

# Summary of UU Regional Environmental Justice Mtg: 10-19-13

## Goals of the meeting:

- Network across UU congregations re: environmental/environmental justice & climate concerns
- Share our work, activities and goals with each other to understand the landscape of efforts and priorities in this region
- Identify resources UU congregations have that we can share with each other
- Identify priorities which congregations can pursue together

## SOME COMMON FOCAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- a) Gardening, permaculture, UUA's "Ethical Eating" initiative, sustainable food production and consumption
- b) Climate Change (includes energy issues)
- c) Maintaining wildlife habitat & restoration (streams, creeks, etc.)
- d) Sustainable building management, green renovation & energy production for congregations
- e) Environmental film series
- f) Earth Day/April activities
- g) We need to grieve for the Earth; maintaining our focus and hope

## SOME COMMON GAPS IDENTIFIED

- a) We often are fragmented in our efforts – some do education, some do advocacy, perhaps some do reflection – but our congregations often don't do all three as part of a seamless process (and often the same people don't do all three steps.) Reflection is a key aspect for faith-based activism. What are we learning about ourselves? What does our faith have to say about what we see and feel and what we do? How is our experience affecting our faith/religious identity? Do we engage in moral reflection? How and when and with whom? It is important to understand how this work contributes to our spiritual growth – we don't always see this/feel this.
- b) We don't generally take the time to consider how social change occurs and so often plan events in a strategic vacuum. We don't have a clearly articulated working theory of social change (as individual congregations, and as a regional group of congregations wanting to be more effective and collaborative.) We tend to be most comfortable in an educational mode (lectures, study groups, films, etc.) involving ourselves. It is also not clear whether we stop to evaluate the impact of what we do and learn from that before planning something new.
- c) Many of us are in the beginning stages of reaching out into our communities to establish ongoing partnerships and address inequalities around us. We feel that we need to do more work related to our own privilege and power – and how this affects how we work on environmental/environmental justice and other issues. We could use better understanding and skills related to racial-ethnic and class dynamics/cultural competencies and friendships.
- d) We are not doing much direct corporate advocacy/systemic change related to our economy and how it is not sustainable (or just).

- e) Help re: maintaining focus and hope/grief work.
- f) We perceive a hole – what is the UUA doing on climate? Not much information/evidence to go on.

## **NEXT STEPS??**

- a. **Plan a day-long meeting where we explore how to integrate racial and economic justice in our vision and practice.**
- b. **Move forward on planning “Bidder 70” – film, discussion and potluck for area young adults.**
- c. **Identify some young adults to join planning team for spring 2014 young adult ej retreat co-sponsored by UUSJ, JPD-racial justice dept., UUMFE, and UUMFE’s YA climate justice network.**
- d. **Convene some joint strategic planning work among interested area congregations related to climate change; watershed planning.**
- e. **Hill advocacy – soon!**
- f. **Provide orientation for facilitators for “Our Place in the Web of Life” – or host a joint class/weekend retreat related to this?? WES interested...**
- g. **Follow-up on the grief and hope work**
- h. **Follow-up – offer workshop on strategic planning and how social change occurs...**
- i. **Evaluate the meeting and plan specific next steps. Share notes with all attendees along with sign-in list to promote networking.**

## **CALENDAR (partial)**

October 25 – UULM VA organizing meeting  
 November – 1<sup>st</sup> week: UU-JPD Racial Justice onference in Philly  
 November 7 – CCAN event re: blocking liquefied fracked natural gas in MD at Silver Spring Civic Center  
 November 10 – Groundswell – Cedar Lane UUC – meeting re: residential energy  
 November 16 – Arlington UUC – presentation on climate change  
 November 19 – Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington – concert  
 November 23 – UUSJ advocacy event at Arlington UUC  
 November 24 – WES shows film on overfishing

January 2014

MLK birthday: IMAC hosts an interfaith service; Fairfax will do an ej/sj project  
 January 28-30 – National conference on “Building Climate Solutions” by National Council of Science & Environment  
 January 29 – UULM-MD Annapolis – annual meeting  
 February 14 – IPL preach-in  
 April 14-21: IMAC will host Holy Week activities  
 Around Earth Day: Arlington UUC possibly hosts Tim DeChristopher  
 April 27 – River Road UUC hosts Paul Ehrlich of “Population Bomb” fame for major speech and fundraiser  
 April – JPD Annual Assembly  
 June 2014 – UUA General Assembly in Providence, RI – many ej workshops and events planned; divestment resolution will be considered.

