

Application for Green Sanctuary Accreditation

May 14, 2007

Congregation: Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Visalia
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Minister or Congregational Leader:
April Hill, President

Congregational Vote: See Minutes of Annual Meeting, June 3, 2007

1. Congregational Profile:

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Visalia (UUFV) was founded in 1970. We are a small lay-led congregation, which has grown from 24 to 29 members in the past year.

Even before seeking Green Sanctuary status, our congregation has had a strong environmental consciousness. Despite our size, we have been able to fulfill the requirements for Green Sanctuary status by involving a large percentage of our members. Because we do not own our own building, have no office, use few paper products, and have no staff, many of our Green Sanctuary goals have necessarily focused on areas other than facilities-oriented issues.

Our Fellowship rents a building for Sunday services from the Visalia Friends (Quaker). Their Meeting House is almost literally a “Green Sanctuary” because it is located in a rural area with many trees, farm animals like peacocks and sheep, and a dedicated wetland on the property. When going to Sunday services, we are greeted by beautiful native plants and flowers, and large native oak and redwood trees. The Meeting House is adjacent to a 324 acre nature sanctuary, the Kaweah Oaks Preserve – the largest preserve of Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*) in the world.

The grounds and facility goals for Green Sanctuary have required cooperation with the Visalia Friends. Fortunately, this has not been too hard to do; our two congregations have similar goals and share some activities. The Friends Meeting House caretaker has served on our Green Sanctuary Committee for the last year.

2. Program Goals:

Our congregation, though small, was very successful in achieving the Green Sanctuary Program Goals. Compared to what we've read about in other congregations, however, our change in terms of congregational culture, from the beginning to a year later was, to be honest, not huge: many members and friends of our congregation have already been and remain very environmentally concerned and active, and our facility already implemented energy efficiency (such as evaporative cooling and compact fluorescents).

Green Sanctuary Goals:

- * To build awareness of societal environmental issues among UUs.
- * To build awareness of and rectify environmental injustices.

In actuality, the vast majority of our members have already been keenly aware of environmental issues and environmental injustice, as we live in one of the most polluted air basins in the country, and where potable water is hard to come by in many small communities due to pesticides and agricultural practices. Although we have a large national park in our county (Sequoia National Park), we have many problems with inappropriate timber harvesting in the adjacent national forest, which threaten rare species and increase fire hazards, while reducing recreational opportunities. Moreover, due to our local extremely conservative political leadership, these problems seem intractable. Thus, for us, *awareness* of environmental problems is not the biggest issue. The challenge is to try to turn the negativity of despair to a more positive direction.

One thing we have achieved is to provide a stronger linkage between Unitarian Universalism and environmentalism. Some of our members have been active in a secular way on environmental issues for some time – e.g. being board members of local City Environmental Committee, local Sierra Club, etc. With the Green Sanctuary program, we have made a stronger link between our faith and values.

- * To generate commitment for personal lifestyle changes.

For our “Earth Day 2007” pledge, a large percentage of members and friends of the Fellowship pledged to install 3 compact fluorescents in their home, and persuade three friends or neighbors to also do so. They also chose one additional project of their own choosing. These additional projects ranged from bicycling to work to becoming more vegetarian to reducing energy in other ways.

Many of our members already drive hybrid vehicles or walk or ride bicycles to work. Others have always recycled and composted, used recycled paper products, or were vegetarian, before we began the project, so we already began with a high level of sustainable lifestyle commitments.

- * To motivate UUs to community action on environmental issues.

Our big effort was our social justice project of donating 1,000 CFLs to a farm worker community that has been hard hit by a freeze this winter. In addition, we engaged in public education on environmental issues through our films and “green” sermons, and encouraged letters to editor and legislators. We also participated in the California UU Legislative Ministry (UULM) spring workshop for the California Central Valley, “Liberal Voices in a Conservative Landscape,” where two members of our Fellowship (April Hill, President of the congregation, and Harold Wood, chair of the Green Sanctuary Committee) gave presentations and led a discussion on the Green Sanctuary program and local government’s “Blueprint” for better planned communities.. April has now been asked to serve on the board of the statewide UULM.

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

We have many earth-centered worship services. Some are on environmental topics or issues, others include earth-centered celebrations, such as Winter Solstice, Ostara, and May Day, and include an environmental consciousness component.

