

Chapter 4

Creating a Comprehensive Program

A COMPREHENSIVE GREEN SANCTUARY PROGRAM encompasses all aspects of our religious life: theological reflection and spiritual growth, religious education for our whole lives, Earth justice activism and outreach, and sustainable practices in our individual and congregational lives. These are the four building blocks of the Green Sanctuary Program.

The choices we make are very much dependent on personal values, experiences, and yes, economic circumstances. As we've said before, there is no universal right answer for the complicated environmental challenges we face. In almost every case, a response in one direction will result in some unintended impact in another direction. And there are always trade-offs, usually related to cost, but often for distribution of impacts or other outcomes. And for some issues, the science isn't well enough developed and reasonable people may simply disagree about the correct course of action.

Our challenge in the face of this complexity is to learn as much as we can about the issues and possible responses, and then make well-intentioned choices. Some of the time, the difference may be quite small, as in disposable cups vs. running the dishwasher for china cups. In other cases, you may have a large front-end cost, but a change would result in a significant environmental improvement, for example, by replacing a furnace with a more efficient model.

Many things in your personal life will be a part of the conversation about how you can live more lightly on the Earth, including the car you drive (if you drive one at all), and the food you eat, as well as how much time you have to contribute to the work of healing the Earth. Basic habits and lifestyle changes can be most difficult without sufficient motivation. Awareness of the impacts of our contemporary lifestyle is the starting point for change. Often this comes from witnessing the damage first-hand, or from hearing the stories of those who are most affected. It is direct experience that often moves us to action when all the intellectualizing in the world has failed.

Our first step is to make the decision to learn. Once we become aware of a problem, we often experience confusion as to the best course of action. This calls for research—and fortunately a lot has been done for many of the most significant issues. Global warming and energy conservation, water access and quality, food sustainability, species extinction, all of these issues and others have attracted extensive scientific research followed by great books and some films translating the knowledge into language we can understand.

Then we must decide how to respond. Of course we can't do everything, but as Joanna Macy reminds us, "the truth is that all aspects of the current crisis reflect the same mistake, setting ourselves apart and using others—other people, other species, other resources—for

our own gain. To heal any aspect of our separateness helps the others to heal as well. Just find what you love to work on and take joy in that.”

Like everyone else, UUs are reluctant to “sacrifice”, and the relative affluence for many of us makes giving up our materialistic lifestyles that much less attractive. The environmental movement sometimes seems to have a reputation of demanding that we give up some of those parts of our lives we think are most important. Making individual life style changes without the support of others with similar intentions can be nearly impossible, even when we know and believe there are personal advantages to the change.

Thinking about getting rid of the TV? It’s virtually impossible in this day and age unless you completely isolate your kids from their friends. But re-focus your family’s social life around strong relationships and interactive activities with others whose values are similar to yours, and suddenly the importance of TV in family life seems to fade away. If shifting away from a materialistic lifestyle seems daunting to many in your congregation, you may want to initiate Simplicity Circles for families to provide built-in reinforcement and affirmation for the changes you are contemplating.

Changes in congregational activities and structures may seem almost insurmountable if you start from “how much will it cost to make the change?” rather than “how can we live our faith in a way that’s best for the Earth as well as our community?” The answer to this second question is the true journey to becoming a Green Sanctuary.

Decisions made in personal lives will influence the congregation’s decisions, and vice versa. If nothing else, this process will give you practice at working through complexities and making difficult choices as a community!

Accreditation requires at least twelve activities or projects spread over the four Focus Areas shown below.

Focus Area	Number of activities or projects required
Worship & Celebration	2 or more
Religious Education	2 or more
Earth Justice	2 or more, at least one of which will be a major ongoing collaboration with another congregation or organization to address an issues of environmental justice in your community or in the world.
Sustainable Living	4 or more, including at least one energy conservation activity
Your choice	2 additional activities in any of the four focus areas above

Developing Activities and Projects for the Action Plan

The specific projects and activities your congregation chooses will depend a lot on the interests, resources, and on-going programs you have to work with. To begin your planning, consider the list of criteria for selecting projects in the box below, and add a few of your own that seem relevant.

