

Earth Day 2009:

Building Environmental Justice

Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth

ACT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

This Earth Day 2009, Unitarian Universalists can work to advance understanding of environmental justice in our congregations and can witness in our communities, our nation and our world to our UU commitment to justice and the interdependent web.

To these ends, UUMFE is partnering with the UUA Washington Office of Advocacy and Witness and the UU Service Committee to bring UU congregations a menu of actions. We encourage all Unitarian Universalist congregations to act on one or more of the following activities which closely relate to environmental justice:

I. BUILD A JUST AND GREEN ECONOMY



photo: Oregon DOT

UU Ministry for Earth has chosen to focus our actions on creating green jobs as a means of addressing both climate change and environmental justice. In collaboration with

the UUA Washington Office of Advocacy and Witness, we ask that you consider the following actions:

- 1. Show the DVD of Van Jones' 2008 General Assembly Ware Lecture in your congregation.**
Thanks to a grant from the UU Funding Program, this DVD is available to you at a 50% discount price of \$10 if you order as between now and April 30, 2009. The DVD comes with a set of discussion questions.
- 2. ASK Your Local Government to take the GREEN JOBS PLEDGE**
Organize the members of your congregation deliver a petition to the leader/s of your local government to sign the Local Government Green Jobs Pledge being sponsored by Green For All, The Center for American Progress, the Apollo Alliance, and ICLEI: Local Governments for Sustainability. (Pledge text available at www.greenforall.org)

II. THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER: THE WATER CRISIS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The global water crisis – the product of shifting and competing political and economic interests, depletion from environmental contamination, climate change, over-extraction, and increasing population – is worsening.

As UUs, we recognize the urgent need to respond. Environmental justice is the human affirmation of our place within the interdependent web of all existence. Environmental justice is the practice of simultaneously protecting natural systems and the ecological health of human communities, especially low-income communities, minorities, and indigenous peoples. We must act from a place of understanding and commitment to human rights as a framework.



photo: UUSC

More people are losing their access to clean, affordable water in the United States and overseas around the world, and too often the victims are low-income families, women, and racial and ethnic minorities. Acting locally in the United States helps to

(continued on back)

(Build a Just and Green Economy continued)

3. Host a SOLUTIONS SALON

Using the guide produced by Green For All, you can host a Solutions Salon which generally is a 2-3 hour event bringing together 50-300 people from a community to talk about innovative solutions for an inclusive green economy. The event includes a panel discussion and/or keynote presentation, some time to break out into smaller topic groups or simply turn to your neighbor and share thoughts on local solutions, and a cultural performance like music, poetry, or dance. A Solutions Salon has a clear purpose such as: launching a new green jobs network, bringing people together to support an important initiative, or discussing different emerging opportunities for the community. (Solutions Salon guidelines available at www.greenforall.org)

A Solutions Salon:

- Focuses more on solutions than problems
- Inspires people with great new models and ideas
- Engages the audience directly in a conversation
- Includes a soulful or cultural component - art is key for keeping it real

(The Human Right to Water continued)

strengthen the international effort to implement the human right to water and protect our neighbors' access to safe, sufficient, affordable water for their daily human needs. President Barack Obama in his inaugural address lifted up the need to ensure access to safe water – we can act to make his and our hopes a reality.

What you can do:

1. **Hold a house party and show *The Water Front*** or host a viewing in your congregation. Learn how a citizen's movement in Highland Park, Michigan, mobilized for a human right to water.
2. **Propose that your worship coordinators integrate the Water Justice Taizé Ritual into a service** to uplift the need to care for water and care about who has access to water.
(www.uusc.org/files/water_justice_taize_ritual.pdf)
3. **Ask your elected officials in Washington, D.C., to fully fund the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act** this year – and make sure that money funds projects for low-income communities!
4. **Consider holding a discussion group in your congregation and community and do UUSC's Water Justice Praxis.** Find out where your water comes from, who makes decisions about water rates, and what happens if a family cannot pay its water bill. Consider writing a local human right to water policy for your utility.
(www.uusc.org/files/Water%20praxis.pdf).
5. **Support international groups in their efforts to enact local human right to water policies.** Their successes increase the chance of achieving water justice for people in the United States.



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