



Green Sanctuary
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
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Application for Green Sanctuary Accreditation

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Congregation Information

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Congregation Profile

Founded in 1952, our congregation has grown from an extended family-size congregation, which met in a house turned sanctuary, to a congregation in need of larger space to accommodate growing numbers of adults and children. A move to a larger building in 2005 (formerly a Christian church) made room for a staff and a growing RE interest and enrollment. Today, paid staff consists of a part-time office administrator, part-time Children's Faith Development Coordinator and a choir director. We are in the process of applying for a full-time minister (spring 2015). Committees abound!

We have an active and committed Fellowship committee that cares for the hospitality needs of the congregation. Our Buildings and Grounds Committee maintains both the church building as well as a parsonage that is presently rented. The grounds are maintained by a group of volunteers from the congregation. Our Worship Committee actively seeks speakers that deepen spiritual understanding and develops services to call us to our better selves. Our Social Action Committee has been the action arm of the congregation putting money, service and support behind the congregation's words. We have a growing library with resources ranging from worship to green homes to children's literature.

The UUFM is a Welcoming Congregation for members, staff, and friends; it is also a 2010 Breakthrough Congregation. The UUFM is an enthusiastic, generous congregation of forward thinking, committed members willing to take risks.

The core membership, until recent years, was composed largely of middle-aged, professional, white, and mostly academic people. There was always a stable, strong, but small RE program. The church experienced growth as Mankato and Minnesota State University, Mankato grew.

Our profile was changed. As a congregation we actively sought new members and became more visible to the community by participating in community events like the South Central Minnesota Pridefest. The inactive Social Action Committee came under new direction and established a monthly Second Collection to provide help for local non-profits. This gave us new connections to our community and them to us. Existing committees became more formalized and some new committees were established.

The congregation experienced considerable growth. Much of the growth consisted of young families, people from neighboring small towns and LGBT individuals and families.

Number of adult members: 120
Children & youth enrollment: 45

Our more mindful foray into 'greening' our congregation has drawn new members and friends into the work of the congregation. We have opportunity for growing interest, commitment and membership through this work of living into the 7th UU principle.

Congregational Vote (official minutes attached in Appendix, vote highlighted in green)

Congregational vote on the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mankato applying to become an accredited Green Sanctuary through the UUA:

As part of our mission to “nurture the earth”, we, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mankato, pledge to continue to live out our Unitarian Universalist principles, including the Seventh Principle, “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” We will continue to incorporate Seventh Principle values and practices into our worship services, celebrations and faith development programs; support efforts to improve our environmental impact; and affirm and promote programs to raise awareness of behaviors that affect the health and sustainability of the living Earth.

Having completed our initial action plan and pledging to continue this work, we vote to apply for accreditation through the UUA’s Green Sanctuary Program.

The above statement was unanimously and enthusiastically approved by the membership at the annual meeting May 17, 2015. Please see attached minutes from the annual meeting in the Appendix.

UU Identity and Spirituality

During the beginning of our work toward becoming a Green Sanctuary, we were often able to refer back to our seven principles for affirmation and support of our efforts when resistance was met. Now, questions of 'why' related to this work are rarely asked as this process has normalized thinking and the importance of being 'green'. The Green Sanctuary process has given us a solid base from which to work and, more importantly, grow.

In 2008, we discussed applying for candidacy to the Green Sanctuary program, but at that time there was neither substantial congregational support, nor enough interested members to pursue the work involved to do it successfully. Through our Social Action committee we continued doing some of the 'green' work that we felt was important, but did not have the people-power to take on larger projects or commitments.

In 2012 it became clear that we, as a fellowship, were ready for this action. We got unanimous approval to proceed with applying for candidacy. We gathered a diverse, passionate group of individuals with unique interests to pursue this work. We developed an extensive action plan that covered all aspects of congregational life. And, we proceeded with intergenerational involvement, community collaboration, curiosity and enthusiasm.

Now, as we wrap up our efforts to complete the necessary steps for accreditation, the unquestionable commitment by our congregation is obvious. As will be noted in future sections of this application, members from throughout the congregation and various committees have seen and felt the impact the Green Sanctuary process has had on our fellowship. Many have commented on how this process has made 'green' thinking a part of our culture and how it has also encouraged them to more fully live out our principles in their own homes and lives.

We are excited to have the opportunity to solidify our commitment, live as a Green Sanctuary and continue to put our principles into action. Even as we met for the last time before sending in our application, we were making plans for the future, discussing a theme to focus on for next year and how to get new people and the community involved.

With words taken from the children's UU Principles song, it is clear that the Green Sanctuary process emphasizes all of the principles, not just the seventh:

"1) Each person is important; 2) Be kind in all you do; 3) We're free to learn together; 4) and search for what is true; 5) All people need a voice; 6) Build a fair and peaceful world; and, 7) We care for earth's lifeboat."

Small actions can lead to big changes. Respect people's opinions even if they are different from your own and work together to find solutions. Education and community building are ways to bring people together from varying backgrounds and lives lived and show we all have the same needs, beyond the basics, of peace, hope, justice and love. And, if we care for and respect the living thing that is this big blue planet we call home, our lives will be enriched, community will be built, and the interdependent web will thrive.

Action Plan

1. Worship and Celebration Projects (2 required)

Project Title: Greener Sunday Worship Services

Project Description:

Objective: To raise awareness and motivate the congregation in areas related to sustainable living and environmental justice.

Plan: To work with the Worship Committee and our new minister to develop worship services on relevant topics and incorporate environmental readings, songs, meditations and stories regularly into Sunday services. These services will work with the Worship Committee monthly themes and maintain a spiritual focus. Also, to research non-petroleum based oil for the chalice and candles.