A few criteria for selecting projects:

- **Congregation's experience with similar projects;**
- **Congregational capacity to organize for success;**
 - **Appropriateness for your situation;**
- **Local or national issues that generate passion among congregation members.**

Any number of sources can be used to develop your initial list of possible projects, for example:

- Results of your congregational assessment. You have identified gaps, problems, and opportunities for further action, any of which will be potential projects. At least one of these projects should come from the energy audit or be aimed at energy conservation.
- Results of the individual assessments. Issues where respondents show interest or willingness to be involved, or topics they indicate they would like to know more about.
- Congregation's strategic plan. If your congregation is already working on a broader strategic plan, Green Sanctuary goals should be a part of that planning process. If you have a completed long range plan, the Green Sanctuary Action Plan should be integrated into it.
- Ongoing congregational programs that could be expanded or deepened by adding an environmental dimension. For example, if you already have an active program on affordable housing, you might decide to integrate energy efficiency into that program.
- Environmental issues in your local community where your congregation's participation could help make a difference. For example, you might be angered by a local waste incinerator that is cited for producing toxins in a minority community. You can join or initiate a campaign to have it shut down, publicly witnessing to the injustice of its location where it impacts residents who did not choose to have it in their neighborhood.

- A global environmental issue, if you sense a high level of concern by congregational members and/or opportunities for collaboration with other groups, e.g., climate change, access to clean water, or sustainable food choices. Any of these or similar issues could offer a broad focus for developing a group of activities. See below for a suggestion on using a comprehensive issue theme for organizing your program.

If an issue excites you, but the immediately obvious solution is not practical in your situation; you might use this exercise as an opportunity to practice thinking “outside the box.” If you rent space for Sunday services, you may not have authority to significantly reduce your energy usage in the building, but you could design a program for alternative transportation to get members to church, as has been done at several congregations. Or you could make individual commitments for members to reduce energy consumption at home, and use one of the computer tools available to calculate your cumulative savings for the congregation. Or you might even cajole the building owners to allow you to make some limited low-cost conservation improvements.

Some of the twelve projects in your action plan will involve only the Green Sanctuary committee and relevant staff or decision makers. For example, a team of the stakeholders would create and implement a policy that commits you to use of non-toxic cleaning products and use of paper products with a recycled content. Other projects will invite participation by members, but only a small number will be involved. A discussion course on voluntary simplicity or global warming would have ten or twelve participants. Still other activities will involve the entire congregation, for example an annual Earth Day event, or creation of a butterfly garden as an intergenerational program. Your total program should include a balance of various sizes of projects to address a variety of issues and offer a range of opportunities for everyone in the congregation to participate in one way or another.

Considering Possible Focus Area Projects

The following section contains a very brief listing of the types of projects that are envisioned for each of the four focus areas. Some of these are real examples from congregations; others are ideas we imagine would make great projects.

Worship and Spiritual Practice

Worship and spiritual practice help to ground our work and deepen our relationships with each other and with Earth. Through worship we create a context for celebrating our gifts and our relationships and reinforcing the bonds that hold us together in community. Our spiritual practice also strengthens us, as we nurture and support each other through hard times and confusion, healing the grief and sense of loss that come from destruction of our Earth home, and finding ways to turn our anger into constructive action. You will design at least two projects to enhance the worship life of the congregation.

Possible Projects

- Integrate Earth awareness into the ongoing worship life of the congregation by including prayers, meditations, readings, and sermons. Add a statement on caring for Earth to the opening words or chalice lighting used on Sunday mornings. Commission a song that celebrates Earth for the congregation.
- Recognize our relationship with Earth through special worship themes in the liturgical calendar, such as Earth Day, flower communion, water communion services, etc.
- Develop additional opportunities for spiritual practice to deepen and enrich the congregation's relationship with Earth through seasonal celebrations, rituals, and alternative worship events. Hold at least one event each season.