## **Activities of congregations in the region:** *(from Katie Cook's notes and newsprint)*

### **VIRGINIA**

#### **Arlington:**

Explore solar roof possibilities; support management in plan for efficient and sustainable practices and upgrades to building systems; work with ministerial search cmte. to find new minister sensitive to 7<sup>th</sup> Principle; consider Green Sanctuary re-certification. Green Religious Education – quarterly programs. Develop “best practices” re: commercial kitchen/rental spaces. Spring: “Awakening the Dreamer” workshop; Earth Day celebration with Tim DeChristopher. Film showing: “Fierce Green Fire”/

#### **Fairfax:**

Climate action group: climate change resolution vote on Nov. 3; blog & LinkedIn presence; related movies on 2<sup>nd</sup> Fridays; Science, Reason and Religion Sunday afternoon discussion series. Planning for April 2014 Earth Day/Rachel Carson Celebration Day. Green Burial – tips and tools. Greening church activities.

#### **Mount Vernon:**

Ethical eating program (cook book, monthly potluck, brochures on restaurants serving sustainably raised meats and produce, green fairs); Water run-off management; Green renovation, Close to energy neutral (geothermal and solar systems), repair café, yearly RE environmental projects, wildlife habitat, tend an organic garden and donate produce to food pantry.

#### **Reston**

Nature trail, NWF backyard wildlife habitat certified; permaculture garden; monthly enviro film series, Northwest Earth Institute studies for adults, climate change conversation group, stream clean ups.

### **MARYLAND**

#### **Cedar Lane:**

Adult ed on increasing home energy efficiency and work with Groundswell; will start UU-UNO climate change team; working on federal and state leg advocacy (Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement; Keystone XL pipeline; GMO labeling; MD bottle bill; mercury in the environment; twice yearly Rock Creek clean ups, raising awareness of reducing the environmental causes of breast cancer.

#### **Frederick:**

Watershed conservation team (currently without a leader). Working with local NAACP chapter to reinvigorate local chapter. Working with local Hispanic Community. Active in Alternatives to Violence Program. In coalition to provide temporary overnight accommodations for homeless families.

#### **River Road**

Creek restoration advocacy for 10 Mile Creek; community-supported agriculture; Paul Ehrlich as upcoming speaker on population.

#### **Rockville**

solar panels on their church, anti-fracking efforts

## **Towson**

working with Chesapeake Bay Fund, stream clean-up

## **WASHINGTON, D.C.**

### **All Souls**

Partnership with Common Good City Farm; working to ensure sustainability and economic justice requirements and design in renovation are implemented; ongoing fair trade sales; Polar Bear Plunge for CCAN; ongoing volunteer support for DC Sustainability Plan; partnering with DC Divest (public retirement funds from fossil fuel companies); Citizens Climate Lobby; WIN- green jobs and job training advocacy.

### **Washington Ethical Society**

Limits to Growth learning group; environmental movies; climate change education and policy work; energy saving in our building (solar roofing); WIN – storm water action; NWEI discussion groups.

UUA Environmental Pages <http://www.uua.org/environment/>

## **Unitarian Universalist-related groups**

### **UUA: Multicultural Growth & Witness Department – Jessica Halperin**

<http://www.uua.org/directory/staff/multiculturalgrowth/index.php>

Jessica works on environmental justice & reproductive justice issues as national staff in the DC office. She tracks national/state trends in legislation/issues; she coordinates between national UU ej leaders and supports the Green Sanctuary Program; she develops theological/best practice resources; connects congregations to resources and opportunities for advocacy. Jessica can help congregations with the reflection piece of the advocacy model as well – understanding our theologies in context of advocacy and our faith journeys. Their office can also help congregations better understand racial-ethnic and class dynamics.

### **UUA: Green Sanctuary Program**

<http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml>

313 congregations in pipeline; 221 certified, 4 re-certified. In the process of revising standards – check out the website for more information! There is a stronger integration of justice throughout the various sections of requirements; more coaching is available for congregations as candidates or going for re-accreditation; cross-congregational collaboration is encouraged for re-accreditation, so this meeting is a great start at that! Feel free to contact Rev. Karen Brammer at the UUA's national office with your questions.

