

ALLEN AVENUE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST  
GREEN SANCTUARY RE-ACCREDITATION



*Green Sanctuary*  
*Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations*  
*Congregational Stewardship Services*  
*25 Beacon Street*  
*Boston, MA 02108*  
*617.948.4251*

## **Application for Green Sanctuary Re-Accreditation Candidacy**

### **Congregation Information**

Congregation Name      Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church

Address                      524 Allen Avenue, Portland, Maine 04103

Web site                      www.a2u2.org

Green Sanctuary contact   Sally Breen

Address                      48 Lantern Lane, Windham, ME 04062

Phone                        207-892-8391 (home): 207-712-7566 (cell)

Email                         sallybreen@roadrunner.com

Minister or  
Congregation Leader      Rev. Mykel (Myke) Johnson

### **CONGREGATION PROFILE**

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**Church Membership and RE Enrollment:**

Current church members is 270, and the average attendance as of May 1, 2009 was 161.  
Registered RE families with A2U2: 49  
Children and Youth registered with A2U2: 81  
Average weekly RE attendance at A2U2 39  
RE leader volunteers at A2U2: 30

**Demographics:** **Portland** is the largest city in the U.S. state of Maine and the county seat of Cumberland County. The city population was 64,249 at the 2000 Census. At the 2005-2007 American Community Survey Estimates, the city's population was 88.3% White, 6.6% Black or African American, 0.9% American Indian and Alaska Native, 4.1% Asian, 1.6% from some other race and 1.4% from two or more races. Portland welcomes immigrants from war-torn countries, most recently with an influx of second-tier immigrants from Iraq. The median income for a household in the city was \$35,650, and the median income for a family was \$48,763. Males had a median income of \$31,828 versus \$27,173 for females. The per capita income for the city was \$22,698. About 9.7% of families and 14.1% of the population were below the poverty line, including 12.5% of those under age 18 and 11.9% of those age 65 or over.

Due to being Maine's largest city, its proximity to Boston (115 miles to the south) and having the state's largest port, Portland has become Maine's economic capital. The local economy has shifted over the years from relying primarily on fishing, manufacturing and agriculture towards a much more service-based economy

**Our Mission Statement:** At Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church, we are growing a community that transforms lives through the power of love. We celebrate diversity, encourage spiritual growth, and promote social responsibility, as we walk with care on this earth. We empower our members to share their gifts to build a world of compassion, equality, and freedom.

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## Our Community:

We are a community that Celebrates Diversity: Our Minister, Reverend Mykel Johnson, is a strong leader and warm presence in the pulpit, in congregational and community life. She challenges us to take a deeper look at ourselves and our relationship with the diverse community and world around us.



Our church is a Welcoming Congregation. Our minister and many congregants participated actively in the successful vote to legalize same-sex marriage in Maine in May 2009. However, the vote was immediately challenged by the religious right. Our entire community was crestfallen (to say the least) in November 2009 when Maine's voters overturned the vote. We have only begun to do what is necessary to legalize same sex marriage in Maine.



A member of our church, Jim Perley, created a bumper sticker with the message, "Our church believes in civil rights for all." We made a special effort to disseminate them widely, and we have seen this bumper sticker on cars across the state.

We are a community that Encourages Spiritual Growth: We offer a broad range of options for personal spiritual growth. Members and friends can choose to join a Spiritual Enrichment Group (SEG), attend Sunday Children's Religious Education programs, and attend workshops that fit their personal spiritual path and gain spiritual and intellectual insights from Reverend Johnson's services. During the year, particularly in the summer, members often lead services that reflect their own personal spiritual and intellectual perspectives and stories.

We are a community that promotes social responsibility: Our congregation is known for its social action and service to others. Allen Avenue is an active participant in Portland's

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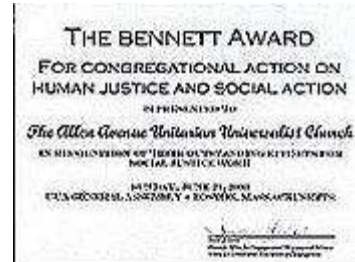
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Soup Kitchen and Project Feed, a local pantry. We engage in UU and community activism, and denomination efforts for peace and justice. Our church is a Nuclear Free Zone and a Green Sanctuary, seeking to be environmentally and socially responsible...as we walk with care on this earth. We have received national UU and local recognition for our efforts.

At the 2003 General Assembly in Boston, the Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church received the prestigious James Bennett Award for Social Action. We frequently receive local recognition for our efforts.



Adult and Religious Education Programs: Our adult and youth education programs help us understand and respect other cultures, religions, political perspectives and lifestyles.

... And Has Fun!

We are also known for our personal warmth, for enjoying each other's company and having fun. Whether at a potluck supper, talent show, a march for peace or social justice, movie night or work day, we know how to enjoy each other's company.



Staff support includes: Rev. Mykel Johnson, Minister; Dale Churchill, Director of Music; Anne Mann, Director of Religious Education; Kim Sprague, Membership Coordinator; Mary Johnson, church secretary; Pam Rowe, administrative assistant; and Steve Zimmerman, Sexton.