Actions taken: We have replaced petroleum-based altar candles and chalice oil with beeswax candles and soy-based oil. We have also had the following services and will continue to schedule services on topics pertaining to sustainable living and environmental justice:

- “Our Spiritual Relationship with the Land That Feeds Us,” Atina Diffley – November 11, 2012
- “Sacred Food” UUFM members, November 25, 2012
- “Lakota Spiritual Practices,” David Brave Heart - January 13, 2013
- “Winter Faith, Spring Faith,” Rev. Laurie Bushbaum - March 24, 2013
- “River as a Spiritual Metaphor,” Hal and Sandra Walberg - April 14, 2013
- “Finding a Spot Between Apathy and Futility” Duane Nunneman – June 16, 2013
- “Reflection on the North American Landscape and Its Spiritual Meaning” Martin Mitchell, PhD – October 6, 2013
- “The Sacred Mountain.” Don Friend - March 23, 2014
- Annual International Day of Peace Service: “Let There Be Peace on Earth and Let it Begin with Me,” Dr. Paul Prew - September 21, 2014
- “The Power of Place” Gwen Westerman Wasicuna – October 19, 2014
- “Water Quality: It May Be Better (or worse) Than You Think” Bob Finley – March 22, 2015
- “Reflections on the Seventh Principle” Green Sanctuary Panel – April 19, 2015

Timeline for Completion: Beginning Fall 2012 regular services were scheduled each calendar year. Ongoing.

Lead: Nancy Cramblit, collaboration with Worship Committee, minister

Project Title: Seasonal Celebrations

Project Description:

Objective: To schedule and implement seasonal celebrations outside of the normal Sunday services

Plan: To work with existing groups such as the Circle of the Oak and Raven (our earth-based spirituality group) and others to create seasonal rites of passage such as the following:

- Harvest celebrations
- Winter Solstice
- Summer Solstice
- Earth Day

Actions taken: The Circle of the Oak and Raven stopped meeting shortly after our plan was put in place so we could not coordinate with them as planned. We were able to coordinate with Children's Faith Development instead for some successful celebrations.

- Winter Solstice 2012
- Spring Equinox celebration 2013
- Corn celebration 2013
- Winter Solstice 2014
- Spring Celebration 2015

Timeline for Completion: Beginning fall 2012, the committee assisted with appropriate seasonal celebrations annually. Ongoing.

Lead: Jeremiah Myer and Patti Ruskey, collaborate with Circle of the Oak and Raven, Children's Faith Development

2. Religious Education Projects (2 required)

Project Title: Adult Education Classes and Projects

Project Description:

Objective: To offer a regular schedule of adult educational offerings on 'green' subjects

Plan: To develop a schedule of workshops and discussions, such as:

- Work to organize a discussion group through the Northwest Earth Institute
- Continue our Eco-Workshops (educational and skill-based workshops on green topics)
- Work to facilitate a book discussion on environmental issues
- Show films on environmental issues, followed by discussions

The committee will commit to offering at least one of each type over the 2012-2013 year. At that point we will evaluate the interest and effectiveness of each to determine the long-term implementation of these offerings going forward.

Actions taken: Through our initial offerings we determined that the workshops and films were the most successful means of engaging our members and the greater community. The film showings in particular have attracted a number of people from the community. The discussion groups had between 8-12 participants and the films ranged between 10-25. The Fair Trade event hosted in collaboration with the Mankato Area Fair Trade Town Initiative had over 150 attendees. We were also able to host a film with the Transition Mankato group strengthening our community connections. The following activities were successfully implemented:

Films:

- "Ingredients" documentary showing 1/2013
- "Food Patriots" documentary 2/2014
- Fourth Friday documentary series 10/2014 ("Wasteland"), 11/2014 ("Inequality for All"), 1/2015 ("I Am"), 2/2015 ("Addicted to Plastic"), 3/2015 ("The Waiting Room"), 4/2015 ("Food Chain\$")
- Hosted Transition Mankato showing of "GMO OMG" - January 2015

Book discussions:

- *How to Cook a Wolf* by MFK Fisher (lessons on sustainable, frugal eating during the Great Depression) book discussion 2/2013
- *Flight Behavior* by Barbara Kingsolver book club discussion 4/2013

Workshops:

- Seed starting Eco-workshop 3/2013
- Tomato canning workshop 9/2013

Presentations:

- A Wilderness Icon: Red Rock Canyonlands presentation by Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance 3/2013
- Hosted Fair Trade Fashion Show and speaker Kelsey Timmerman 9/2014

Discussion courses:

- 'Voluntary Simplicity' NWEI discussion course 4/2013-5/2013
- "Unnatural Causes" Discussion Course Feb-March 2015

Timeline for Completion: Beginning Winter 2012/2013, the committee offered a variety of opportunities for member and community adult educational engagement. Ongoing.

Lead: Linda Ganske and Becky Rossow, collaborate with Book Discussion group, Social Action committee, Children's Faith Development, community groups

Project Title: Children's Lifespan Faith Development and Projects

Project Description:

Objective: To regularly incorporate lessons which teach environmental issues to the children and youth; To provide opportunities for the children and youth to participate in environmental projects

Plan: To research environmental curricula and projects and to adopt an earth-centered program to supplement the children's curriculum. One possible resource is the pair of books Teaching Kids to Love the Earth and More Teaching Kids to Love the Earth by Mariana Lachecki.

Actions taken: We have been able to work with Children's Faith Development to engage the children and youth in garden, nature and environmental programming including the following:

- Monthly classes with children for 2013-2014 year using the UUA "Nurturing the Spirit Nature Connection" curriculum
- Monthly spring/summer garden classes with children 2013, 2014, 2015 – seed starting, transplanting, planting, weeding, watering, harvesting
- Youth energy usage investigation using a watt meter around the fellowship 2014
- Seasonal classes with children 2014-15
- Monthly summer classes with DNR Naturalist 2013, 2014 (animal tracks and signs, wild edibles, animal and plant identification, local wildlife, canoeing)

Timeline for Completion: Researched and planned during 2012-13 year with implementation in 2013-14 and 2014-2015. Ongoing.

