GA Delegates Choose “The Threat of Global Warming” as New Study Action

by Rev. Katherine Jesch, Dir. Environmental Ministry

By now most of you are aware that the Study Action Issue (SAI) selected by General Assembly delegates for congregations to explore for the next two years is the Threat of Global Warming. This was not the first environmental issue to be adopted by the Assembly. In fact, over the years nearly two dozen resolutions and statements have been adopted at past GAs addressing issues of natural resources, pollution, population, energy, economic and environmental justice, the Earth Charter, and the environment in general. All have encouraged individual UUs and congregations to inform themselves and study the issues, and a few have even suggested that congregations and individuals consider taking some actions to influence public policies. But none of these previous SAIs has ever resulted in significant changes in the way we Unitarian Universalists behave, either individually or as a religious institution.

There is ample scientific evidence that human activities have influenced, if not actually triggered, the changes in our climate we are witnessing today. Scientists have described likely impacts from the changes, including erratic weather, severe droughts, floods, or heat waves, rising sea level, and spread of various diseases into areas formerly unaffected. Given these dire impacts, it’s easy to see some of the implications for justice that will (and are already) resulting from the changes. With this issue, our study may lead us to change the way we live our lives and practice our faith. It is also possible that the resulting “statement of conscience” may direct the UUA to change the way it, or more correctly, we do business. Are we ready for that?

The study-action approach now defined by the Commission on Social Witness focuses attention on the issue and provides study materials to assist congregations in their study. The SPP is currently preparing the study materials which will be available on the UUA website in early October, and mailed to congregations in late October. Watch the SPP website for additional resources and links.

SPP sees this SAI as a mandate to lead Unitarian Universalists into the rich and demanding process of examining our faith for direction in our lives. How do our principles – all of them, but especially the seventh one – inform the way we live, and our obligation to respond to this challenge?

In his speech to the Assembly advocating adopting this issue, Rev. Gary Kowalski offered the image of the passengers rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic after it hit the iceberg, suggesting that we’ve been doing just that for decades. Will we continue business as usual, or are we going to figure out how to launch the life rafts? Perhaps in this case, we’d better repair the hole, since the life rafts don’t have another planet to (cont. page 2)
take us to - at least that we know of yet. Tony Newey, the initiator of this SAI, reminds us that “our seventh principle commits us to protect the environment, but we Unitarians have been largely silent on this other issue while others [denominations] have been speaking out.” And Rev. Fred Small, warned us that “our descendants will ask us painful questions; the same terrible questions asked of those complacent in times of slavery and genocide. How could you not have known? Knowing what you knew, how could you have failed to act? Let us answer as Unitarian Universalists, ‘We knew, and we acted!’”

Yes, let us act. Those of you receiving this newsletter are among the most passionate about this issue in your congregations. We hope you’ll be among the leaders, helping your congregations to learn more about global warming and it’s potentially devastating implications, and working to be part of the solution instead of just helping to rearrange the deck chairs. And we hope that you will help SPP rise to the challenge of supporting the work of all UUs as we use this process to promote the changes we’ve been talking about for many years.

Get a Headstart on the New SAI with YES! Magazine Offer

The fall issue of Yes! Magazine focuses entirely on global warming. It includes articles by Hunter Lovins, David Orr, and many others; and comes with a downloadable discussion guide. Through the generosity of the folks at Yes! (www.yesmagazine.org) we are pleased to send the first 200 UUs who join or renew at $50 or more a copy of this informative issue. Don’t miss out! Check the box on the membership form on the back page of this newsletter today!

2004 General Assembly Better Than Ever!

The Seventh Principle Project continued to be a strong presence at GA this year. Our booth, ably designed by Board member Sharon Roberts, was visually appealing and offered attendees a glimpse of the work of four Green Sanctuary congregations. The displays highlighted the wide range of environmental projects undertaken by these congregations including the newly completed LEED-certified R.E. building of Emerson Unitarian Church of Houston Texas, the chalice created from recycled materials in the sanctuary of the Granite Peak UU Congregation of Prescott, Arizona, the native plant garden planted by the UU Church of Elgin, Illinois, and interfaith environmental programming sponsored in part by the UU Church of Spokane Washington. The booth was extremely busy; thanks to the two new sell-out resources that SPP has developed in the last year which were featured in two of our workshops at GA. Our thanks go to Board member Lara Hoke who contributed most of her time at GA to “booth-sitting”, thus insuring that each visitor was engaged in an informed and enthusiastic way.