Church History:

Our church history began in 1821 with some services held in a cooper's shop with Hosea Ballou a visiting minister. Through the years, our churches have always played a prominent role in the community. After many mergers through the years, in 1971 we moved into our present building. We are now in our third year of planning for a church expansion due to our increased membership.

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### **Prior to Becoming a Green Sanctuary:**

Prior to becoming a Green Sanctuary, our church used plastic cup holders with plastic cup inserts every Sunday for coffee hour. Paper plates, cups and napkins filled the trash barrel after each church function. After purchasing a Hobart commercial dishwasher, we began using our china cups and plates, cloth napkins and cloth tablecloths for all church function. We then began the process to become a Green Sanctuary.

### **Accomplishment of Program Goals**

- **To build awareness of societal environmental issues among UU's.**

1. **Menu for our Future:** Allen Avenue Unitarian Church hosted a Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI) program that began April 13, 2009 and ended six weeks later. We followed the NWEI Study Guide "Menu for the Future". The readings featured topics from organic to local foods, from farming practices to global impact, and invited dialogue and change. We sampled various organic foods, and shared educational resources on many health food topics. Twelve enthusiastic people with a wide range of age and experiences met weekly at the Church. The conclusion was a field trip to one participant's house to see winter organic gardening practices, and enjoy an organic, vegetarian potluck. Lois Howlett led this program and the NEWI program on Global Warming that was held at the Church in 2008. Report by Lois Howlett
2. **Nuclear Weapons Abolition:** Our Social Action Committee collaborates with Peace Action Maine, Veterans for Peace, Physicians for Social Responsibility and other peace and justice organizations on issues of war and nuclear weapons—both the ULTIMATE in environmental (not to mention human) destruction. Our members have met via satellite with Senator Susan Collins regarding nuclear weapons. Her no vote was critical to stopping work on the nuclear bunker buster bill. In October 2009, we have met with the staff of Senator Snowe, Senator Collins and Representative Chellie Pingree on the many nuclear weapons issues to be addressed in the coming months. Report by Sally Breen

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3. **Stop War:** I was a member of the “Snowe Seven” who was arrested in Senator Snowe’s office before the beginning of the Iraqi War. Six members of our church marched in D.C. against the Iraq war carrying our social action banner, and some went on to receive training and then meet with our Senators and Representative on the Hill. War’s devastating environmental effects were known as far back as Hannibal’s salting the Earth. Ten years after the U.S. sprayed Agent Orange in Viet Nam, a woman having chemotherapy, recalled, “All our coconut trees died. The seeds of the rice became very small, and we couldn’t use them for replanting.” Meanwhile, Agent Orange’s carcinogenic dioxin was sinking into the soil, washing into the sea, and entering the food chain, where it is still at work today.



(A Peace Pledge Project :  
[http://www.ppu.org.uk/learn/infodocs/st\\_environment.html](http://www.ppu.org.uk/learn/infodocs/st_environment.html))

Today, depleted uranium lurks in the burned out tanks where Iraqi children play. I personally witnessed the infamous forest fires of May 2000 that crept close to the Los Alamos National Laboratories (LANL) where nuclear weapons are created and stored. Alarm spread through the region fearing what hazards were spreading with the smoke and fumes. I was arrested shortly thereafter along with a contingent of other peace activists. There is no reliable data to determine how much radioactive and hazardous materials have been released from LANL over the past 57 years. Report by Sally Breen

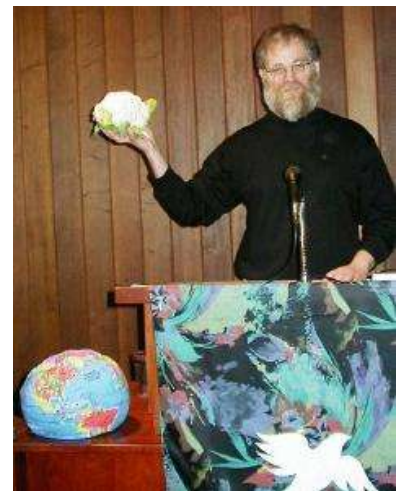
4. **Energy Efficiency:**
- a) *Green Power:* Church members worked tirelessly to help bring Interfaith Power and Light into existence in the state of Maine, and then worked to encourage other churches as well as our own church members to actually sign up to use green power. All in all, this was a three-year effort. Our church now has changed out all the light bulbs to energy efficient ones, and has a contract with Maine Interfaith Power and Light to use clean power. Report by Sally Breen

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- b) *Energy Efficiency Sunday Service*: On Nov. 16, 2008, the Social Action Committee offered a service on Energy to a crowded sanctuary. The specific topics addressed by four speakers were food, electricity, heating and transportation relating how we have made our decisions about our energy needs in our community, church and home. We connected it to the seventh principle. Committee members have since had inquiries from others about our efforts and some have followed our lead. Report by Delene Perley.
- c) *Home Energy Efficiency*: In order to promote energy awareness and to help church members and others in the community carry out energy efficiency measures at home, the Green Earth Subcommittee sponsored an Energy Efficiency Workshop at the church on Saturday, September 27, 2008, from 9 to 1 pm. About 35 people attended over the course of four hours. Cool Communities staff presented two offerings of their workshop "Cool Starts with You," in which attendees learned about energy efficiency at home and how to buy green energy. Other presentations included slide shows by church members explaining their experiences installing and using solar thermal heating and solar photovoltaic systems.