3. Program Activities

We worked on 12 Action Projects, for the past year. These resulted in energy savings and greater education of the community and our Fellowship on the importance of energy conservation, and the need to address global warming and other environmental concerns.

We documented our progress on all these changes on our website Green Sanctuary blog, beginning in April, 2006, and continuing to the present:

<http://www.uuvisalia.org/green/>

(We plan to continue this blog to keep track of and to continue to inspire our environmental efforts).

Although we submitted our application for Candidacy in April of 2006, our efforts actually began in December of 2005. That month, one of our services covered the topic:

Creating a Green Sanctuary: Environmentally Friendly Practices for Unitarian Universalist Churches - Presentation by Harold Wood. (12/11/05)

Download:

Power Point Presentation (3.1 MB):

http://www.uuvisalia.org/ppt/creating_a_green_sanctuary.ppt

PDF (1.4 MB):

http://www.uuvisalia.org/pdf/creating_green_sanctuary.pdf

Following that presentation, the Green Sanctuary Committee was formed and we began our Environmental audit and researching and preparing our Action Plan. We also began some of our additional projects at this time, including a summer discussion series on *Walden*, and sponsoring films and discussions with other groups on environmental topics.

Each Project as listed on our Action Plan will be described below, by category:

Worship and Celebration

Project 1: Arrange for minimum of 6 “green” sermons each year.

We accomplished this with the following programs held during our regular worship services over the last year:

1. “Reduce Your Carbon Footprint with Carbon Offsets” by Harold Wood. 4/23/06
At the same time this presentation was made, we started a section on our website on Energy Efficiency:

<http://www.uuvisalia.org/justice/energy.html>

After the presentation, it was posted online:

PDF: http://www.uuvisalia.org/pdf/reduce_carbon_footprint.pdf

Power Point: http://www.uuvisalia.org/ppt/reduce_your_carbon_footprint.ppt

2. "Ideas for Non-Toxic Homes" presented by Teri Van Huss.

On May 7, 2006, our Fellowship hosted Teri Van Huss, of EIS Consulting and Sequoia Riverlands Trust, who gave a wonderful and useful presentation for "being the change you want to see" by removing toxic chemicals from our homes. The handout from her presentation has been posted on our website with her permission:

http://www.uuvisalia.org/justice/non_toxic_homes.html

3. “An Inconvenient Truth” – First Sunday Forum – 10/1/06.

Our congregation participated in the Interfaith Power and Light pre-DVD release showing of “An Inconvenient Truth.” This was publicized in our local newspapers and on the Sierra Club and Audubon mailing lists. We had approximately 56 persons in attendance – double our usual turnout for Sunday services. We also had quite a few people sign up for our e-mail newsletter list, and several of those visitors have attended our services over the course of the year.

4. Service on "**UU's Take on Global Warming**" 12/10/06)- A Visual Summary of the Unitarian Universalist Statement of Conscience on Global Warming and Climate Change (Adopted June, 2006), presentation by Harold Wood. This presentation was also posted on our website after it was made:

PDF: http://www.uuvisalia.org/pdf/uus_take_on_global_warming.pdf

Power Pont: http://www.uuvisalia.org/ppt/uus_take_on_global_warming.ppt

(Links to these are found on our “Climate Page” and “Sermons” pages.)

http://www.uuvisalia.org/justice/climate_change.html

5. Water justice (3/11/07) – Paul Boyer from Self-Help Enterprises.

<http://www.selfhelpenterprises.org/> This presentation explained the efforts of the non-profit organization, Self-Help Enterprises, to help small rural communities obtain potable drinking water. Many of the wells in our county have been contaminated with pesticides, or sometimes with naturally occurring toxic minerals, which have leached out because of the reduction of the water table. In order to obtain potable drinking water, these communities need to dig much deeper wells and/or install filtering systems, but being poor, rural communities, lack the funding to do so. Self-Help Enterprises helps to obtain state and other grants to dig these deeper wells. Many of these communities have also relied upon antiquated septic systems for wastewater disposal. Such systems can cause significant environmental health and safety problems. Self Help and local government assists these low-income communities in the development of new community sewer systems.