Our programming this year was dynamic and clearly resonated with those attending. Two “Earth Honoring Worship that Reconnects” programs debuted the new worship resource of that name by leading a total of 160 attendees through “annotated” worship services that featured materials from the new resource. The chalice table was draped with a beautiful mandala depicting the universe story. Contributors to the participated in the service which some attendees commented was the most meaningful service they have attended at GA. Each attendee was given a small polished stone as they entered, and Rev. Margaret Keip offered a beautiful meditation on a stone. SPP President Claudia Kern offered a doxology entitled, “The Great Gathering to accompany the mandala, while Board member Lyn Cameron Stangland theatrically used an apple to graphically demonstrate the limits of Earth’s resources. Rev. Laura Horton, intern minister Olympia Brown UU Church, Racine WI, captivated the audience with her sermon, “The Earth, Our Mother, and the entire service was knit together with joyful singing led by the incomparable Rev. Fred Small. SPP’s own Rev. Katherine Jesch provided an inspiring commentary which invited attendees to begin to envision how they could use the new worship resource to bring Earth-honoring worship into their own congregations.

“Nurturing Our Children’s Spirit-Nature Connections” drew a total audience of 150 in two workshops led by Sparrow Alden, Director of Religious Education for the UUCongr of the Upper Valley in Norwich Vermont. The workshop previewed the new cross-referenced created index of existing RE curriculum created by Sparrow and inspired the audience with her new pre-school curriculum “Animal Helpers”. Next, Charlene Brotman introduced her new book, “The Kids Book of Awesome Stuff” with a visual tour through the book, and the workshop concluded with an audience participation “event” orchestrated by Pat Hoertdoerfer which created a living interdependent web. Attendees left inspired to offer their own contributions to this growing resource and filled with ideas for making our connections with the natural world part of their religious education programs.

The above programs may be ordered online on tape or CD at http://www.softconference.com/240626.

The Seventh Principle Project annual meeting was attended by 60 members and honored four new Green Sanctuary congregations. Retiring board member Lyn Cameron Stangland of Hopedale, MA was presented with
a certificate in recognition of her twelve years of service to the organization, and Rick North of Portland, OR was thanked for his two years of service on the board. Karen Urbano from Anaheim Hills, CA and Ann May from Houston, TX were elected to the board (see their bios in this issue). A motion was made from the floor by Rev. Fred Small and passed by the membership requesting that the Board take under serious consideration changing the name of our organization to more clearly communicate our mission. The Board is responding to this vote and will report in our next newsletter.

Our keynote address this year, “Women, Religion, Ecology, and Globalization” by Rosemary Radford Ruether is described below.

Now the work begins for next year in Ft. Worth, Texas!

**Dr. Rosemary Radford Ruff presents SPP Keynote Address at GA**

In Long Beach, the Seventh Principle Project hosted a presentation by Dr. Rosemary Radford Ruether. Hosting speakers of this caliber is part of SPP’s mission, and only one of the reasons we need the financial support of UUs. However generous speakers are it is rarely possible to bring them to GA for nothing. Dr. Ruether is Carpenter Professor of Feminist Theology at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. She has written many books, including a number of studies of the relationship between oppression of women and domination over the environment. Dr. Ruether is currently working on a book on globalization and women’s movements that is scheduled for publication in November, 2004.

At GA, she gave us a preview of the book, beginning with an analysis of the spread of globalization and how it has affected people throughout the world, especially the “two-thirds world” in which many people are forced to struggle to make a subsistence existence. She then went on to discuss various feminist movements throughout the Two-Thirds World and how they have confronted threats to their livelihood from globalization. Finally, she gave us a discussion of the various ways that faith communities have played a role in supporting feminist movements and in opposing some of the worst effects of globalization.

When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.

-Audre Lorde
resources and ministry as together we commit to moving over the next two years to a new level of personal and institutional action, to a place of renewed possibilities for a sustainable, just future on a living Earth.