Literature tables were set up where attendees could peruse and collect information on home energy efficiency and various financial programs available to help finance home energy improvements. In the afternoon, two church members offered tours of their homes, one of the photovoltaic installation and the other of the solar thermal heating system. Report by Harold McWilliams

- d) *Earth Day Sunday, April 2006*: Members of the Green Earth committee participated in the service. One of the readings, *The Cauliflower*, was so popular that it was requested by members of other churches. That night's television showed our church with the energy efficient light bulbs, the ceramic coffee mugs, and the parking lot where the many fuel-efficient cars were lined up. Report by Sally Breen



5. **Global Warming Sunday:** The Social Action Committee presented a Global Warming Sunday in January 2008. Members of the Green Sanctuary Committee presented their various views about global warming. We included a story for all ages, special music and readings to complete the program.

6. **Building and Grounds:**

Following a church audit by Energy Efficiency Maine, our Building and Ground Committee began a program of fulfilling the suggestions:

- a) Replaced all the thermostats with automatic setback thermostats
  - b) Replace all the lighting in the original part of the building with electronic ballasts using 32 watt fluorescent bulbs
  - c) Major exterior caulking
  - d) Replaced the toilets in all the lavatories with Toto low flow toilets
- Report by Jerry Freeman, Chair of Building & Grounds

• **To generate commitment for personal lifestyle changes.**

1. **Recycling:**

- a. Clynk is a local company that collects and recycles deposit beverage containers. In Maine, this includes not only beer and soft drinks, but juices, wine and other alcoholic beverages. The church obtains plastic bags from Clynk and collects beverage containers at two locations in the building. When full, the bags are taken to a Clynk location for recycling and deposit refunds are credited to the church. The church also makes plastic bags available for church attendees to take and use for recycling at home. When full, the bags are taken to a Clynk location by the users. Because the bags are labeled with the churches' ID information, the deposit refunds are credited to the church.
- b. **General Recycling:** The greater Portland area uses a combined recycling system whereby all recyclable materials can be combined for collection and are then sorted at the recycling facility. The church collects recyclable materials at two locations in the building. When the containers are full, the materials are removed and placed in the recyclable waste system

Recycling Report by Dan Chase

2. **Ethical Eating Sunday Service**— On October 11, 2009, the Ethical Eating Committee led a worship service titled “Food – the Joy, Nourishment, and Security of It”. The congregation was invited to examine what ethical eating means on a personal level and in their relationships with others. After a rousing song of “Inch by Inch, Row by Ro,” readings were presented on the effect of our food choices on personal health, our planet Earth, global hunger, and animal welfare. Through personal stories we offered a glimpse of our own food journeys as we decide how to eat in a world where agribusiness dominates and small farmers struggle. Written information was provided for people to take home with them on subjects such as the ten best foods to buy organically, local CSAs, hunger relief organizations, and additional reading resources. Report by Julie Harrison
  
3. **Solar Energy Seminars:** On Saturday, October 8, 2005, we provided a half-day solar workshop that was open to the wider community. Our speaker worked for the Maine Energy Investment Corporation, and was working with Maine Interfaith Power and Light and the Maine Council of Churches. In addition to doing the presentation to the audience of about 30 people, he gave us an estimate for some solar panels for our church. Report by Sally Breen
  
4. **Church sponsored Food Co-op:** For the past 20 years, our church has sponsored the A2U2 Food Co-op. It is open to both church members and to some members of the community (who usually later become members of our church). The purpose of the food co-op is to encourage bulk purchases, which reduces packaging, and encourages purchasing organic products. The church provides the co-op a free space to meet, and in return, the co-op annually gives money to the Portland Soup Kitchen and buys items needed by the church. Report by Sally Breen
  
5. The A2U2 Ride Share project began in the spring of 2008 and continued for about one year. Our goals for the program were three-fold. One was to reduce the carbon signature of the Sunday services by facilitating carpooling to and from church. Two, we wanted to develop a program for people who, for a variety of reasons beyond environmental concerns, needed assistance in getting to church.

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Our third objective was to facilitate a sense of community and deepen connections between church members and friends by providing a little "quality time" during the rides.

The initiative took a tremendous amount of effort and handholding. Although we had some initial successes, in the end, it appears that folks wanted the option to do errands after church services, switch from the early to the late service at the last moment, and even cancel going to church all together. The subcommittee theorized that this is a product of our car culture; we love our automobiles in part because of the freedom of choice they offer us. We will maintain the structure outline if, in the future, we want to try the Ride Share Program again.

