two elders in our church called our attention to the book *The Rights of Nature: the Case for a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth*. An interested group of us read and discussed the book. Our early goals became educating other church members and writing our own resolution to present for a congregational vote. The Universal Declaration itself, which was passed at the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in 2010, was too long and detailed for our purpose of a relatively simple statement of moral conscience.

About five to eight core members of our Rights of Nature Group worked on education within the church: contributing to the church's Earth Day service in April 2012; doing a worship service on the Rights of Nature in Sept. 2012; having speakers from Global Exchange and Earth Law Center; presenting a workshop at our church-wide retreat; writing an article for the newsletter; and having discussion meetings.

Some of the core members worked on writing our own Statement on the Rights of Nature. Being Unitarian Universalists, this was perhaps the most difficult part – getting enough agreement to support a final version. Our Statement on the Rights of Nature was approved by a strong majority vote at a congregational meeting on April 7, 2013 (see Statement below). We proudly handed out copies of the Statement at our Rights of Nature table at the



Pacific Western Regional Assembly in San Jose, CA later that month. Our next step is yet to be determined.

Statement on the Rights of Nature

Inspired by the "Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth" which was adopted by the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth held in Bolivia in 2010.

Long ago many indigenous peoples recognized that they shared a common existence with the whole of nature, and today they are among the leaders of a Rights of Mother Earth movement. As Unitarian Universalists, we also affirm our respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part (our Seventh Principle). A Rights of Nature worldview calls us to unite our First and Seventh Principles: We covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every being, including the interdependent web of all existence.

Currently our governments and corporations treat nature, our natural environment and its resources, as property that can be exploited for profit. This is a major factor in producing overconsumption, pollution, and critical environmental imbalances such as accelerated climate change. A fundamental shift is required in our way of thinking in order to transform our economic and legal systems to acknowledge the Rights of Nature to exist and to thrive. This change is already taking place in many local communities across the United States and even some nations. Communities have written rights for natural entities and ecosystems into their laws, while giving people the legal standing to represent nature.

We, the members of the First Unitarian Church of San Jose, in agreement with our Principles, affirm that Nature, or Mother Earth, which encompasses all

natural beings and their interconnected natural systems, has inherent worth and inherent rights to exist, maintain its integrity and perform its natural vital functions. All beings (species, natural communities and ecosystems) have the right to healthy water, land and air. The rights of each being, including humans, are limited by the rights of other beings. Conflicts between their rights are to be resolved in a way that maintains the



News & Commentary From Members and Congregations

integrity, balance and health of Mother Earth as a whole.

To bring about this major change in our relationship with the natural world, we agree to support and promote the Rights of Nature movement in the larger Unitarian Universalist community and in communities where we live. ♦

Beyond Changing Light Bulbs

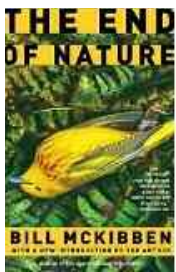
Rev. Fred Small, Senior Minister, First Parish in Cambridge, Unitarian Universalist

Note: during GA in Louisville, UUMFE Board members had a conversation with Fred about his impatience with personal responsibility as a strategy for change. He sent this reflection as a follow-up.

Changing a light bulb is good. Changing a senator is better.

As a minister, I believe in the power of spiritual practice. I practice voluntary simplicity because it changes me, not because I expect it to change the world. Indeed, if a mass voluntary simplicity movement actually succeeded in reducing demand for resources, their price would drop and less enlightened consumers and manufacturers would gladly snap them up.

50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth was published in 1989, the same year as *The End of Nature*. In the quarter-century since, if environmentally concerned Americans had spent as much time



organizing and lobbying for an end to fossil fuels as they spent calculating their personal carbon footprint, researching the life-cycle costs of every product they purchased, studying the labels of consumer goods, and rinsing plastic food-storage bags for reuse, I suspect we'd have made a lot more

progress against global warming.

No matter how much we exhort people to reduce, reuse, and recycle, not much will change until we get accurate price signals at the cash register and gas pump. And that requires political action. By placing the burden and responsibility on the individual, "Reduce, reuse, recycle" diverts attention from

corporations and governments – which suits them just fine.

So I walk and bicycle and take the train whenever I can, but I also drive and fly when I need to. Every time I buy gas for my car, I note what I paid and send the same amount to 350.org. (It's my personal carbon tax.) I'm using a computer to write this message even though I haven't examined whether a handwritten letter might or might not use less energy.