Lead: Lisa Coons and Scott Kudelka

3. Environmental Justice (2 required, 1 long term that actively promotes justice for those affected by environmental injustices and creates relationships)

Project Title: Food Justice Brochures

Project Description:

Objective: To assist in the effort to eliminate food insecurity in our community

Plan: To develop a brochure outlining the food resources available in our community including nutrition assistance programs, food shelves, free meal programs, reduced cost food sources, community gardens, farmer's markets and more. The brochure would be made available at the community food shelf, area shelters, county human services department and the like to ensure that those that need assistance know of all the resources available to them.

To develop a second brochure outlining the volunteer opportunities that are available in our community working with organizations offering assistance to those facing food insecurity. The brochure would be made available at area churches, senior living centers, community centers, etc.

Actions taken: We developed, printed and distributed 2500 color brochures outlining how to access food resources in our community including the local food shelf, government programs, Backpack Food Program for school-aged children, free meals in the area, food giveaways, reduced cost food resources and food recovery meal access. We did not develop the second brochure as planned because in researching for the first brochure we found that that information is already readily available in a condensed form in multiple locations (United Way, Volunteer Interfaith Network, organization websites and the county government).

Timeline for Completion:

Stage I – 2012-13: Researched existing programs and gathered contact information.

Stage II – 2014-15: Developed brochures and distributed to area organizations and individuals.

Lead: Becky Rossow

Project Title: Food Not Bombs

Project Description:

Objective: To provide cooking and community space for the local chapter of Food Not Bombs and make connections with those in attendance

Plan: This was not part of our original action plan.

Actions taken: In December 2014, the local chapter of Food Not Bombs was looking for a place to prepare and serve food for any and all in the community who could use a good meal every Sunday evening. Wanting to further our efforts toward food justice, starting in January 2015, we offered our kitchen and fellowship hall for their efforts. Fellowship members and friends were

quickly drawn to the energy and passion of the group and engaged in the work that the Food Not Bombs crew was doing, cooking with the crew and eating in solidarity side-by-side with those from the community that come for the meal. Attendance has ranged from 25 to over 50 each Sunday and additional food is delivered to others in the community who can use it including shelters, supportive housing and low-income individuals equaling over 100 meals served each week. This has proven to be a great opportunity for us to meet new people and make individual connections while providing a much-needed service.

Timeline for Completion: January 2015. Ongoing.

Lead: Patti Ruskey

Project Title: Garden Partners

Project Description:

Objective: To provide fresh produce for a local shelter for women and children

Plan: To work with the kitchen staff at an area shelter to determine what types of produce would be of benefit to their residents; To grow the appropriate types of fruit and vegetable in our garden space and expand as needed to fulfill as much of the fresh produce needs as possible; To provide education and opportunity for the residents to work in the garden; To include UUFM children and youth in the growing and harvesting.

Actions taken: We were not able to complete this task as planned because the church next door to the shelter we were communicating with offered a similar project and it made more sense for them to fulfill this need so we adjusted our plan to provide food to the area homeless shelters instead. In 2013, the garden was expanded from the existing 900 to 1500 square feet and fenced in. Another community garden in the area was already donating produce weekly to the homeless shelters so in 2014 we decided to open a farmstand at the fellowship to offer the produce grown free of charge to anyone who could use it. Any extras were donated to the local food shelf. Some chose to give a free will donation and the first \$250 raised went to sponsor a garden for a family in Haiti through UUSC's 'Gardens for Haiti' project. We were able to raise over \$1000 additional for our accessibility fund to install a lift in our fellowship. This platform was so successful and appreciated we are continuing it for the 2015 year and beyond with extra produce now going to the Food Not Bombs project. In 2015, we are also establishing a raspberry patch. Each year in the garden, we have been able to include the children and youth as well as fellowship members and friends in starting seeds, transplanting, weeding, watering and harvesting.

Timeline for Completion: Communicated with the domestic abuse shelter fall 2012 for plans to start growing produce for this action in spring 2013. In winter the church next door to them offered the same services. So, instead, produce was donated to two local homeless shelters weekly in 2013. In 2014, food grown was offered at a weekly farmstand to anyone that could use it with extras donated to the local food shelf. Plan for 2015 is to continue the farmstand for those who can use the produce and to provide fresh produce for the Food Not Bombs project. Ongoing.

Lead: Linda Ganske

Other Environmental Justice Projects:

In addition to the above, we established an annual 'Eat for ECHO' soup and bread benefit fundraiser for our local food shelf. There was no charge for this meal, but a free will donation was accepted at the door for those wishing and able to contribute. We raised \$1250 in 2013 and \$1100 in 2014. Planning is in process for fall 2015.

We also raised funds through a Sunday morning collection to become "Bronze Spade" level sponsors of the Blue Earth County Community Farm in May 2013. The Community Farm grows fresh produce for the local Food Shelf and Salvation Army meal program.

In May 2015, we did a special Sunday morning collection to purchase XXXX cases of Leanne Brown's "Good and Cheap: Eat Well on \$4/Day" cookbook for distribution to those in need in our community. We plan to make these available free of charge at the local food shelf, homeless shelters, an area group home that is using them to teach cooking to their residents, and to other low-income individuals.

We hosted a seed swap in 2014 with Transition Mankato and have hosted annual plant swaps since 2012 for garden plants as well as perennial pollinators and other plants for landscaping.

Our fellowship also signed on as a supporter for America's Red Rock Wilderness Act in 2013 and again in 2015 to protect some of the US's last remaining wilderness in the canyonlands of Utah. We also sent letters to our Congressional leaders in April of 2013 and in February of 2015 to ask them to sponsor and pass America's Red Rock Wilderness Act.

