

Review of *Gather for the Earth* Responses

On February 29, 2020, members of Unity Church-Unitarian met to share concerns and responses to the current state of the environment. This *Gathering for the Earth* was moderated by the Sustainable Living Team, or SLT. The intention of this document is to compile responses from that meeting in a way that can inform the ministry of the SLT and Unity Church-Unitarian to further environmental and climate justice and sustainability. The SLT will develop a Green Sanctuary Action Plan for the congregation reflecting the wishes of the congregation as expressed by these results.

We are grounded in this work by the **Seventh Principle of the UUA**:

“Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part”

And by our own congregation’s **Ends** statements:

“Discover and pursue our individual and collect work to advance justice, wholeness, and equity for people, our Earth and all life on it.”

And by the SLT mission statement:

“To help Unity Church-Unitarian become a leader in climate action, environmental justice and sustainable living through education, hands-on projects, policy initiatives and opportunities for reflection and celebration”

Four main themes emerged from the meeting, and are listed below as **OUTCOMES**. Each outcome is followed by **STRATEGIES** proposed by *Gather for the Earth* participants, ranked in order according to the number of times the idea was brought forward. (We anticipate additional strategies will emerge as we formulate the Action Plan.)

The four themes, or **OUTCOMES**, are:

- Congregants are sustained spiritually for the work of environmental and climate justice and sustainability
- Individuals make wise choices and act for environmental and climate justice and sustainability.
- The church community acts for environmental and climate justice and sustainability.
- Long-term partnerships inform, enhance, and leverage our work and assist in influencing public policy and furthering social justice work.

Respectfully submitted by Priscilla Morton, Anna Newton, Nicole Lynskey and Jean Hammink, and the Sustainable Living Team, with immense gratitude to Laura Park

Outcome 1

Congregants are sustained spiritually for the work of environmental and climate justice and sustainability.

Strategies:

- Build support groups so that people can walk the walk collectively and know how their individual acts add up. Be accountable to one another for the work.
- Invite indigenous communities to share their perspective with the congregation about indigenous spiritual practice that connects people to the land.
- Acknowledge, with humility, our place in the interconnected web of existence.
- Maximize opportunities to build spiritual practices, express grief and find hope in worship and religious education.
- Create opportunities to connect with and enjoy nature.
- Take action purposefully and mindfully.

Outcome 2

Individuals make wise choices and act for environmental and climate justice and sustainability.

Strategies:

- Create opportunities to empower congregants to learn about and engage in wise choices:
 - Make information and sustainable practices accessible for the congregation
 - Communicate monthly environmental practices aligned with the worship theme.
 - Share tips regularly and create an ongoing, easily accessible list.
 - Teach people the 6 Rs: reduce, reuse, recycle, refuse, repair, repurpose
 - Help congregants use alternative forms of transportation (bikes, public transit)
 - Help congregants share their environmental skills with each other
 - Provide a clearinghouse for ways individuals can act to support policy issues.
 - Show people how to act in alignment with appropriate land stewardship (pollinator gardens, land use in development, balancing conflicting values in land use, planting trees, food production, use of farmland)
 - Teach people about divestment from fossil fuels.
 - Learn collectively about this land's history (i.e. Dakota land) and our historical, cultural connection to nature. (your historical and cultural connection)
 - Create opportunities to steward the land.

- Track whether people are making wise choices and acting (congregational survey?)
- Celebrate success in individual choices and action.

Outcome 3

The church community acts for environmental and climate justice and sustainability.

Strategies:

- Find collective actions for the congregation:
 - Plant trees
 - Collect funds for a particular purpose
 - Assess the church's investment in the work (green minister? Money invested? Time invested?)
 - Set up a carpool program
 - Help people use their gifts, talents, and resources in the work.
- Implement best sustainability practices at the church to act in alignment with environmental values and as a model for what's possible in environmental sustainability and as education for others (individuals, institutions, and the community), including:
 - Audit the church's carbon footprint
 - Aim for net zero carbon use: Clean energy, Solar on the church
 - Grounds/greenspace pollinator garden
 - Divest from fossil fuels (probably already done; check with Barbara)
- Collectively endorse a broad and proactive policy for environmental and climate justice and sustainability (e.g., the Green New Deal or the Minnesota 100 percent).
- Integrate environmental and climate justice and sustainability education into all areas the church educates (Religious Education, Wellspring Wednesday, etc.)
- Connect environmental justice work with other justice work the church does.
- Assess the results of this work.
- Celebrate and publicize successes and process, particularly what we're already doing.

Outcome 4

Long-term partnerships inform, enhance, and leverage our work and assist in influencing public policy and furthering social justice work.

Strategies:

- Create and sustain partnerships, [in humility] that inform our work:
 - Indigenous people
 - Youth
 - Other traditionally marginalized and oppressed communities
- Create and sustain partnerships that enhance:

- U of M
- Frogtown Green
- Transition Towns
- Ramsey County and City of St. Paul
- MNIPL
- CUB (Community Urban Builders?)
- MN Council of Churches
- Obama Elementary
- House of Hope Church
- Create and sustain partnerships that assist in influencing public policy
 - MNIPL
 - MN state legislature and departments
 - Ramsey County and City of St. Paul
 - Other environmental advocacy groups
- Create and sustain partnerships that assist in furthering social justice work:
 - Poor People's Campaign
 - Indigenous and other marginalized people