Religious Education

Religious education for our children should be designed to prepare them to live sustainably in the world, understanding they are part of nature. That's not something they'll learn in the mainstream culture. RE includes classroom learning, direct experience of nature (a walk in the woods or a visit to a bird sanctuary for example), and practice in repairing environmental damage (stream cleanup or planting a garden).

Lifespan religious exploration for adults helps us to understand the complexity of Earth's systems, how our lifestyle affects those systems and how we can change to live more responsibly. It also provides an integrated context for understanding for learning from Earth's wisdom, drawing sustenance from the "peace of wild things" (in Wendell Berry's words), and truly knowing the sacredness of all of life.

RE programs will often involve inter-generational activities that allow the children and adults to learn together, reinforcing each others learning, and having fun in the process. You will select at least one project for children and one for adults.

Possible projects:

- Adopt an Earth-centered curriculum for the children's RE program, teaching that we are all a part of nature, not separate and outside of it.
- Invite each class of children to adopt a small section of the congregation's property to learn about its resident plants and animals and how to keep it healthy. The children will become familiar with the seasonal cycles in their plot and develop deep connections with the beings that inhabit it: soil microbes and fungi, spiders and song birds, squirrels and raccoons, and giant oak and fir trees.
- Design an intergenerational project for both children and adults to learn about your local landscape, its biological and cultural history, and what dangers are posed by global warming or another serious environmental issue.

- Offer at least one Northwest Earth Institute discussion course each semester for adults and teenagers.
- Sponsor a community film festival of environmental films.
- Organize a book group with a new environmental topic each month (or semester).
- Collaborate with other congregations or environmental groups to design an educational series on a local issue of significance at the state or regional level. Follow up with action to respond to what you learned.

Earth Justice

As Unitarian Universalists we long for a just society where the benefits for some do not come at the expense of others, especially poor and oppressed people in our communities and around the world. Earth justice acknowledges that environmental impacts fall first and most severely on those who receive the least of the benefits and are mostly powerless to effect changes. We can find ways to work in solidarity with them to prevent or mitigate those impacts. Earth justice also ought to extend beyond human societies to include all beings who inhabit this planet.



A gift of light (bulbs) for local farm worker families. UU Fellowship of Visalia, California

It's hard to think of a social justice issue that doesn't have an environmental dimension, and there are virtually no environmental issues that aren't driven by their social dimension. So it's up to us to examine those issues we're called upon to respond to, and to understand the environmental aspects of them. The following questions and ideas are offered to trigger your imagination as you consider a range of justice issues.

Possible projects:

- If you promote affordable housing, you could consider how to make sure that low cost homes take advantage of energy saving technologies to minimize CO2 emissions. If the issue is health care for all, you know that children affected by severe air pollution suffer much higher rates of childhood asthma. They need consistent access to health care, but they also deserve reduced pollution to improve their overall health. To combat hunger, gleaning from local farms, promoting sustainable agriculture, or starting a community garden and giving some of the produce to a local food pantry are ways to improve access to healthier food for low income people.
- The work of justice also requires that we look at the impacts of our congregational actions and practices on poor communities and people of color. If there are negative

impacts surely we must immediately mitigate them. We must also look for opportunities to build new relationships and create positive impacts in these communities.

- If we have a larger property with a stream running through it, what is the condition of the habitat and what creatures use it? Is there a need for restoration? Do we treat our land like a golf course, fertilizing and eliminating every dandelion with herbicides, creating a functional desert with our chemicals? Can we turn a portion into a butterfly garden? Can we install bat houses and water sources to make it more friendly to non-human neighbors? How can we honor their intrinsic worth and make sure there is justice for these species?