4. Sustainable Living (4 required, 1 that addresses energy conservation)

Project Title: Kitchen Compost

Project Description:

Objective: To ensure all compostable materials from the kitchen are placed in the new compost bin

Plan: To develop and implement an effective compost plan for kitchen wastes. To provide education on both on-site composting and composting at home.

Actions taken: We set out buckets for compostable materials in the fall of 2012. All those working in the kitchen immediately embraced this effort. Children and youth are often the ones to empty the buckets outside in the compost bins. We have signs posted on what is compostable and encourage individuals to compost in their own homes. We also promote through our weekly updates and newsletters the annual sale of compost bins and rain barrels through the Recycling Association of Minnesota.

Timeline for Completion: Beginning Fall 2012. Ongoing.

Lead: Committee set up the buckets, but it was lead by the whole fellowship/kitchen workers

Project Title: Sustainable Landscaping

Project Description:

Objective: To use our church landscape to grow food that can be donated to those in need or be used by our own church community; To promote sustainable land use.

Plan: To develop a green landscape master plan for the church property with the following in mind:

- Plant fruit bearing trees and bushes
- Maintain current garden space (established Spring 2012) and consider expanding
- Fence the garden area to protect from area wildlife
- Research becoming Certified Wildlife Habitat with the National Wildlife Refuge

Actions taken: We expanded the garden to 1500 square feet in 2013 and fenced it in. We attempted to plant raspberries and grape vines in 2014, but they were in a hard to reach, unprotected area and did not survive. We were successful in planting a cherry tree and a plum tree. In 2015 we are establishing a raspberry patch outside of the garden, planting native pollinators along the south side of the garden fence and establishing a hazelnut hedge behind our rain garden.

We have purchased and installed four rain barrels totaling 230 gallons of rainwater storage.

We are hand-digging dandelions in the front of the property instead of using chemicals and have used corn gluten for many years as a preventative. We are also establishing a test plot of eco-

grass and buffalo grass in 2015 on our north side to test for drought tolerance and low growth. If either is successful, we are considering lawn replacement in areas that are susceptible to drought conditions to reduce any need for water and mowing.

In the fall of 2014 we applied for and received certification as a Certified Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation for providing wildlife habitat, food, shelter, water and a place to raise their young.

In 2013 we surveyed the congregation asking for input on a master landscaping plan. We implemented some of the suggestions in 2014 and are currently in the process of hiring a landscape design consultant to develop a five-year landscape plan for us that is low maintenance and includes extensive use of edible and native plants, natural habitats, water conservation, a memorial garden and areas for meditation. We will use this plan to implement the design over a five-year period.

Timeline for Completion:

Stage I: Surveyed members for landscape design ideas - 2013

Stage II: Developed list to present to landscape designer - 2014

Stage III: Hire landscape designer to plan landscape for entire property - 2015

Stage IV: Implement all steps in the master landscape plan - 2015-2020

This did not happen?

Lead: Henry Panowitsch, collaborate with Building and Grounds Committee

Project Title: Energy Conservation (at home and on-site)

Project Description:

Objective: To work toward reducing our individual and collective consumption of energy

Plan:

At home: To encourage members to commit (or re-commit) to participation in the Minnesota Energy Challenge (mnenergychallenge.org), which outlines numerous ways for individuals and families to commit to reducing their energy consumption. Paper surveys and commitments will also be available for those who prefer a paper rather than online commitment.

On-site: To work with Building and Grounds to develop a written policy regarding the replacement of appliances as they age. This policy will specify that energy usage will be considered in any replacement and energy-star rated appliances will be purchased as replacement is needed. We will also continue to research and implement suggestions as outlined in our environmental assessment.

Actions taken: We had an energy assessment done by Minnesota Retiree Environmental Technical Assistance Program (RETAP) in the fall of 2012. They looked at all of the energy use in the building and made recommendations on where we could improve our usage. One suggestion they had was to replace our old fluorescent fixtures with newer, more efficient

ballasts so we did this in December 2012. There were minimal costs involved because of state rebates.

In April 2014 we installed a programmable thermostat in the main area of the lower level. We made this an educational event by showing congregants how easy it can be to install one in your own home. We installed another programmable thermostat in the office administrator's office in January 2015. Now we have most areas of the building covered by a program instead of relying on us to remember to turn down the thermostats when we leave the building.

We don't have written building policies so we did not complete that portion of the plan, but energy star ratings are considered when we are replacing old appliances. We had to replace a stove this winter and went with an energy star used model. Consciousness of energy use is much more a part of the culture of the UUFM now.

We have a large building project planned for fall 2015 that will include a lift for accessibility to our lower level, enclose and expand our front entry and add another main floor office for the new minister. Through the process of designing this project, consideration for southern roof solar PV access, energy efficiency and other green building practices are being considered.

We are currently in the process of contracting for solar PV panels to cover 100% of our energy use. We have a contractor lined up, but need to wait until the current building project is nearing completion to install them. It is possible that could fall through if we miss the rebate deadline and need to reapply for state funds, but we have a congregational commitment to pursue this effort.

We also encouraged members and friends through social media and onsite to sign up for the Minnesota Energy Challenge. This challenge asks you to survey your current energy conservation practices at home and to commit to new reductions to reduce your CO2 output and energy usage. We have had 21 members sign up for the challenge and currently rank #36 out of 268 congregations in the state in annual CO2 savings.

We also encouraged participation in the '30 Days of Climate Justice' effort in 2015 and offer regular tips in our weekly update to reduce your impact on our planet.

Timeline for Completion: Beginning 2012, ongoing efforts towards efficiency.