### **UU United Nations Office Climate Portal**

<http://climate.uu-uno.org/>

### **UUA: Joseph Priestly District – Racial Justice**

<http://jpdoua.org/uu-racial-justice-resources>

Paula Cole Jones is our district Racial Justice staff person. Key events coming up are: November 1-3 the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Racial Justice Conference in Philly; Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> – Mass Incarceration Teach-In; October 25 – Jazz Poetry Slam in Sterling, VA (UU Church); November 25 – VA UU

Legislative Ministry; April – District Assembly, DRUUMM, Allies for Racial Justice, Jubilee and White Allies workshops to be announced; reproductive justice workshops/train the trainers. Racial justice – dominant culture paradigm – shift to multicultural paradigm – work of inclusion

- Finding: UU congregations are diverse, but social and environmental justice work does not reflect this diversity
- Promotion of a new, 8<sup>th</sup> Principle – breaking down racial barriers
- Workshop in April in Joseph Priestley District – let Paula Cole Jones know if interested

### **Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice in the National Capital Region**

[www.uusj.org](http://www.uusj.org)

October 20 – gala celebrating sj and environmental justice UU leaders; November 23 – Best SJ and Advocacy practices with SOS@ Arlington; Fall – Bidder 70 Event with young adults; Spring – Young adult weekend retreat – a canoe/camping trip on environmental justice; training and trip to Capitol Hill on legislation after holidays – on Farm Bill and cap and dividend. Website and e-news for environmental and other sj events/issues. Inside/outside effort?

### **Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland**

[www.uulmmd.org](http://www.uulmmd.org). Margery Knight is the coordinator. Contact her at: [info@uulmmd.org](mailto:info@uulmmd.org) or 410-266-8044 x111. 2014 Legislative Priorities are: achieving significant increases in MD's mandatory renewable portfolio standard re: use of renewable energy; limits on the what qualifies for renewable energy credits; continue the moratorium on fracking.

### **Unitarian Universalist Virginia Legislative Advocacy Network**

<https://sites.google.com/site/uuvlan/>

Mason Moseley, [commish@uufp.org](mailto:commish@uufp.org)

Jonah Whitley, [peacenow1@verizon.net](mailto:peacenow1@verizon.net), 757-645-5028

Susan Bennett, UU Congregation of Fairfax, [scbennett@cox.net](mailto:scbennett@cox.net), 703-623-7685

### **UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST MINISTRY FOR EARTH**

<http://uuministryforearth.org/>

Young Adult UU Climate Justice Network forming – Facebook page and regional retreats around the country. Two events being planned with UUSJ here in this area – Bidder 70 in winter and spring ej trip to Chalk Point electric generation plant. REVISED: Now a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition to “Our Place in the Web of Life” curriculum. Coaching for facilitators available – talk with Pamela Sparr.

UUMFE helping to coordinate divestment from fossil fuels work at national level – prepare for new resolution at GA 2014. Earth Day materials coming out on sustainable communities.

Available on-line for free!

**Work by regional environmental organizations:**

**Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN)**

<http://www.chesapeakeclimate.org/>

11/7/2013 – Emergency Town Hall meeting re: liquefied fracked natural gas being shipped to and exported from MD at Cove Point. Free tickets for Silver Spring Civic Center event. Go to their website for details.

**GW IPL:**

<http://gwipl.org/>

November 19 – interfaith concert; January – organizing to strengthen MD clean energy  
2014 – Groundswell energy partnership; Speakers’ Bureau – resource for congregations; will start to do consumers’ coops for energy purchase.

**Sustainable DC:**

<http://sustainable.dc.gov/>

Faith-based coalition forming. DC effort is a model for other cities. To learn more, contact Mary Rojas who is a volunteer organizer with them on behalf of All Souls Church, Unitarian.

**National Interfaith**

Interfaith Moral Action on Climate

<http://www.interfaithactiononclimatechange.org/>

**Attending congregations:**

- UU Church of Arlington (UUCA)
- UU Church of Fairfax
- Washington Ethical Society
- UU Church of Rockville
- Cedar Lane UU Church
- UU Church of Mt. Vernon
- River Road UU Church
- UU Church of Reston
- UU Church of Towson
- UU Church of Frederick
- All Souls, Unitarian, Washington DC

**UU Organizations & Initiatives in Attendance/Represented**

- Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice in the National Capital Region
- Maryland UU State Advocacy Network
- UUA- Joseph Priestly District – racial justice staff
- UUA: Multicultural Growth & Witness Department (ej work) & Green Sanctuary Program
- Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth

**Regional and national organizations and initiatives represented**

- Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light (GW IPL)
- Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN)
- Interfaith Moral Action on Climate (IMAC)

- Sustainable DC (initiative through DC city government)