Claudia Kern, Chair

**SPP Poised To Soar, Members Needed!**

As we go to press, current membership renewals and new memberships are lagging seriously behind. A vibrant organization is created by a core of people who affirm the vision and the work of the organization by lending both their name and their financial support. Without your ongoing membership to count upon, we literally have no organization. Without a strong membership we cannot attract potential funders. Without strong membership, we cannot answer UUA President Bill Sinkford’s queries about the level of grassroots support, which he believes vital if the UUA is to seriously engage UUs in considering our relationship to and our responsibility for Earth.

Without your generous membership support today we cannot go forward with the following work that is currently underway:

- taking exclusive responsibility for developing the content of the resource guide for the new study/action guide on global warming
- writing grant proposals to bring major speakers to GA next year
- upgrading content and service on our website to include a new, bi-monthly columns; resources for Global Warming SAI; online membership, donation and purchase capability; and a search engine
- creating a visionary plan for an environmentally themed GA in 2006 to be presented to the GA Planning Committee in September
- preparing workshop programs to reach UUs locally in three District Conferences this Fall; and with funding, more in the Winter and Spring
- continuing to expand new worship and RE resources
- starting initial work on green building resource
- improving membership database management to provide better membership service, better communication, and make more time available for program development
- nurturing GS congregations and candidate congregations, recruiting new candidates
- increasing our visibility through articles and advertising in UU World to build membership and awareness

We are poised on the threshold of several great opportunities which can, almost certainly, grow this organization into a powerful and effective voice within the UUA at a time when our world is desperate for the message inherent in our seventh principle. But that will happen only if we seize the possibilities. Only if we understand that we must stand and be counted as UUs who are passionate about trying to shape a relevant religious response to the environmental challenges of our Earth home. Only if you decide it is important enough to you to offer your name, your money, and, hopefully, some small amount of your time.

Please, renew your membership today and strengthen your commitment by asking five people you know to support our work as well. We are all in this together, a collective of individuals with the common intention of creating an institutional and a personal response to our most deeply felt concerns and passion for Earth.

**New SPP Resources Available Now!**

Nurturing the Spirit-Nature Connection: A Seventh Principle Project Religious Education Resource has sold out since GA, but has been reprinted and may be ordered now. Contents include:

- A curriculum map of UU RE curricula to locate age-appropriate lesson on the following themes: The Interdependent Web, Cycles, Creation and Creativity, Earth Spirit, the Elements, Fauna, Flora, Trees – Very Special Flora, and Sustainability.
- An annotated bibliography of materials
- A supplement to one section Hands-On Nature (Lingelbach and Purcell, Vermont Institute of Science)
- A children’s parable by Connie Barlow
- A sample intergenerational service
- A curriculum for teaching children about the story of the universe by Leslie Klein Pilder
- A curriculum from the Interfaith Coalition on Energy called “Energy Activities for Faithful Youth”

Earth-Honoring Worship: A Seventh Principle Worship Resource sold out at GA, but is also now available by mail order. This Resource of over 200 pages includes the following:

- Opening and Closing Words, Chalice lighting
Green Sanctuary
Program Update

Our third annual Green Sanctuary celebration/meeting at General Assembly proudly recognized four new congregations as this year. Beverly Unitarian Church in Chicago, Bradford Community Church UU in Kenosha, Wisconsin, Unitarian Universalist Church West in Brookfield, Wisconsin, and the UU Fellowship of Sussex County in Newton, New Jersey, each received certificates at our Annual Meeting. A fifth congregation, Bull Run Unitarian Universalists in Manassas, Virginia, has since been accredited and will receive their certificate at a congregational event in January. Congratulations to each for their accomplishments!

I returned from GA to a mountain of GS inquiries, correspondence, requests for books, and four new GS candidate applications. Apparently, most GS congregational leaders didn’t go to GA, instead they were hard at work while we were in Long Beach having a good time! At least three more congregations have already indicated they expect to complete their applications for accreditation in the next couple of months.

We currently have 37 Green Sanctuary candidates formally enrolled in the program, including four added this summer. The preliminary work they’ve done to complete an environmental audit and prepare an action plan demonstrates their deeper understanding of how our congregational life relates to environmental problems. I believe the restructuring of the program we did last year is helping to make these connections more clear. However, the inquiries I’m receiving about getting started suggest some areas where we need to increase the support during this next year. For example, the environmental audit seems to be an area of uncertainty for many, so we’ll try to add suggestions and perhaps a suggested format to the SPP website this fall.