Lead: Ted Downey, Barbara and Earl Young

Project Title: Zero Waste Events

Project Description:

Objective: To work toward reduced waste at all, and zero waste at a portion, of our church functions

Plan: To work with the Fellowship committee and others who are planning functions at our facility to use reusable dishes and silverware whenever possible. We will hold a fellowship event to collectively sew cloth napkins for use at church functions. We will then hold a trial luncheon after which we can evaluate what works and what we still need to figure out before full implementation of regular zero waste events can occur.

Actions taken: Cloth napkins were introduced at our fellowship in September 2013. Shortly after, we held a cloth napkin sewing workshop to supplement those that had been donated. We have a member who has enthusiastically taken on the task of the weekly washings. Now we do not use disposable utensils, dishes or napkins at our Sunday fellowship times or special events. We have also collected enough secondhand reusable dishes, silverware and napkins to use at our annual meal for Habitat for Humanity Care-A-Vanners so we can avoid disposables at that off-site meal as well. Our next target is to replace the disposable salt and pepper shakers we currently use with refillable ones. We have the replacement shakers and are just waiting for the old disposables to run out.

We have coordinated with the county to set up a twice-yearly recycling collection of packaging material (packing peanuts, air packets, bubble wrap, etc.). These materials are not currently recyclable locally, but we are able to get them to someone who can reuse them in their business.

In collaboration with our Blue Skunks intergenerational activity group at the UUFM, we also are supporting a local non-profit, Misfit Acres – a horse rescue and sanctuary, by accepting materials that are not currently recyclable in our curbside bins. Misfit Acres is part of the TerraCycle network and is able to get money for recycling certain materials. We have set up our own account through TerraCycle as well so we can take things that Misfit Acres does not to further reduce our individual and collective waste.

Timeline for Completion:

We were able to skip our cloth napkin trial period and just jump right into it. Much like our composting effort, it was quickly embraced by the entire congregation and has become part of our culture. Ongoing.

Lead: Committee collected cloth napkins and set up recycling efforts, but whole fellowship takes responsibility for ongoing efforts

4. Additional (2 required; these can relate to the program elements of your choice)

Project Title: Sustainable Eating for Health

Project Description:

Objective: To educate, explore and promote a way of eating that is healthful for us and for the planet.

Plan: To offer a variety of ways to learn to incorporate sustainable eating into our diets, we will:

- Hold workshops and discussions on low-meat consumption, healthy cooking, vegetarian meals
- Commit to one-third of our luncheons being completely plant-based and local, as much as possible.
- Include recipes for dishes that are served so that our members can continue to cook and eat in a more sustainable way at home.
- Look into starting a cooking group that regularly gets together to share ideas and prepare meals.

Actions taken: We have taken responsibility for one luncheon each quarter since 2013 with a focus on local foods. We offer produce from the garden if members bringing food don't have their own access to locally grown products. We also ask donators to bring copies of their recipes to share. These luncheons have been extremely successful with delicious food and enthusiastic support. Free will donations collected during these luncheons have gone toward our accessibility fund for the lift project and will continue to be put toward environmental or justice efforts.

Timeline for Completion: Beginning 2013, quarterly. Ongoing.

Lead: Lisa Coons, collaborate with Fellowship Committee

Project Title: Consumption Reduction Challenge

Project Description:

Objective: To challenge our members to reduce material consumption in their lives

Plan: To encourage our members to resist the call of advertising that tells us we need more, better, different, bigger stuff, we will:

- Screen the short documentary "The Story of Stuff" to be followed by a discussion
- Start a "No New Stuff Challenge" tailored to individual goals to last for at least a two-week period (the time needed to change a habit), but also tailored to individual timeline goals (two weeks, one month, six months, etc.)
- Establish regular check-ins and updates on how things are going

- Follow-up the challenge with a discussion of how things went, what was learned and if participants foresee a long-term change in their habits and behaviors
- In addition to no new stuff, consider an additional “30 Items in 30 Days” Challenge – participants are challenged to give away, donate or sell at least one item daily for 30 days

Actions taken: We screened the “Story of Stuff” and held a discussion in November 2013. We followed up with a “Story of Solutions” screening and discussion in January 2014 in preparation for our ‘No New Stuff Challenge’ that same month. We challenged people to not buy anything new for the month of January. We held a check-in midway through the month to see how things were going with everyone. Then we held our ‘30 Items/30 Days Challenge’ to push participants to reduce clutter in their lives by donating, selling or tossing at least one item every day for 30 days. From that effort and discussion came the idea for a ‘Sharing Board’ to post giveaways, wanteds, shares, services, borrows and lends which is hanging in our Fellowship Hall and an ongoing remnant of these challenges.

Timeline for Completion: Planned in 2013, implemented in 2013-14.

Lead: Linda Ganske and Becky Rossow

Other Projects/Efforts

The Green Sanctuary Committee has hosted a basket for the annual silent auction fundraiser since 2013. These baskets have been filled with everything from green cleaning products, to handmade soap, cloth napkins to CFLs, garden seedlings and so much more.

When the Fellowship Hall, kitchen and lower level bathrooms were scheduled for painting, we asked that no-VOC paint be used. The Building Committee agreed and actually found that no-VOC paint cost nearly the same as traditional paint so there was little additional cost – proving that being green doesn’t always cost more.

Radon testing was done throughout the building in spring of 2014 and our levels were found to be higher than EPA recommendations. One system was installed in October 2014 and another is planned for installation with the new construction to provide coverage for the whole building.

Finally, as a sign of environmental awareness becoming a stronger part of the congregational culture, we adopted a new mission statement in October 2014. After much discussion in the congregation on what our mission should be, it was made clear that concern for the environment is a large part of who we are and what we want to be. To that end, the phrase “nurture the earth” is one of four statements included in our new mission.