6. “Earth Precepts” (3/25/07 – David Hodges led this presentation, first by handing out and reading over a summary of “Earth Precepts: Principles for a Moral Relationship with the Earth” by Pepper Trail:

<http://www.earthprecepts.net/>

We then had a lively discussion about these precepts, and the pros and cons of each. Most of our congregants found these precepts to be on the mark, but lamented that our society seems to be so far off the mark in achieving them. However, we ended with a positive note, showing the important things that individuals can do that help protect the Earth are often the same kinds of things that lead to personal and financial health.

7. Earth Day/Compact Fluorescents Presentation – (program held 4/22/07 - Harold) See more information about this for Project 9 and 10 below, and on our website:

<http://www.uuvisalia.org/justice/cfl.html>

8. Sermon: *Where Has the Car Driven Us?* (May 8, 2007 – Katherine Singh)

Katherine passed out a two-page “Car Quiz” to test our knowledge about the paving of America and the enormous subsidies our road and highway system take. After assuring us we would not be graded on the test, we went through the answers together, based on the book *Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America and How We Can Take It Back* by Jane Holtz Kay (1997). We were appalled by the huge environmental and economic costs caused by our automobile dependency. Katherine then invited congregants to share their memory of their favorite car. Everything from Model A’s to the Pries! Only one congregant stated that he never liked *any* of the cars he had – he has always considered them a necessary evil. But after showing how much most of us love our cars, Katherine gave us some strategies for reducing our auto dependency, by supporting better land-use planning, public transportation, bicycle pathways, getting rid of a second car, and even joining a car co-op.

This service was followed after our potluck, quite suitably, with a showing of the film "The Oil Factor: Behind the War on Terror." This documentary goes to the roots of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Project 2: Research and Prepare Service on Water Justice, using info from UU California Legislative Ministry

We wound up not doing this as a separate member project but instead covered this topic with the Paul Boyer presentation on March 11. It is clear that the local efforts of Self-Help Enterprises efforts are fully consistent with the UULM-CA Water Justice Guiding Principles:

<http://www.uulmca.org/programs/water.html>.

Religious Education

As explained in our application for candidacy, our congregation is too small to have an active children's RE program. When families with children visit, teachers introduce UU values and share from "The Kids' Book of Awesome Stuff", which has lessons on the natural world. But we do have an active Adult Education Program.

Project 3: Research & Prepare a service presentation on Renewable Energy Certificates/Carbon Offsets. (4/23/06)

Harold Wood researched this issue extensively, and then presented a Power Point Presentation on this topic to the congregation on 4/23/06. The program was titled "Reduce Your Carbon Footprint" and emphasized carbon offsets along with energy conservation activities.

We understand that several members bought into this program following the presentation. Also, our board approved purchasing carbon offsets on a monthly basis for our congregation from carbonfund.org, since we do not own our own building and so greatly increased energy efficiency investments by our congregation are not viable. See Project 8 below.

This presentation has also been posted to our website:

PDF: http://www.uuvisalia.org/pdf/reduce_carbon_footprint.pdf

Power Point: http://www.uuvisalia.org/ppt/reduce_your_carbon_footprint.ppt

Handout – UU Ministry for Earth & Carbon Fund:

http://www.uuvisalia.org/pdf/uumfe_carbonfund_handout.pdf

Project 4: Add to our Fellowship library at least 20 books or other resources on environmental issues, preferably by donation.

Books include topics of sustainability, worship, and environmental awareness and justice. We requested that books be contemporary or of “classic” value, and not be out-dated.

- Harold Wood donated 24 books on Environmental Philosophy, Global Warming, Sustainable Living, and Green Worship and Spiritual Growth (see list)
- April Hill donated 23 environmental books (see list)
- Katherine Singh donated *Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America and How We Can Take it Back*, by Jane Holtz Kay
- Janet Wood donated *Amazing Journey - The Universe & Me - Readings on the Universe Story*
- Several others have or are donating books on environmental justice.

The Fellowship’s library at the beginning of the year was not catalogued in any way other than 3 x 5 index cards. So, we began with an effort to provide an online catalog for our existing library, which we created on the Librarything.com website. Our Fellowship’s catalog is available for members and visitors to read here:

<http://www.librarything.com/catalog/uuvisalia>

We are still in the process of adding the recently donated environmental books to this catalog.