The limit to what you can accomplish by making more sustainable choices is determined by the limits of your imagination and by your capacity to get things done—in terms of energy, time, and resources. Restoring Earth justice can draw us into any of the several dimensions:

- Impacts on poor and/or indigenous communities from environmental issues such as drought, erosion, or flooding resulting in loss of homelands and forced migrations, famine, disease, etc.
- The intersection of racism and environmental problems, resulting in acceptance of pollution sources being sited near communities of color, or the lack of investment in adequate infrastructure in these communities so that they experience frequent disasters like floods or toxic spills.
- Unsafe conditions or practices in our church facilities which may impact employees, contractors, or neighbors, e.g., application of toxic lawn chemicals or cleaning supplies, or exposed asbestos or toxic mold in buildings in poor repair.
- Loss of species diversity and habitat degradation impacting non-human species.

Your Green Sanctuary Earth justice projects will directly address at least one of these dimensions. Your choice of a project should begin with building a relationship with those impacted by the problem. It is important to get to know the community's interests—their history, their concerns, their capacity to respond, their hopes for a better future. As you get to know them, you will learn how you can best support their interests so that your project design will be most effective on their terms.

UU congregations usually see themselves as strong supporters of liberal social justice causes and they may already be active on several justice fronts. Sometimes the Green Sanctuary program is seen at first as another program competing for the attention and resources of the congregation's activists. But this program does not necessarily require a whole new social justice project. A little imagination will allow you to find the environmental aspects of almost any social justice issue. In fact, you can often bolster current projects of the congregation with a dimension of Earth justice by bringing new energy and creativity to a long standing project instead of initiating an entirely new activity.

For the Green Sanctuary Program, you are asked to plan and carry out two relevant projects. At least one must be a major on-going project in collaboration with other groups or partners. You will want to build on relationships you already have in the community. In addition, you may seek out other partners and collaborators who have existing relationships in the community you are supporting, and others who may have the expertise and/or connections that can help resolve the issue you decide to address. These partnerships will boost your capacity to create change.

We suggest you team up with another congregation (UU or another faith) if at all possible, to reinforce the relationship of this work to your faith. If you are not working with a faith group, we encourage you to make your faith a visible part of your motivation for your involvement. In a very real way this is evangelical work, and it should be clear that you are doing it because your faith calls you to care for the Earth and all of Earth's inhabitants.

Your second environmental justice project can be of a smaller scale, and may be less direct. Some congregations might decide to raise funds to support a justice issue in response to a book or film that got their attention. Many contributed to the disaster recovery in New Orleans, for example, supporting the justice work of the UUSC that continues even now. You may also want to sponsor work teams for the ongoing rebuilding efforts in that ravaged city. Or you might contribute to an organization in Appalachia working to fight mountain top removal and participate in local activism to support their efforts on the issue.

You could select a public policy issue relating to Earth justice and join the letter writing campaign to support new legislation or regulations for that issue. A great example of this might be the recent publication of proposed regulations that would reduce requirements for stream protection for coal mining. You might want to write letters—many letters—(and recruit others to write them too) to agency officials, congress members, local and national newspapers, and anyone else who should listen, decrying this sell out to the mining companies and demanding stronger protection.

Whatever projects you select should aim toward benefiting to those who directly suffer the impacts of the environmental degradation. With this as the criterion, we must note that activities that have only very small and indirect affects will not qualify. For example, selling fair trade coffee in the congregation is often a proposed project, but the benefit for the farmer of the coffee is very indirect; most of the benefit goes to the congregation members who get to drink good coffee without going out of their way. We want to encourage you to go beyond the first easy step. For example, after learning about how fair trade works and how important shade farming is for the health of the land, and organic is for the health of the farmer, one congregation decided that they wanted to spread the word. They put together a team to visit businesses in their community to promote the use of fair trade coffee in local restaurants and offices.

Possible projects:

- Adopt a community that is already feeling the affects of climate change. Learn from their situation and find out how you can help them mitigate the impacts.