Accomplishment of Program Goals

1. Build awareness of the significance and complexity of environmental issues.

Perhaps it could be said that all the work of our Green Sanctuary committee in some way seeks to accomplish this goal but in the interest of brevity, we will highlight two important areas. Our religious education projects aimed at adults and children deepen the understanding of complex environmental issues. And our worship services seek to deepen our spirituality as we build awareness in congregants. We have brought more information about environmental issues such as the impacts of our food choices to educational forums and Sunday Services alike. The concentrated efforts of our Green sanctuary work deepen congregants' understanding of not just *what* we do, but *why* we do it.

Our work in this area includes adult education efforts allowing for access to many members, friends and community members. From film screenings to book study and discussion to hosting a fair trade fashion show and lecture, this work deepened the understanding of environmental justice issues while challenging folks to make connections to and changes in their lives. Additionally, Eco-Workshops such as seed starting and canning teach skills for increasing sustainable living. Our quarterly Local Foods Luncheons have brought another level of awareness as folks experience the pleasures and possibilities of local foods even in the harsh winter months in Minnesota. One member said,

“As I think about Green Sanctuary the idea that stands out in my mind is that Green Sanctuary has "normalized" our thinking and taking some actions on environmental justice and what that all means on how we operate as a community at UU FM. I also think it is affecting how people think and do things in their homes, etc. It's there in front of us as we are reminded of what's happening and what's being done. I know we have a ways to go -- never will we be done. But, the fact that we now have the discussions and make decisions with the environment in mind is a big step.”

Our work with the children included a yearlong commitment to UU Ministry for Earth curriculum “Nurturing the Spirit Nature Connection.” Each class focused on a broader theme of recognizing the family of life on earth and the value of each member of the family. We accomplished this through song, story, crafts and hands-on experiences of the natural world. Lessons included celebrations of the rhythms of Earth with seasonal reflections, explanations and connections. Our congregational site allows for much outdoor exploration and allows us to deepen our lessons experientially. Children went on nature scavenger hikes, explored animal tracks and signs, and explored the value of native plants, seeds and habitats. We planted a congregational garden, which is a natural learning environment and provides ongoing lessons on nature and justice from early spring until the last fall harvest. We continue this work with a commitment to quarterly classes with the children. The work with the children and youth has had an impact according to a long-time member.

“I think the fact that the children and young people in our congregation know we are committed to this work makes a big difference to how they may hope and work toward a better future for themselves and others. We are saying to them WE CARE, as we are involved in this work. WE CARE about them and the world they'll be living in in the future.”

Our worship services aimed to deepen understanding of and commitment to action around environmental justice issues. We are located in the heart of farm country and on the banks of a river so our congregation's responses to worship and environmental issues aptly range from local food and farming to the power of water and rivers as well as climate change and its impacts. In addition to regular Sunday Services, we are striving to bring more consistent seasonal celebrations and reflections to widen our worship experience. One Worship Committee member had this to say,

"In the worship committee, we now have consistent use of non-petroleum products in our candles and chalice oil. We consider what kind of services we can have to support our 'green sanctuary' and a greener world."

2. Encourage personal lifestyle changes.

Encouraging personal lifestyle changes has been a rather easy goal for our Green Sanctuary Program. As we seek justice in our work, always we start with the question, "What can I do today?" For most folks, that means taking sometimes small, but not insignificant, steps to further their commitment to "nurture the Earth" (language we adopted in our new congregational mission statement this year). People in our congregation have participated in a voluntary simplicity discussion course, sewed cloth napkins together, cooked local foods to serve at quarterly Local Foods Luncheons and taken a survey and pledge to decrease their carbon footprint.

As our congregation makes visible changes to our congregational life, we encourage and provide resources to folks to adopt similar changes at home. We have installed programmable thermostats and demonstrated how to do this at home. We have virtually eliminated disposable tableware, dishes and napkins from our gatherings showing how truly easy this can be. In the feedback we sought from our members and friends, we heard over and over again how the work of the Green Sanctuary had an impact on people's home life. From cloth napkins to composting at home members have committed to living more sustainably both as a faith community and as individuals and families.

3. Engage in community action on environmental issues.

Our most significant work on community action as it pertains to environmental justice has been around the issue of food. We have added a church garden to our site and have grown food for the past three years that has been donated to food relief agencies, homeless shelters and other low-income folks. As we think globally, we know we need to act locally, and last year we offered some of the produce from the garden to congregants for an optional donation. In this way, we were able to extend the impact of our garden as we sponsored a family garden in Haiti through the UUSC's "Gardens for Haiti" project.

Another way we engage in community action and significantly work at social and environmental justice is partnership with the local Food Not Bombs group to prepare and serve a free community meal each week. This partnership allows rescued food (food that needs to be used right away or be wasted) to be prepared into healthy, vegetarian meals to share in our fellowship hall. Volunteers from the church work side-by-side with the young folks involved with Food Not Bombs as they prepare these weekly meals. When the meal is served, volunteers and guests

(elders, families and young adults struggling with college or college debt) sit down to share the meal together. One guest said the meal is helping him as he tries to eat better. Everyone seems to welcome the hot, homemade meal and time spent visiting together. After the meal, prepared food is delivered to area homeless and women's shelters bringing healthy food to some of our community's most vulnerable members.

There are many impacts from this work. Turning would-be food waste into a beautiful, nutritious meal is a testament to hope. Participating in food recovery and redistribution, we gain a deeper understanding of the systems that make abundant food resources inaccessible for too many. The environmental gain is obvious as we divert food waste from filling landfills to filling bellies. Food waste dumped in landfills contributes methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, to the atmosphere and where climate change is concerned, many feel powerless. This is one small way that empowers people to act and to change. It is estimated that 40% of food in the U.S. is wasted. Interrupting this habit makes us more mindful of our food and of those who may not get enough nutritious food. And of course, magic happens during the meal. Sharing food is an age-old custom that elicits good will and understanding. Getting to know our neighbors who are low-income and food insecure and hearing from them their experiences is a powerful practice of hospitality.