Environmental Justice

Project 5: Plan Compact Fluorescent Light program with London Community Council

Long-time Fellowship member David Hodges came up with the idea of donating Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs (CFLs) to the small rural Tulare County community of London. His wife Diane had worked on community development activities for this low-income farm worker community for many years, so had contact with their local community council and the community services (water) district there.

We do want to give credit to the Main Line Unitarian Church in Devon, PA, because they had done a similar project reported in *UU World* which inspired us and gave us the idea for this project. Their ECO group shared information and photos with us, but we had to figure out how to apply the idea to our local community.

We realized immediately that because CFLs tend to cost four or five times as much as regular incandescent bulbs, many low-income families would not be purchasing them. They not only might not realize the long-term cost savings, but even if they did, they simply might not be able to afford the higher cost of purchasing these kind of light bulbs.

So, our thought was that this would be something to contribute to social justice as well as to the environment.

David discussed the idea with Carolyn Thomas, the director of the London Community Services District, who embraced the idea, particularly since many farm workers were hurting with a bad freeze that destroyed many crops this year.

Researching the community, we learned there were about 400 homes with a population of 2,000 people. We did the math, and tried to figure out how to raise funds to buy at least 400 light bulbs, which we estimated to cost nearly \$2,000 at current prices. We discussed the issue with community services agencies, like C-SET, but could obtain no funding from them. We spent several months contacting various persons in the bureaucracy of the electric utility that covers the London community, P G & E, to see if we could piggyback off of their program to aid low-income individuals, or their energy efficiency program. We were hoping they would either donate the bulbs, or at least partner with us, but after many delays, they refused to do anything. They gave us the names and contact for three CFL manufacturers, but that did not result in anything either. So then we tried applying to four major hardware stores in Visalia, requesting the in-kind donation of these bulbs for this community. Four of our committee were assigned to approach each store, which we did in both writing and in person. All these stores declined our requests.

We were running out of options, and uncertain where to turn next. Finally, one of our regular attendees, Daljit Singh (husband of Green Sanctuary member Katherine Singh) discovered that a local grocery store in March was selling CFLs for the price of 49 cents for a pair of dimmable light bulbs. It turns out that the electrical utility located south of London, outside its jurisdiction, Southern California Edison, was subsidizing these bulbs with something like a \$7.00 subsidy. He talked to the grocery store manager, and he was willing to sell us 1,000 of these bulbs for the same price. Worried that these CFLs would not be available for long at this phenomenally low price, we wondered where we would come up with the \$245 needed on short notice, whereupon Dr. Singh said he would donate the cost, and immediately wrote the Fellowship a check to cover this expenditure. (We were disappointed further with PG & E when we recently saw a similar subsidized CFL sale in stores in our city – yet PG & E had never told us that this program was coming!)

So, we bought 1,000 CFL bulbs, wrote up a press release (see attached), and planned for their delivery. Because most community residents pay their water bills in person, we arranged to have the pair of light bulbs given to each person as they came in to pay their water bill at the London Community Services District office. We realized that we needed both an English explanation and with it a Spanish translation of our reasons for providing the fluorescent light bulbs for the citizens of London. A contact in a local community service organization, Proteus, wrote a Spanish translation. We had 425 copies made, English on one side, Spanish on the reverse, and gave them to Carolyn Thomas to hand out at the same time as the light bulb distribution. so the recipients would understand the benefit of these products.

David Hodges contacted the two major local newspapers, Visalia Times-Delta and Fresno Bee, and both agreed to send photographers out to witness the CFL distribution. See two of the resulting photos at the end of this document, one showing UU Visalia Fellowship President April Hill smiling over the CFL distribution. Also, on April 11, Lew Griswold, a columnist for the Fresno Bee, wrote up a nice story about our donation, "Faithful put energy into lighting up London," which you can read on the Fresno Bee website:

<http://www.fresnobee.com/186/story/41032.html>

We rejoiced that this project turned out to be successful, after so many roadblocks. Although our congregation is small, we hope we might inspire larger churches to do the same kind of project, which would be much easier for a large church to accomplish, and which could afford to donate many more CFLs. We also recently learned that Southern California Edison is applying to the California Utility Commission for permission to donate 1,000,000 CFLs to low income families, to be paid for with a small rate increase. If approved, this would help get the CFLs into the homes of the persons who cannot otherwise readily afford them.