In August I spent ten days in retreat at Land of Medicine Buddha, a beautiful Tibetan center in the Santa Cruz Mountains of California. Joanna Macy led this intensive on The Work that Reconnects for 28 participants from the U.S. and around the world. Our purpose was to “develop inner resources for the essential revolution of our time: the Great Turning to a life-sustaining society.”

Retreats are always important for resting and taking

Both resources may be ordered from the Seventh Principle Project, PO Box 1523, Arlington, VA, 22210.

Price: Nurturing the Spirit-Nature Connection, $15
        Earth-Honoring Worship, $25
        Shipping is $4 for the first copy and $2 for each additional one.

Work has already begun on adding to both resources. If you would like to contribute to the next volumes, please email resource project coordinator, Karen Urbano, karenjean@earthlink.net or write to SPP at the address above.

Meet the New SPP Board Members!

As mentioned earlier, two new members were elected to the Board at GA and have pledged to lend their hard work and talents to our efforts.

Karen Urbano has been a UU for over 30 years and a member of Orange Coast UU Church in Costa Mesa, CA since 1999. She has worked as a bilingual (English/Spanish) legal advocate with Legal Services/Legal Aid both in New Jersey and California, as well as a court advocate for battered women. She now teaches English as a second language in Santa Ana, CA, working mainly with the Latino community. She has been interested in the simplicity/sustainability movements for many years and has been facilitating voluntary simplicity circles since 1999. It was a natural step from taking personal actions to more global ones for Karen and now she is spearheading the Green Sanctuary program at her congregation in CA. She is happy to be able to lend a hand by joining the Seventh Principle Board and hopes she can do it justice.

Ann May is also a long-time UU and has attended UU congregations in Colorado and New York through the years. She and her husband have been members of Emerson Unitarian Church in Houston since 1992. She too has been active in her church’s environmental programming. Emerson received its Green Sanctuary certification in 2003. Ann’s background is in biology and microbiology. Since the late 1980s she has worked as a technical editor for companies involved in environmental studies, engineering and construction and computers. Ann works in the community presenting programs on air pollution in schools for Mothers for Clean Air, a partner organization with Emerson Unitarian Church.
stock of what’s next, but I found this experience to be transforming as well as renewing. Those of you who are familiar with Joanna’s work know that she approaches the healing of our world from a deep ecology perspective. She helps seekers find ways to respond to the fear and despair so many of us feel these days, and to re-energize our capacity to engage in the work that must be done. I returned from this experience refreshed and recommitted to the enormous task we face, and ready to engage with others to find ways to sustain the momentum we’ve already established for this work.

I really enjoy visiting with folks around the country to share different aspects of “greening” our congregations. This summer I spent a week at Ferry Beach on the coast of Maine as the theme speaker for the Clara Barton District family camp, sharing perspectives on creation stories, spiritual practice, and theology, as well as more specific explorations of the Green Sanctuary program. In September, I’ll speak at an evening program of the environmental task force of the Hampshire Interfaith Council that’s co-sponsored by the Unitarian Societies of Amherst and Northampton and Florence. I’m also set to offer a program for the leadership of the Council of UU Camps and Conferences for their annual retreat during the first week in October. In late October, I’ll facilitate a Green Sanctuary workshop at the New Hampshire/Vermont District Assembly where fellow SPP Board members Claudia Kern and Steve Maier will conduct a workshop on global warming. Other SPP Board members are providing programs at District conferences in the Clara Barton and Thomas Jefferson Districts this fall.

Winter and Spring promise to be busy seasons as well. I am already collaborating with local congregations in several locations to design environmental programs, workshops, and retreats for clusters of congregations. If you are interested in scheduling such a program in your area, I encourage you to contact me to discuss opportunities. Please watch our website for details and these and other scheduled events.

Rev. Katherine Jesch
Director of Environmental Ministry

---

**Emerson Unitarian Church of Houston’s LEED RE Building Recognized in UU World Magazine.**

Once again a Green Sanctuary congregation has been recognized in UU World magazine. The new R.E. building of the Emerson Unitarian Church of Houston is an exciting new addition that boasts not only a exterior reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie-style buildings but also incorporates many energy efficient features. In addition, recycled materials were used throughout the building qualifying it for recognition as a LEED certified structure (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). Check out the wonderful pictures on page 19 in the September/October 2004 issue.