- Join the coalition to prevent the construction of a coal fired power plant in your region. Develop a partnership with a community likely to be directly impacted by the plant and support their campaign.
- As part of your on-going program to support affordable housing, participate in the annual house painting project for community elders. Purchase low-VOC paint to minimize toxics for the homeowners you are helping. Also bring a batch of compact fluorescent light bulbs as a gift to them.

Sustainable Living

Sustainable living includes many of our day-to-day choices: for example, energy and landscaping, building management and waste management, transportation and food production and distribution, and many other issues. In this element, you will seek out and put into action ways to lighten the burden of your lifestyle on Earth's systems. You will select at least four projects in this area to reduce your environmental footprint, address some damage or problem identified in your audit, or address environmental issues the congregation is concerned about. At least one of these projects must be aimed at energy conservation. Some projects will focus on congregational practices while others may promote change in the personal lives of members. For the latter, you should document the changes individuals make and calculate the collective benefits to show how individual actions can quickly add up to a big difference.

Possible projects:

- Energy conservation: Implement at least some of the recommendations from your energy audit to reduce energy consumption and CO2 emissions. Energy conservation is a fairly easy sell these days, as relentless increases in the price of fuel force a new look at cheaper options. With growing understanding of the environmental impacts of profligate fossil fuel consumption, it's getting easier to gain support for the up front investment that may be required for conservation. In addition to cost savings, you can feel positive that you're making your contribution to addressing global warming.
- Based on the findings of your environmental assessment, select an area of church policy and practice that needs changing. For example, develop appropriate policy(ies) and design a campaign to promote changes in behavior to implement them. Consider building into rental agreements a request or requirement to address the issue. Possible issues could include: recycling/composting procedures and practice; use of recycled products (e.g., office paper, paper products, dish ware, etc); socially/environmentally responsible investments; support for and use of alternative transportation.
- Select an issue with serious environmental impacts (such as water, development sprawl, or food production). Develop a comprehensive program to learn about the problems, local policy issues, potential damage, and appropriate mitigation strategies. Then design activities to respond to the issue through personal lifestyle chang-

es, congregational policies and practice, and civic activism. The set of activities can qualify as more than one project if separate actions are substantial.

Planning for success

Making Every Project Count

As the Green Sanctuary committee gets started on the action plan, many ask us whether they can count projects they have already completed prior to applying for candidacy. The question implies a conceptual misunderstanding of Green Sanctuary as a “check list” of projects that you will complete one at a time, checking them off as you go. But the answer is not so straightforward. One faith activist describes it this way: “It’s not about changing light bulbs; it’s about transforming people on the assumption that transformed people will change light bulbs.” The “steps” or projects are just a tool for furthering that transformation. That should change the way you look at what you “counts” as one of the 12 projects in your action plan. Your 12 projects won’t solve the environmental crisis by themselves, but you will raise awareness and get members started on the path of living more lightly. At the same time, as a congregation you will be deepening your relationship with Earth and with each other, making your community stronger and more committed to healing a hurting world. That is why some of the projects are about religious education, not just environmental education, and why some are about spiritual practice, not just environmental topics for the Sunday sermon.

The environmental assessment you’ll do in preparation for your application will clarify your current status in terms of awareness and practice. You will also look at your congregation’s interests and inclinations in order to understand what it takes to get them motivated and excited about issues or programs. (This is unique to every congregation.) By shedding light on these two aspects of congregational life, you can develop a comprehensive program of projects and programs that will move them to the next level—all in the context of the 5 goals of the Green Sanctuary Program.



Rescued Raptors Rap with RE Kids. Injured raptors can't go home to the wild, so they visit the UU kids for a close-up view. River Road UU Church, Bethesda, Maryland

Comprehensive Issue Theme: One Approach for Planning

One possible approach to choosing activities to include in your action plan is to select an overall theme that will serve as a framework for the projects you decide on. This could be something that is part of your congregation's identity, or a specific issue that you have been working on over time. By putting the individual projects into a particular context, it can be easier to develop goals and integrate the Earth consciousness into all aspects of the congregation's life. The following are two very different scenarios that suggest creative ways of using a theme. The scenarios are composites, with specific ideas taken from many of the certified and candidate congregations.