Report by Marc Hills

• **To motivate UU's to community action on environmental issues.**

- 1. An environmental column for a local newspaper:** Sally Breen writes a monthly column for a local newspaper with a readership that reaches about 5 small towns in the region. The title of the column is *Earth Speaks*, and the content includes a wide variety of topics from Yucca Mountain nuclear waste deposit site in New Mexico to toxic-free homemade cleaning products. These articles have appeared since 2006. Report by Sally Breen
- 2. Green Burial:** In April 2009 we held an Adult RE Class over three Wednesday evenings to discuss "green burial" and other funeral options. Average attendance over the 3 sessions was a little more than seven. During this class we compared the environmental and financial cost of what has become a typical US funeral, vs. cremation, vs. green or natural burial. We discussed caring for our own dead at home in a more hands-on, meaningful way, and how groups (such as a church committee) could volunteer to help each other with this. We discussed the importance of making wishes known to family members and also the ministers of our churches. We plan to offer this information again at a future Adult Education class.

Three members of our church serve on the Funeral Alliance of Maine's board of directors. They are involved in studying the issues around Green Burial

to be a resource for our work on the subject. Report by Eva Thompson of the Yarmouth, Maine UU Church

3. **Cloth Bags for Food Pantry:** Our church has a Share-the-plate program. Last year the amount gifted to the selected organization was one-third of the plate offering. The Share-the-Plate organization for June-August 2009 was with Project FEED, a Portland food pantry, which we support, and is housed at Woodfords UCC church. The \$800 of the Share-the-Plate offering was used to purchase cloth bags for the pantry. We explained to the clients that our goal is to reduce the number of paper and plastic bags used weekly from the present 200, and their part was to bring the cloth bag back with them for their next monthly visit. We enticed them with a “bonus item” when they brought back their cloth bag. Evidence of our success is that those “bonus items” are disappearing from the shelves. A local Hannaford’s grocery store has also contributed a number of cloth bags to us for this purpose, and some of the clients are beginning to bring other cloth bags with them...clear evidence of heightened environmental awareness. Report by Delene Perley
4. **Wind Turbines rather than War Ships:** Our church signed a widely-circulated petition requesting Bath Iron Works to begin building wind turbines rather than ships of death. A member of our church testified before a statewide commission in favor of wind energy. Now we learn that Bath Iron Works is *actually attempting to get government funding to begin building wind turbines.* (We understand they will continue to build some ships of death, but perhaps someday, when war will come no more, they will want to build only wind turbines or some other items that are environmentally friendly.) Report by Sally Breen
5. **Green Table at Church Fair – 2008 Open to the Public:** The Green Earth committee established a collaborative agreement with the F.W. Horch store in Brunswick, Maine and sold select items from the store at our Holiday Fair in 2008. F.W. Horch is a local business that promotes sustainability and our church wanted to promote their efforts and to give holiday shoppers an opportunity to purchase eco-friendly gift alternatives. Items that were sold included plastic bag drying racks, low-flow shower heads, biodegradable sponges and reusable gift bags. The table was a success in that it earned money for the church’s general fund and publicized A2U2’s commitment to sustainable living. Report by Ann Hitzrot

6. **Green Table at Church Fair – 2009 Open to the Public:** We again had a Green Table at the church fair. Although we didn't raise much money for the church, it was still a table with many people interested in the products on display from F.W. Horch Company. In the future, we may reevaluate how we display the products for sale at the table. Report by Harold McWilliams

• **To build a connection between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness.**

1. **Ministerial Power!** Below is a list of sermons preached by Rev. Myke Johnson from 2006 through 2009 .

**2006**

March 19, 2006                      Water, Water                      Rev. Myke Johnson

We usually take clean drinking water for granted. Yet there is a global crisis unfolding because of a growing shortage of clean fresh water. The UU Service Committee is devoting its resources to responding to this crisis, and the human rights issues it raises worldwide. Today we will explore some of the issues concerning water in our time, and consider also the spiritual dimensions of our own relationship to water.

April 30      In the Beginning                      Rev. Myke Johnson

The first of May marks Beltane, an ancient Celtic celebration of the fertility of the earth and its creatures. Let us explore the mystery of life through our cosmic and scientific stories of the origins of everything.

Lesson for All Ages: The Everything Seed, Mayday maypole after service

June 18      Gardening                      Rev. Myke Johnson

Gardening is a source of food and beauty, and also food for thought and lessons for beautiful living. Composting, planting, weeding, harvesting, enjoying. What can we learn about ourselves as we labor with the earth? Bring a flower to church today for our traditional Flower Communion, on our final Sunday of the church year.

**2007**

Mar 18                      Restoring the Earth—Environmentalism as a Spiritual Path

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(Women-Annie Finch and Meret Bainbridge)

This year's Women's Service will take a contemporary look at the ancient Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone / Kore. We will explore the Goddess of vegetation and seasonal changes in light of global climate change and mixed-up seasons created by human tinkering with the environment. What can and must we as UUs do to help restore the natural balance? Together, we'll renew our commitment to earth stewardship and - despite a sobering reality - celebrate the return of spring and hope!