---

**Green Sanctuary Project Ideas**

A couple of newsletter issues back, we initiated a column of project ideas from various congregations that were either certified Green Sanctuaries or working towards certification. Now, perhaps we can’t all build a new LEED-certified building like Emerson Unitarian Church, but all of our Green Sanctuary candidates and certified Green Sanctuaries are doing great work that we want to highlight and share. Here are a couple of ideas submitted by other congregations as part of their Green Sanctuary work. Perhaps one of these would fill an empty niche in your developing action plan or kick start a new year of projects. Have a look and see what you find. And of course, we hope that you will continue to share your successful projects with us so we can pass them along to other congregations in future issues. If you have a project you’d like to share, please send the description to Sharon Roberts, SPP Newsletter Editor, email address: robersr@auburn.edu

**GET OFF JUNK MAIL CAMPAIGN**

Portland, Oregon
1st Unitarian Church
Barbara Ford
bislandview@aol.com

We collaborated with Portland’s Metro to help people get off junk mail lists, reducing the demand for paper and for trees being cut. Metro provides a kit that has pre-addressed postcards and a toll-free number to call. After sending in the post cards and making the call, the amount
There is a new incentive to check our website frequently. We have added a new feature page that will include monthly reflections by Rev. Katherine Jesch, Director of Environmental Ministry and by members of the Seventh Principle Project Board.

In addition, we will soon be adding a link to keep you informed and up to date on the new Global Warming Study/Action Issue.

If you haven’t already discovered it, you’ll also want to investigate our Green Sanctuary listserv, an e-mail network for connecting with other individuals and congregations who are working to make their personal and congregational activities more sustainable. You can share experiences for the Green Sanctuary Program, the Study Action Issue on global warming, and other environmental topics. To sign on, go to http://www.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/greensanctuary and follow the simple directions.

So, if you haven’t visited in awhile, click on http://www.uuaspp.org and see what’s new!

Get a Jump-Start on the SAI on Global Warming!

Many of the articles in this issue of the SPP newsletter have focused on the SAI on Global Warming and as mentioned, the Commission on Social Witness will soon have resources available on their website. However, this is a big issue and so, we encourage you to begin to learn more about it. Perhaps your congregation’s Green Sanctuary committee would like to initiate discussion of this issue through an adult RE class, discussion group or study circle. So, we’ve developed a list of resources to help you get started. The time is now and we must all become better informed and empowered. We can make a difference!

“Taking Action for Climate Change”, World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
www.biodiversity911.org

“Good Stuff: A Behind-the-scenes Guide to the Stuff We Buy”
http://www.worldwatch.org/pubs/goodstuff/

“Reduce Climate Change and Energy Use, a factsheet from the Physicians for Social Responsibility.” psmatl@psr.org

“Footprints and Milestones: Population and Environmental Change”, UN Population Fund, 2001,

“Climate Change Activities in the United States: 2004 Update”, Pew Center for Global Climate Change,
http://www.pewclimate.org/global-warming-in-depth/all_reports/

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has.

-Margaret Mead
The Seventh Principle Project Needs You!
Help our organization grow by joining us today! We are a volunteer organization dedicated to affirming and promoting the Seventh Principle: “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” Please join or renew today. Membership levels are described on the previous page. To join or renew, just complete the membership form below and send it and a check payable to “The Seventh Principle Project” to:

Membership Categories:

- Planting the Seed $25/year
- Kindling the Flame $50
- Stepping in the Stream $100
- Putting Down Roots $250
- Soaring Like an Eagle $500
- Thinking Like a Mountain $1000
- Congregational $100

Seventh Principle Project
PO Box 1523
Arlington, VA 22210

Name: ________________________________
Street or PO Box: __________________________
City: ________________________________
State or Province: _______________________
Zip or Postal Code: ___________________________________________________________
email address: ___________________ Congregation: __________________________

☐ Check if You are Joining or Renewing at the $50 Level or Higher and Wish to Receive YES! Magazine

For further information, visit our website
www.uuaspp.org
or call us at (703)-920-3615