For a mid-size Florida congregation which spends much of its time outdoors on its 7-acre property, the landscape becomes an obvious framework.

Worship often is focused on gratitude for the beauty and bounty of the land. Seasonal celebrations become a regular part of the worship calendar, and meditation services make use of a new memorial garden. A labyrinth is planned for the future.

RE projects include creating a butterfly garden and a produce garden, learning about soil nutrients and microscopic inhabitants, the importance of the wetland area, and the wildlife that visits or lives on the property. Age appropriate activities are designed for the children, and many activities in the gardens are intergenerational.

An environmental justice project enhances the health of the wetland by improving water circulation and removing invasive species designed by a member of the congregation who is an hydraulic engineer. For another project, a group of congregants works with a local community food program, contributing produce from the garden and consulting with a local group that's starting their own community garden.

Sustainable living activities are aimed at reducing the congregation's environmental footprint, includ-

ing eliminating use of toxic chemicals and reducing carbon emissions to mitigate global warming. A compost system has been started for kitchen and yard waste.

For a large inner city congregation, racial and economic justice have long been a central theme, so it is a natural fit to integrate environmental justice into their ongoing program.

Worship in the sanctuary is multi-cultural, celebrating the diversity of the local community. Respect and care for the Earth is added to the ritual verse used for the chalice lighting each Sunday.

The Minister of Religious Education incorporates an environmental curriculum for the children, adapting from one that emphasizes Native American stories and rituals. She has researched local Native culture to add an extra relevance, being careful to avoid cultural appropriation. Adult courses study indigenous cultures and one of the covenant groups conducts a worship service honoring environmental activists in developing countries.

For environmental justice, the congregation participates in a local affordable housing project, raising funds to donate energy efficient appliances and low-VOC paint. They plan to hold a campaign to raise funds for solar panels for an apartment building planned for a nearby neighborhood.

For sustainable living, the audit revealed a severe asbestos problem in the building, including the basement room where a neighborhood youth group meets every week. Remediation of this space is a top priority. For another project the committee will decide to take on the weekly lunch program to make it a Zero Trash event. (Lunch is served every Sunday after church.) They received a grant to hire a neighborhood resident to help wash dishes and raised funds to buy the additional dishes needed to replace paper plates. They are usually successful in recruiting the four to six volunteers needed to staff the events. They currently hold Zero Trash lunches once a month, but the goal is eventually to do it every week.

Only when you have this comprehensive understanding can you decide what projects to put in your action plan. The action plan starts where you're at now and moves you forward from there. It's not enough to incorporate Earth references in a one-time, special service. But if you've already begun to regularly include Earth references in your worship, you ask yourself what you might do next to move to another level. If you have already switched to ceramic coffee cups for coffee hour, what can you do to move to the next level in terms of waste management in the congregation? If you created an organic garden, what will you do to continue to integrate the garden into the life of the congregation? (How about a class: "Gardening as spiritual practice," beginning with weeding as meditation and ending with an organic communion.)

Most congregations find that the problem is narrowing down their list of projects, not finding more projects to fill up the 12 boxes on the action plan. In the end, if there's one project you've already finished but that you truly think must be there, we can consider how it fits and why you see it as appropriate. We are generally not inclined to accept projects or actions that were completed before you did the assessment, but we are willing to try to understand why you want to include one that's finished rather than one that still is waiting to be done. We certainly will work with you to create a realistic and sustainable program overall. This is lifetime work, not a 2-year project you'll finish and then move on to something else. Creating an action plan that will move the congregation towards that transformation instead of just changing light bulbs is a different challenge.