Apr 22      The Language of Trees      Rev. Myke Johnson  
Our connection to trees is as ancient as the myths of all religions, and as immediate as the dawn redwood outside our sanctuary window. In honor of Earth Day, I offer a reflection on the kinship between human beings and trees.  
Lesson: Walk with Care on this Earth

June 10      Earth Foolishness, Earth Wisdom      Rev. Myke Johnson  
Sustainability means finding ways to live so that our children's children will also be able to live. Reflections on environmental issues and ecological connections.

Nov 18      Hunger      Rev. Myke Johnson  
Human beings need constant sustenance to continue being alive—air, water, and food being the top three needs for all of us. But what is hunger? How do we keep our balance in a “consumer” culture where we learn to hunger for more than what we need? How do we respond to the basic hunger of those who don't have what they need?

**2008**

Jan 13      Seeing in the Dark      Rev. Myke Johnson  
These winter weeks are the darkest time of the year. Human beings seem to carry an instinctive fear of the dark, and we associate the dark with hard times, evil times, sad times. But there are blessings to be discovered here, in the cycle of our sleeping, our dreaming, our winter, our night.  
LFAA interview with UU astronomer

Jan 20      Are You Ready?      Social Action Committee

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Global Warming is here and will affect us all in various ways. Be sure to attend the Social Action Global Warming Sunday Service on January 20, 2008 where you will hear stories with —teaching moments. Representatives from some of our local environmental organizations will be at both services to provide us with information on transportation options, energy options, local foods options and more.

Feb 24                                      Mushroom Cloud Meditation                                      Rev. Myke Johnson

The mushroom cloud of nuclear weapons represents the potential destruction of life on earth. What is big enough to give us hope in the face of that danger? Actual mushrooms, according to Paul Stamets, might help to save the world from all manner of ecological destruction.  
(LFAA is a lesson about mushrooms and mycelia)

**2009**

Feb 1                                      Darwin's 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday                                      Rev. Myke Johnson

This year represents the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin (12 February 1809) and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his seminal work *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. This backdrop provides a rich opportunity to explore what religion and science have to offer one another. We are joining congregations all around the world in celebrating Evolution Weekend 2009! [LFAA Walter Selens, and William, showing fossils and an earth time line. How Old Are You?]

April 12                                      Easter in Paradise                                      Rev. Myke Johnson

According to a study by Rebecca Parker and Rita Nakashima Brock, until the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Christians did not portray the death of Jesus on a cross in their sanctuaries, or focus on an afterlife in heaven—they celebrated Jesus as a living presence and the church as a paradise on this beautiful earth, here and now. On the holiest day in Christianity, let us explore these surprising earth-honoring threads in the Christian tradition.

April 26                                      The Turning of the World?                                      Rev. Myke Johnson

What is going on in our times? What will the future hold? Some visionary leaders say we are in a Great Turning: a shift from an industrial growth/empire-

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oriented society to a life-sustaining, earth community. Big ideas—but let's take a look.

[LFAA-Earth day]

## 2) Infusion of green thinking:

- a. Part of our church mission statement, which is written across one wall of our sanctuary, reads, "...promote social responsibility as we walk with care on this earth." Most of our church members live by their environmental values. Many of our members are teachers, and carry their environmental lessons into their classrooms.
- b. New members are given information about our church being a Green Sanctuary. The story at our church is that when a new member asks why we are not using paper plates at a function, they are quickly told that "You had better look out for our Green Sanctuary members."
- c. By living our values at home, work or play, always with the knowledge of our environmental impact on the Earth, we are spiritually fulfilled.

Report by Sally Breen

### • To build awareness of and rectify environmental injustices.

1. On January 14, 2010, some members of our church joined about 70 other peace activists who attended a press event at the Maine State House to kick off a 3-month campaign by a coalition of peace groups in Maine to stop the war in Afghanistan. This war, as do all wars, contaminate and destroy. The depleted uranium left from the Russian invasion is the cause of children malformed at birth and a high rate of aborted fetuses. The roadside bombs kill indiscriminately. The drone attacks now being carried out by our US military not only cause a high rate of children killed, but add to the destruction of our Earth. On Monday, April 5, 2010, the Portland Town Council voted 7 in favor to 1 against to accept a resolution to demand that our two representatives, Chellie Pingree and Mike Michaud, vote for no more war funding, and also request that they work to encourage their colleagues in the House of Representatives to also vote for no more war funding. Report by Sally Breen
2. On January 17, 2010, the Peace Sub Committee of the Social Action Committee sponsored a presentation by two speakers from Code Pink about the war in Afghanistan and to learn of an effort to begin reforestation in Afghanistan. To

become part of the life-giving act of planting a tree is a heroic path. Some members were moved by this presentation and donated funds towards the initiative. Report by Sally Breen