4. Strengthen the connection between spiritual practice and Earth consciousness.

Our work on this goal is continually evolving, as is our congregation. When we began our Green Sanctuary work in the fall of 2012, it was evident there was much physical work to do. Our Energy Assessments gave us some direction. We began composting on site. We established a garden and added rain barrels. We quickly made long-term plans to install programmable thermostats, update fluorescent lighting, sew cloth napkins and eliminate disposables in our kitchen. We are exploring solar installation on our roof. These are all tangible changes that can be measured. What is more difficult, however, is measuring the impact of these actions on congregants, committee members' work and the spiritual life of our church. Our Green Sanctuary work involves people from nearly every committee and touches the congregational life in so many ways. The practice of turning destructive practices of living on Earth into restorative practices is spiritual work, indeed. Time and again members mentioned how the culture of our church community has changed noticeably. Some members had this to say:

"I think embodying care for the earth as part of our way of congregational life has deepened our commitment to sustainable practices and makes us stronger. Our culture has changed in that we consider the impact of our actions before taking action."

And this,

"I am more conscious on a regular basis of how my choices affect our world."

In addition to incorporating Earth consciousness into nearly every aspect of our church life, our worship services reinforce the spiritual depth of this awareness. Services continue to challenge and uplift congregants as we explore together topics of climate change, water, farming and justice. Our congregation has increased the number and breadth of services focused specifically on earth consciousness, as well. Our work with the Children's Faith Development coordinator and committee gives us a wonderful opportunity to strengthen the children's connection between spiritual practice and Earth consciousness as we bring to every lesson or experiential class an aspect of spirituality and our 7th Principle.

By offering seasonal celebrations that highlight our deep connections to the rhythms of Earth, we increase our Earth consciousness and spiritual practice, merging the two. And finally, our congregation adopted a new mission statement this year that includes a strong statement about intent as a community.

“We are a welcoming people of diverse beliefs who commit to nourish the spirit, broaden the mind, **nurture the earth** and build community.”

Were it not for the 3 years of work of the Green Sanctuary Program in our congregation demonstrating this need to “nurture the earth,” this may not have been so easily adopted by members.

5. Work to heal environmental injustices.

We have a responsibility to act like responsible members of the earth community. Caring for our home is work that inspires us to shift our lives in the direction of healing environmental injustices. As we all become more aware of climate change and its impacts on our communities and the communities of vulnerable people across the globe, we realize the need to act now to reduce our carbon footprint. Our work is to demonstrate as a faith community what we can do together and encourage folks to take action in their lives to further address environmental injustices. We accomplish this through education, support, and empowerment to act. Environmental injustice is so deeply rooted you can start anywhere and go everywhere. Each action that doesn't contribute to the further destruction of our Earth home, in some small way contributes to healing. We have worked to raise awareness of and commitment to local foods as one avenue for environmental justice.

Learning about the benefits of local food to small, sustainable farmers, human health and the planet's health empowers folks to make this choice more often. Our own church garden teaches children about local food and organic gardening practices as well as the need to take care of each other in our community. Our local foods luncheons raise awareness about how to eat locally year-round as well as how great this food tastes. Recipes are shared and the movement grows. And, our recent partnership with a local Food Not Bombs group highlights the amount of food waste in our community there is at the same time that we share the food freely with those who may be food insecure. There is healing on multiple levels with this partnership. We cut food waste, which decreases greenhouse gas emissions, which contributes to the billions of small acts by people around the globe hoping for a livable future. We partner with youth who are trying to find a way to engage more deeply and make a difference in their community, encouraging and empowering them in this work even as we gain inspiration. And finally, the opportunity to sit down to a meal with those folks who come for the free community meal, who may seem very different from us and our own lived experiences, is an opportunity to witness, to listen and to know more deeply how much we are alike.

Program Evaluation

What do you believe has been the most important benefit your congregation has gained as a result of your participation in the Green Sanctuary Program?

By far the most important benefit to our congregation has been the change in culture. Every committee has had a part in the Action Plan to become a Green Sanctuary from Buildings and Grounds to the Adult Programming Committee to the obvious Worship and Children's Faith Development classes. Outlining a very broad Action Plan, reiterating those goals and celebrating the accomplishments in the newsletter kept the Green Sanctuary commitments on the forefront of our congregational work. Work on 'green' issues has always been a part of the UUFM. However, this Green Sanctuary Program meant we ALL were invited to think deeply, make changes and challenge each other and ourselves.

As previously mentioned, one of our members commented that "the Green Sanctuary has 'normalized' our thinking and taking some action on environmental justice and...how we operate as a community...." Another long-time member had this to say about the benefit of the Green Sanctuary work and the change to our culture,

"Green Sanctuary's work has been one of the most gratifying and visible parts of the UUFM. As the work has progressed thru the past few years you can see a real shift in how the members and committees "see" sustainability. We have moved thru the stages pretty smoothly overall (the green committee wants, to what will the green committee say about that? to not even considering something not sustainable as a fellowship!) now that's a culture shift!"

New members have found the Green Sanctuary work inspiring as well. One young mother said,

"I will say that the Green Sanctuary is one of my favorite things - it combines so many aspects of Social Justice, stewardship, education, etc. in a proactive positive way."

What has been the most difficult or challenging aspect of the program for your congregation to make progress on?