Developing a Communications Plan

Communications techniques are among your most powerful tools for successfully achieving the goals of the Green Sanctuary Program. Whether within your congregation or in the wider community, you need to share information, recruit participation, and gather resources to carry out your actions.

The Action Plan described in the next section requires a communications strategy for sharing information about and inviting participation in the various environmental issues and activities. The communications strategy will largely reflect current practices in your congregation, but this may also be an opportunity to develop new tools and new expertise that will serve the congregation in other ways. Your strategy will outline your intended approaches to:

- Sharing practical information about environmental issues and sustainable living strategies,
- Recruiting participation in your many program actions, and
- Collaborating with other groups, organizations, or communities within and beyond your congregation.

The communications strategy will record how you plan to accomplish the objectives using the communications tools determined to be most effective, based on existing experience and enthusiasm for new technologies. You may want to create a "green" column for your

newsletter; and a bulletin board at the church to educate and encourage members to take action on various issues. You'll want a Green Sanctuary page on your web site which links to UUMFE, the UUA, and other relevant sites. See the UUMFE web site for a template you may use if it seems appropriate. You'll also want to develop strategies for outreach to other churches and activists in your community, using existing relationships and creating new ones. Specific elements should consider several possibilities:

- Congregational newsletter, web site, and list serve or blog;
- Bulletin board and or information table for Sunday fellowship hour;
- Community-wide networks to share information and success stories and collaborate on projects through interfaith organizations, secular environmental networks, and local community groups; and
- Local media outlets (newspaper, radio, cable TV, or others in your community) for broader announcements and to generate support and participation for events and political actions to protect the environment and mitigate environmental problems. Keep in mind that community radio and TV stations are always looking for content to highlight local issues and events. Your material could be in high demand!

Media training is often available at local community colleges or adult education programs, and sometimes through community activist organizations. UUs for a Just Economic Community (www.uujec.net) offers a program of media training for economic justice activists, and will welcome Green Sanctuary participants.

Remember that your communications strategies are not ends in themselves, but tools to make your program more effective. Use of a variety of both proven and emerging communications tools will go a long way towards helping you build the kind of dynamic community that will support and motivate the members of your congregation to stay the course. Continually rethinking your communication strategy will also allow you to adapt and make use of new technologies as they become available. Exhibit D offers some examples of Communications Plans.

Documenting Your Action Plan

Once you have identified your congregation's choice of specific activities or projects and designed a communications plan, the final step in Phase I, prior to filing for candidacy, will be for the Green Sanctuary committee to document your Action Plan to guide the congregation's completion of the requirements for Green Sanctuary accreditation. While choice of specific activities is at the discretion of the congregation, the total strategy will be aimed at achieving the five goals of the Green Sanctuary program. The Action Plan will propose the twelve or more projects the congregation intends to undertake during candidacy.

The Action Plan is a road map to help you think through your strategy and check the logistics of your program elements. If, in the implementation of a particular part of the plan, you find that circumstances have changed, plans are no longer appropriate, or barriers for a

particular project are insurmountable, the Green Sanctuary coordinator is always available to help you revise your plan.

The Action Plan will include a brief description of each of the twelve projects. For each project, include the following:

- Project objective, (i.e., what are you trying to accomplish)
- Description of what you intend to do,
- Identification of the leader or coordinator and who in the congregation will participate,
- Strategies for communicating with the congregation about the project, and
- A proposed time line.

Remember that the reviewers of your Action Plan are not necessarily familiar with the situation in your congregation, so include enough information about the project that they understand what you intend to have happen. Usually a paragraph or two is sufficient, but if your project is somewhat unique you may need to include additional context and a more detailed description. If you are using local references, please be sure you translate them for non-local reviewers.

Exhibit C offers examples of action plans. You may adapt one of these to fit your program, or create a different format, as long as it contains the required information.