3. **Ethical Eating:** Ethical Eating will be a major focus of one of our projects in the coming years. On February 24<sup>th</sup>, we showed the film, “Fresh.” Several Maine farmers were present that evening with a showing of the 20 vegetables available in Maine year round. It was publicized widely, including in the Portland newspaper. There were 50 people in attendance, some of them from outside our church community. After the film, the audience participated actively in discussion. Report by Julie Harrison & Sally Breen

### Living Out the Commitment

- **What congregational culture changes have been observed as a result of your Green Sanctuary accreditation?**
  1. **New mission statement:** At Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church, we are growing a community that transforms lives through the power of love. We celebrate diversity, encourage spiritual growth, and promote social responsibility, *as we walk with care on this earth.* We empower our members to share their gifts to build a world of compassion, equality, and freedom.
  2. **Green Earth Committee:** We have an established, active and committed Green Earth Committee.
  3. **All-Church Awareness:** All church committees are aware and conscious of their actions as they affect not only our local environment (our property includes a wetland and a city-sponsored walking trail) but the environment on a global scale.
  4. **New Members:** New members are educated about our church commitment to our Green Sanctuary program and “walking with care on this earth.” When a new member asks why we don’t simply use paper plates and plastic tableware, they are told, “Look out for the Green Earth Committee!”
  5. **Recycling Program:** We have an active recycling program. The money collected goes back into the church account to help offset the higher cost of “green power.” (Refund for 2009 was \$737.00.)

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- **What discernable examples of living out your Green Sanctuary commitment are apparent? What are some examples from out in the community? What are some examples from your congregation?**

1. **Green Power:** Members of our church were very active in the early phases of the work needed to bring green power to Maine. One member spoke to other UU churches in Maine to bring them the knowledge about green power.
2. **Despite the added cost of using “green power,”** our church voted to sign up for this service as soon as it became available in Maine through Maine Interfaith Power and Light. This example inspired members of the church to do likewise at their own homes.
3. **A dedicated group of youth:** Two years ago, when there was some debate over whether the church could afford to continue to use “green electricity,” which comes at a premium price, the youth took down our “Green Sanctuary” sign that hangs prominently under our large church sign on Allen Avenue. They held the sign “hostage” until the church voted to continue to fund “green electricity.” Only then did they hang the “Green Sanctuary: sign back in its place.

4. **Community Reputation:** Our church has a reputation in the greater Portland



area as “the activist church.” The photo below was taken at our 2006 Green Sanctuary service which was covered by a local television channel and shown on the evening news.

- 4) **Area-wide participation:**

- a) Our church hosted a Northwest Earth Institute series, *Sustainable Living*. UU members from other churches attended as well as members of our wider Portland community.

- b) Our church offered a well-attended session on green burials. There was great interest in offering this information to the entire church membership and possibly to the wider community.
- 5) **Our minister, the Rev. Myke Johnson, included environmental research in her recently completed sabbatical time.** She attended a two week intensive "Earth Activist Training" led by Starhawk and Charles William, in Unity Maine. The Earth Activist Training starts with permaculture as the foundation. "Permaculture" is regenerative design: a set of ethics, principles, and practices that create beneficial relationships and whole systems. Permaculture meets human needs sustainably and heals damaged natural systems. Permaculture works with nature, or rather, teaches us to "work as nature working."

EAT extends the principles and insights of permaculture into progressive political organizing, and explores strategies for change. It weaves in threads of Earth-based spirituality, inclusive and non-dogmatic, to connect heart and soul to the work. The Earth Activist Training is a rich array of solutions, tools, and strategies to redesign our world, and includes classroom theory, hands-on practice, inner experience, and a rigorous 72-hour permaculture design course- participants receive a certificate on completion. Report by Rev. Myke Johnson

- **What specific plans do you have to continue your Green Sanctuary commitments?**

1. For more than twenty years, our church has sponsored a food co-op.
2. There is better statewide planning by Maine farmers to promote buying local and our committee is helping promote their efforts.
3. We will continue our recycling efforts.
4. Plans are under consideration to offer green burial information to the wider community.

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- . What on-going role do you expect your congregation will take in the wider community relative to environmental issues? How do you feel recognition as a Green Sanctuary affects your position in the community (both the local community, interfaith community, and the UU community-at-large)?
- 1) Advertise our workshops on green burial, ethical eating, etc. in area newspapers and with other area UU churches with the information that our church is a Green Sanctuary and the workshops are part of our efforts to promote Earth stewardship.
  - 2) Continue to work with Maine Interfaith Power and Light to promote green power.
  - 3) Participate in the Got Your Bags program with the Natural Resources Council of Maine and the Merchants Association of Maine.

## WORSHIP

### Worship and Celebration Project (1 required)

Project Title: Worship Celebrations on Earth Themes

Project Description and Action:

Since coming to Allen Avenue UU Church, I have tried to have two or three services each year that relate to our connection to the earth, or activism on the environment. The Social Action committee does one service per year, and some of these have been on green themes.