I don't feel guilty because I live in the society I do. I just work like hell to change it. ♦



It's all in the family. In the center of the photo is 91-year-old Ellen Small, Rev. Fred Small's mother. The photo was taken at 350.org's very successful Summer Heat action in Richmond, CA. So, no excuses – you're never too old to protest for your values! See coverage of Summer Heat actions around the country on our website home page, <http://uuministryforearth.org> and great photographs on page 12 of this newsletter.

Are We Smarter Than Frogs?

Rev. Earl Koteen, Consulting Minister for Climate Justice, UU Legislative Ministry California, and UUMFE Board member

Remember Al Gore's old metaphor for humanity and climate change? It was the assertion that if you dropped a frog in hot water, it would jump right out. However, if you started with the water at a comfortable temperature and gradually increased the temperature, you could boil the frog because s/he wouldn't sense the rising temperature.

News & Commentary From Members and Congregations

I first heard Al share this at a conference in the 1980s back when he was still Senator Gore.

Like most frogs, I hadn't noticed the temperature rise sufficiently to hop out of the water. It wouldn't be until 2009 that a much more frightening presentation by Dan Miller, *A REALLY Inconvenient Truth*, (http://fora.tv/2009/08/18/A_REALLY_Inconvenient_Truth_Dan_Miller – slides and other material



available on the web if you Google the title), would wake me up to the fact that even if we were to turn off the oven, the temperature would continue to rise.

As pointed out in "Odds of Cooking the Grandkids" (<http://earlywarn.blogspot.com/2010/05/odds-of-cooking-grandkids.html>), one weakness in the metaphor is that we, for the most part, aren't the frogs. Although we've already seen death and suffering from climate change, the risk is much greater in the future than it is now. It's as if several generations of frogs are all in the same pot, and it's the youngest that are most at risk.

I know not all UUs are over-educated, upper middle class, white, middle-aged or elderly, but we are predominately so. At this point many of us and our loved ones are protected by our privilege from the suffering already seen in disadvantaged communities. So we are cooking our grandchildren and our neighbors' children.

Now there is a well-known TV show that asks *Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?* Of course, the real question of the show is, are you more knowledgeable than a 5th grader, or have you already forgotten what they've learned. One of the pleasures of aging is watching my steel trap mind rust out. So I doubt that I'd want to be on the show.

But it's also sad to admit that we (humanity) are not smarter than frogs. I recently read that it turns out that Gore was wrong – you can't boil a frog by gradually increasing the temperature in a pot. The frog jumps out long before the boiling point.

Note that I didn't say you weren't smarter than a frog or I'm not smarter than a frog, but we, collectively, don't have the sense that the Goddess gave a frog. How do I know this? Because we continue to

increase the level of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere even though we know that our progeny and we are likely to be paying for this folly for a thousand years.

I've heard all the excuse for not being a climate/ environmental justice activist. I've even invented a few of my own. So be sure to call me if you need one.

Also, I've learned that trying to guilt people into activism isn't effective. Rather I will ask you what does it mean to stand on the side of love, to live your UU faith? All I ask is that you open your eyes and your heart; your mind and your body will follow.

You have skills. You have talent. You can make a difference. Need help in figuring out how? UUMFE stands ready. Drop us a line or teach our environmental justice (EJ) course at your congregation. Look for EJ allies in your community.

And now the fun part!

The welcome mat is out. The number and types of allies is growing every day. We are building a mass movement. Everyday more people and organizations are waking up to what is going on around us.

And these are good people. They share UU values. Some even become UUs or rediscover UUism through this work. There is so much joy, so much community, and you will be doing the Goddess's work. ♦



Last February, UUMFE's Office Manager Sabrina Louise Harle (in red skirt) marched through downtown Portland during the One Billion Rising event – the biggest mass global action to end violence against women and girls in the history of humankind.



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Empower UUs: Support Development of Additional UUMFE Services

Your donation to UU Ministry for Earth will enable further development of the services offered for you, your congregations, and districts/regions to fulfill your vision of Earth celebration and justice. UUMFE is a 501c3, non-profit organization. Our Vision is of "... a world in which all people make reverence, gratitude, and care for the living Earth central to their lives."

For more information, visit the UUMFE website at uuministryforearth.org and click on the blue DONATE button.