Green Sanctuary Candidacy

Once you have formed a Green Sanctuary Committee, engaged your congregation, completed most of the audit, and drafted an Action Plan for the program activities or projects, you are ready to enroll as a Green Sanctuary candidate. We ask that you bring your congregation to this stage of development prior to candidacy so that you understand both what will be involved and who is committed to specific program elements. This is critical to your success. At any time during your preparation work, don't hesitate to contact the Green Sanctuary coordinator with questions about the process.

Some congregations decide to ask their members to vote to apply for candidacy. This is not a required step (the vote is required for accreditation), but it can be one way of gauging the commitment of the members and solidifying support. If you choose to ask for a vote, we suggest you keep the wording of the motion fairly general. As you move through the program, you may find you need to make adjustments to your original plans and less restrictive language will leave your options open. On the other hand, there is some risk in asking the congregation to vote too early. If there is hesitancy about moving forward or resistance to making a strong commitment, getting a negative vote or a very weak positive vote may tie your hands and preclude moving forward. You will need to anticipate the likely outcome and choose your strategy accordingly.

With these tasks completed, the Green Sanctuary committee will apply to the UU Ministry for Earth for candidacy status. Formal application will be submitted using the Application for Candidacy form in Exhibit E. We prefer that you submit your application electronically in MS Word format. If you include attachments with extensive graphics, you may submit them in Adobe PDF format. If you cannot submit electronically, please contact the Green Sanctuary coordinator for alternate instructions for mailing.

The application fee for the Green Sanctuary Program is \$100.00. You may submit this payment by credit card through our web site, or mail a check to the UU Ministry for Earth office. Please clearly indicate on your order form or check that it is for your candidate application fee. This fee is used to support the Green Sanctuary Program, and confers a one-year congregational membership in Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth.

Once a congregation is accepted as a candidate, it generally takes about 18 months to two years to complete the candidacy. Besides simply the amount of work involved in this major effort, this length of time allows for integration of the commitment beyond the surface, helping the congregation to build its Earth ministry identity more completely. It takes at least a year to begin to institutionalize the changes that are called for in the congregation, and to get all members on board with the program. On the other hand, it is difficult to sustain enthusiasm and focus for a program of this magnitude over several years, so it is best if you plan your program to take no longer than two years.

As a candidate, you have access to program support for your committee, including telephone consultation on specific issues. The UUMFE web site also contains resources that will help you along the way. As you complete the projects in your Action Plan, be sure to compile the documentation and photographs to accompany your final application for accreditation.

In order to monitor your progress, we ask you to submit a brief report twice a year to let us know what you've accomplished, whether you're on track with your time line, and whether you need any assistance. These reports are requested in December and May. You will receive a message about three weeks before the report is due.

With your destination more clearly spelled out, with the path cleared and a map in hand, with many companions gathered, you are set to begin your journey. Some may approach this work as if it is simply a task to get done before moving on to the next one, but with a vision that narrow it will be hard to keep your companions interested and engaged. Others may approach this work as an urgent mission to save the world, but a view that expansive is likely to be overwhelming; the first roadblock could serve as an excuse to give up once again.

Rather, the Green Sanctuary Program should be seen as a great adventure. As you implement your action plan, you'll use the benefits of both perspectives: the task orientation will keep you organized and give you milestones to celebrate on the way. The sense of mission can inspire you to stretch beyond your usual comfort level to reach for a higher goal.

You'll worship and celebrate together, honoring and reinforcing your connection with Earth. You'll gain knowledge and wisdom in religious education activities from experts on the issues and from each other's experience and perspectives. You'll make practical changes in your personal and congregational lives, finding that when you combine your actions with those of other activists you can make a substantial difference in the condition of the planet. And you'll experience once again the joy and satisfaction that comes from working together to restore right relations with each other and with beings on this Earth, for now and for the future.

As Joanna Macy reminds us, it is a privilege to live in this time and place when we can participate in the self-healing of the world. Implementing your Green Sanctuary Program is one way to show our gratitude for this gift.

When you have completed all the projects in your action plan, it is time to prepare for accreditation. The following chapter will guide you through that process.