As we go forward, I am planning to continue including earth oriented themes in worship services I lead, often in concert with projects that our Green Earth Committee will be working on. Coming up in the next few months, in particular, I would highlight:

In March a service, entitled “Breathing,” described as: “On this first weekend of spring, a celebration of the power of air. Breath is life, and conscious breathing is also a way to engage more deeply with life. The word spirit comes from the word for breathing.” Within the context of breath and spirit, I will interweave links to clean air, and our stewardship of the air.

In April, I am planning a worship service for Earth Day, looking at our deep connection to Nature. The details are not yet worked out, but our lesson for all ages will be coordinated with a Green Earth Committee project on using re-usable bags.

My own spiritual practice draws heavily on earth-based traditions, so I bring many earth themes into worship services of all types during the year.

Timeline for Completion: These two worship services will be completed this spring, and others will be ongoing.

Lead: Rev. Myke Johnson

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## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

*Religious Education Project (1 required, either for children, adults, or multi-generational)*

**Project Title:** Enhance and expand the composting component of our environmental activities.

**Project Description:** We decided to continue with all of our current activities toward a more environmentally aware and practicing congregation. We will continue to use cloth napkins, tablecloths, ceramic dinnerware, wicker baskets, and washable cups for our RE gatherings and snack times. This will continue to help reduce paper and plastic waste. We were informed that the amount of water and soap used to clean and wash everything was less damaging to the environment than the purchasing and throwing away of paper and plastic goods. We will also continue to gather raw food scraps and coffee grinds and put them in a compost bucket in the kitchen. This helps to recycle the top soil and provide good healthy nutrients for outside projects, such as new plantings, lawn fertilizer, and possible other possible gardening needs. Members have been taking the compost home.

**Project Action Plan:** We wish now to create and build a composting system on the Church grounds so that we may use the compost we create here on the property and continue to learn about the process of composting and its unique part in sustainable organic farming and everyday life. We will need to first learn about composting, build the containers, educate the congregation and ourselves about how to use and maintain the system. This process will be implemented and interwoven with the 8, 9, and 10 year olds curricula for this Spring, Experiences with the Web of Life and Caring for Our Planet Earth. We will be inviting outside resources in to help educate us on the process of composting, such as Ferry Beach Ecology School

**Timeline for Completion:** This is a long term project and we may need to create a three year strategic plan in order to complete it. We may ask the older classes of youth, ages 11-18 to help and guide us at certain parts of the project.

We are very excited about our projects this year and wish to thank you for asking us to participate in a2u2's recertification process for Green Sanctuary.

**Submitted by Religious Education Director:** Anne Mann

## **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

*Environmental Justice* (1 long-term that **actively** promotes justice for those affected by environmental injustices and creates relationships)

**Project Title: Project Title: Intersectionality of Environment and Social Justice**  
(Note: I learned the word “intersectionality” from Professor and author Angela Davis. She uses the word to describe her work for social justice and women’s issues.)

**Project Description:** Presently, in our county, there are organizations and individuals that are associated with growing, selling, and/or the delivery of food. Within this system, there is often no communication among them that identifies how they could become a circle to help those less fortunate among us and, at the same time, eliminate the issue of food waste. Our project will identify those possible interconnections, and encourage communication and sharing of knowledge and resources.

### **Background Information:**

**Fact 1:** Our church has a rich background in educating ourselves and our community about the many issues related to the availability of a fresh and safe food supply.

- We participated in the Good Apple program of the Maine Council of Churches, asking people to commit to eating more local/organic food.
- Our Ethical Eating Committee has about half a dozen members and a vibrant and knowledgeable chair.
- In April of 2009, a member of the Ethical Eating committee lead a six week discussion course from the Northwest Earth Institute called “Menu for the Future”.
- The Ethical Eating Committee presented a worship service in the fall of 2009 entitled “*Food – the Joy, Nourishment, and Security of It.*”
- In February 2010, we showed the movie “*Fresh*” to an audience of 50 people. Two local farmers attended and showcased the 20 foods grown year-round in Maine.
- Our chair of the Ethical Eating Committee is following up on the farmers’ CSA by providing the congregation with information.
- We have a long standing commitment to a food pantry located in another church. Three of our members are on the Board, one of our members

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organizes the stocking of the pantry, at least 9 members re-stock or serve the clients and members of the congregation donate food weekly.

- We make our parking lot available to a CSA for distribution in the summertime.

**Fact 2.** Other area resources:

- Our county has an abundance of food pantries.
- Farmers' Markets are now held in more towns and more often.
- Farmers' Markets are now being offered in the winter (even in Maine!).
- The Maine Organic Farmers and Growers (MOFGA) provides excellent information on growing food and food safety.
- The University of Maine Cooperative Extension is a community resource for gardening information and has an existing network of low-income families through their Eat Well Nutrition Education program.
- Some people have their own gardens.
- There is an increased interest in the local "Plant a Row for the Hungry" program among community members.
- Some people are taking advantage of CSAs.
- There is an organization in town that does food rescue.