The most difficult aspect has been the environmental justice work. Emphasizing how our local choices have a global impact, we have been able to enliven the 7th UU Principle for many in our congregation. However, meeting the goals of the GSP's environmental justice projects were a challenge. Much of our environmental justice work was around the issue of food justice. Addressing the lack of coordinated resources, we designed, printed and distributed brochures listing the local food resources available to address food insecurity in our community. These were distributed through schools, churches and the food shelf. The schools and food shelf were particularly glad to have this brochure to distribute to folks. We will continue updating this and making it available as a needed resource.

Our second environmental justice project focused on establishing a community garden. The initial goal of our garden was to provide food and connect with clients at a local domestic violence shelter. When we found that need was met in the meantime, we adjusted and planned to grow food for our homeless shelters and food shelf. This was good and certainly brought fresh, organic, nutrient dense food to folks not typically in a position to access good food but the

community connection piece was lost. The next year, we grew food for a church “farm stand” and offered it for free or a donation. The first funds raised from that were sent to the UUSC Gardens for Haiti project – broadening the reach of our own environmental justice project.

Continuing to seek the community connection led us to a project that embodies the Green Sanctuary Program’s goals for an environmental justice project this past year. We partnered with a local chapter of the international group Food NOT Bombs. Together, we have been rescuing fresh food and preparing it into a free, weekly meal to be shared in our fellowship hall. This project, though not an initial project of our environmental justice action plan, has harnessed the energy of young environmental activists, social justice proponents and our UU congregation to create something good out of food poised to spoil and go to the landfill where its impact on the environment is great. Relationships have been established and are growing and we expect this program to expand in the coming year.

Have you been able to discern positive changes in your congregation’s culture as a result of the activities you accomplished? If so, what are they?

Oh, my, yes! This has been the most exciting part! Considering our ecological impact has moved from the work of a few to the responsibility of us all! One congregant expressed it precisely,

“It’s becoming a part of the fabric of our community.”

Our Board president mused,

“I think embodying care for the earth as part of our way of congregational life has deepened our commitment to sustainable practices and makes us stronger.”

What are your intentions/aspirations for continuing to live out your Green Sanctuary commitments?

Given the change in culture, we will continue to make changes and adjustments to practices already in place as well as add more. Nearly all of our action items were designed not as a one-time project but as a long-term, ongoing commitment. With the changes, many new members have come to expect that this is just how we do things, and indeed some, especially young families, are attracted to the UUFM because their values are in alignment with these green commitments. Additionally, we will deepen our impacts as we encourage, educate and inspire our congregants to take these lessons home. For instance, we have been composting kitchen waste for the past 2-3 years. One retiree related a story recently of her 3½ year-old granddaughter asking her where her compost was and when learning that the grandparents didn’t have one, suggesting they ought to get one! Needless to say, Grandma came to us to see how she can add a compost bin at home!

What on-going role do you expect your congregation will take in the wider community relative to environmental issues? How does your Green Sanctuary work affect your connection in the community?

The UUFM has a reputation in our area as a progressive, forward-thinking congregation. We will continue to build on this recognition as we continue to offer innovative Adult and Children’s Faith Development programs that invite people to deepen their understanding and commitment to

environmental justice in their lives. One developing local resource is a “Green Churches Coalition” which we hope to participate in to share our own journey to a “Green Sanctuary” and learn from others’ ideas and projects. Bringing together all the area churches around this focus also will enable us to respond to issues as a larger group.

As previously stated, The Green Sanctuary work has led to deeper connections in our community with young activists, our food insecure neighbors and each other. Having gone through the rigorous process of applying for Green Sanctuary status has positioned us as a resource for others looking to evaluate their environmental impacts as individuals, families or church congregations. Many UUFM members participate in a variety of community groups seeking to improve our community’s environmental impact, lessen our carbon footprint and become more resilient to climate change. These relationships connect people with our resources and connect us to others’ resources as well. This will certainly continue and, hopefully, grow, as we become a stronger UUFM.

Appendix

Minutes from Annual Meeting at which approval was given to apply for Green Sanctuary accreditation:

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mankato

Annual Meeting Minutes

Sunday, May 17, 2015

Proceedings:

- Carrie Rice called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.m. and lit the chalice
- Attendees read the Congregational Covenant together
- The minutes from 2014 were approved (MSC: Lisa Coons/Kay VanBuskirk)

Committee Updates:

Committees submitted written reports and Carrie thanked committee chairs for their work .

Capital Campaign/Construction Update:

Dave Schostag said things are on track, and that they are hoping for construction to begin late this summer.

Board Update/Ministerial Search

Carrie provided an update on the search for a minister, noting that a set of new names would soon be available. The timeline is to make an offer by the end of May.

Treasurer's Report

John Knox provided an overview of the proposed budget.

Congregational Votes:

1. *The congregation voted to approve to apply to become an accredited Green Sanctuary through the UUA.* Lisa Coons shared a brief overview of efforts by the Fellowship to become a Green Sanctuary and thanked the congregation for embracing the Seventh Principle.

"As part of our mission to 'nurture the earth', we, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mankato, pledge to continue to live out our Unitarian Universalist principles, including the Seventh Principle, 'Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are part.' We will continue to incorporate the Seventh Principle values and practices into our worship services, celebrations and faith development programs; support efforts to improve our environmental impact; and affirm and promote programs to raise awareness of behaviors that affect the health and sustainability of the living Earth."

(MSC: Gail Finley, Barbara Keating)

2. Nominees for the board were presented to the congregation. Barbara Keating moved that nominees be elected by acclamation. (MSC: Barbara Keating/Connie Rovney). The slate of officers was approved (MSC: Lisa Coons/Denny Cramblit)).

President: Carrie Rice – second term, one year
Vice President: Nancy Cramblit – first term, one year
Secretary: Linda Good – one year
Treasurer: John Knows – second full term, two years

Members at Large:

Henry Panowitsch – second full term, two years
Marlene Stein-Greiner – second term, two years

The chalice was extinguished and the meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Amy Lennartson, secretary