**Observation 1:**

- The immigrant families, the working poor and those even less fortunate often have no transportation to avail themselves of these resources.
- The prices for organic food are usually more expensive than the local store.
- CSA costs often make them prohibitively expensive for this segment of our society.
- This population rarely have land on which to raise a garden
- Some who do have land, lack the knowledge, resources, and/or self-efficacy to grow food.
- The food pantries often have no fresh food to offer their clients

**Observation 2:**

- We have a Share the Plate from which 50% of each month's plate collection is shared with a local community organization. Choices are to be made for those non-profit organizations each spring.
- Our church also has an Iraqi Refugee Committee through which we are working with at least seven immigrant/refugee families.

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- The farmers tell us that they have food left at the end of the markets and often take the produce back to the farm to compost.
- Some farmers do not want to haul their produce back to the farm
- The food rescue operation is functioning but in flux and may need more help with funds, people and vehicles

**PROJECT ACTION 1:**

Identify the intersectionality of food suppliers with those who have a need for food by using the following methods:

- Inform ourselves and our publics on the issues.
- Consider a Share-the-Plate with an established organization and use the proceeds as needed to help alleviate food insecurity.
- Learn about the needs and outcomes of the community gardens.
- Encourage members of our church to use their time and talent to help guide/teach the refugees and other less fortunate church or community members to produce their own vegetables, especially in these community garden settings.
- Connect the markets/farmers with the food pantries to supply them with leftover produce to make it available to the more food insecure.
- Inform ourselves on the potential obstacles of left-over produce transportation and refrigeration and work with farmers/pantry operators and community members to overcome these obstacles.

**PROJECT ACTION 2:**

Use the knowledge gained from our previous experience with food production and safety and the information provided by other county organizations and individuals to create a circle of sharing information and resources to close the gap between those who produce food and those who use the food. This closed circle will have little food waste, will provide food security and safety for immigrant families, transitory members of our community, the working poor, and those whose life situations find them in need of assistance

**Timeline for Completion:** Until June 2012

**Lead:** Julie Harrison and members of the Ethical Eating Committee and members of the Green Earth committee.

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## **SUSTAINABLE LIVING**

*Sustainable Living (2 required, 1 that addresses energy conservation)*

1. **Project Title #1:** *Reduce use of plastic and paper shopping bags.*

**Project Description:** Got Your Bags? is a new initiative of a coalition of the Natural Resource Council Maine and Maine merchants to reduce the use of plastic and paper bags, both known to require great uses of energy to manufacture. Their draft report calls for:

- a. Setting a goal of reducing paper and plastic disposable checkout bag distribution by members by an average of 33% by volume per participating retailers by 2013;
- b. Encouraging over 1,000 retailers in Maine to participate in the effort to reduce disposable checkout bag use;
- c. Ensuring compliance with existing state law requiring plastic checkout bag recycling programs at all retailers that offer first-use plastic checkout

**Project Action:**

- a) Work cooperatively with the Natural Resources Council of Maine on the Got Your Bags Maine initiative.
- b) Review the project as outlined in a draft report by Matt Prindiville of the Natural Resources Council of Maine.
- c) Assist the Natural Resources Council of Maine to survey local shopping habits and increase awareness.
- d) Discuss with Green Earth Committee members as to how we want to commit individually to always have our own shopping bags available when we go to the store(s).
- e) Create a plan for getting commitments from an achievable percentage of our church members to adhere to the plan.
- f) Bring our plan to other UU churches in our area by offering speaking engagements
- g) Market our success in the local media

**Timeline for Completion:** Begin project in February 2010. Be at “marketing our success in local media” by June 2013.

**Lead:** Sally Breen and Delene Perley

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## *Sustainable Living*

### 2. **Project Title #2:** *Planning Ahead for a Green Burial*

#### **Project Description and Action:**

Each of us and our loved ones will die one day. Are we prepared? Can we die as green as we live? Let's open the conversation with ourselves and our families and friends.

Three of our church members are on the Board of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Maine, which "promotes simplicity, dignity and economy in funeral arrangements through advance planning." The state has two relatively new green cemeteries. Our Adult Enrichment program last spring sponsored a three-evening workshop on Green Burial which was attended by a dozen people. This spring the Green Earth group is sponsoring a one day workshop. These workshops were attended by already-interested and informed members.

Next fall, as seems to be a tradition at UU churches, we will no doubt again have a "Day of the Dead" worship service. At that time we plan to bring the rest of the congregation into thinking about this topic by providing a strong informational focus IN the sanctuary and main foyer of the church with as much visual, print and real life material as possible. Following this we will sponsor as many conversations as are desired and provide continued information for our members.

By publicizing this event, we hope to increase people's awareness of the environmental cost of traditional funerals and improve their planning for greener and subsequently more spiritual alternatives.

**Timeline for Completion:** Planning this spring and summer, 2010, with the Main Event in late October, 2010. Continued information to be posted on our church's website and in our church's office.

**Lead:** Delene Perley