Project 6: Participate in California Interfaith Power & Light

We joined this organization in the summer of 2006. They have provided useful information for us, and provide a valuable network among congregations of all sorts of denominations and faiths. The greatest in benefit for our particular Fellowship was their provision of the re-DVD release showing of "An Inconvenient Truth."

At this time, we are the only church in the entire San Joaquin Valley that is a member of this group. We distributed information about the organization and mentioned it during our California Legislative Ministry workshop in Fresno in March, 2007. Over time we hope to promote this organization to a greater extent locally, and have in fact began discussions with a local Jewish congregation.

We did get a media call from a local television station, but before they scheduled an interview, they decided to postpone a proposed story on this topic. We are hopeful that next year we may be able to engage further in this effort.

Project 7: Environmental investing

Our action plan proposed doing a program for congregation on options for environmental investing, but we did not get around to that; we will have to do that in the future.,

Our Board did, however, approve moving our congregation's CD to an environmentally responsible certificate of deposit at ShoreBank Pacific <http://www.eco-bank.com/> in Ilwaco, Washington. This project was delayed when we learned that ShoreBank would

not accept the UUA tax-exempt ID number, which we had been using with our current bank, as sufficient for us to open an account. We were required to separately incorporate as a non-profit religious corporation in California – which has several advantages anyway. Incorporation was completed in December 2006, and the CD transfer in May 2007.

Sustainable Living

Project 8: Develop renewable energy/carbon offset program

At the request of the Green Sanctuary Committee, our board approved purchasing carbon offsets on a monthly basis for our congregation from carbonfund.org. We chose to do this because we do not own our own building and so greatly increased energy efficiency investments by our congregation are not viable. My doing carbon offsets, we can nonetheless reduce our carbon footprint in an indirect way.



In addition, we promote members doing the same thing in our monthly Fellowship newsletter, and on our website's home page.

Project 9: Do a program for congregation on the value/importance of CFLs, then get pledges - ask 80% of congregation to replace three most used traditional lights with Compact Fluorescent Lights

Combined with Project 10 – see below.

Project 10: Ask congregation to have three family & friends replace three most used lights with CFLs.

We combined Projects 9 and 10.

On Earth Day 2007, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Visalia celebrated Earth Day with a special program entitled, "Change a Light, Change the World," presented by Green Sanctuary Chair, Harold Wood. The Power Point presentation [available for download at: http://www.uuvisalia.org/ppt/change_a_light.ppt] explained the wastefulness of conventional incandescent light bulbs, and the much more efficient compact fluorescent (CFL) and LED lights now available. Going well beyond the basics, the presentation gave information on the three most important things to look for when buying CFLs - which involves earning some new language for most people: lumens, correlated color temperature, and the color rendering index.

At the end of the program, everyone attending were invited to take two dimmable compact fluorescent light bulbs home with them - for free - thanks to the generosity of

congregation friend Daljit Singh. (Dr. Singh also contributed the funding for 1,000 CFLs, which the Fellowship has delivered to the low-income community of London, in rural Tulare County (pop. 2,000).)

Congregational members and friends were asked, as a condition to taking the CFL light bulbs, to sign the UU Visalia Earth Day Pledge. 92% of all persons attending turned in the pledge! The written pledge was also left out with the light bulbs for the next several weeks, so several additional pledges were obtained. Total pledges received to date: 24, which is 83% of our membership, but 92% of those attending the worship service. We consider this score very good, since we rarely have 80% of our members in attendance on Sundays – many of the pledges were from non-member friends.

The 2007 UU Visalia Earth Day Pledge had three parts:

- 1) Part One asked each member or friend to replace three or more of the most used lights in their home with Energy Star Compact or Tube Fluorescent lights.
- 2) Part Two asked each congregant to in tern ask three friends or family to replace three or more of the most use lights in their home with Energy Star Compact Fluorescent lights.
- 3) Part Three asked each congregant to choose one additional action item of their choosing that would help combat global warming and promote greater harmony with the environment.

I, _____, a member or friend of Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Visalia, pledge to do the following for Earth Day 2007:

1. Replace three or more of the most used lights in my home with Energy Star Compact or Tube Fluorescent lights. (The highest use fixtures in a home are typically the kitchen ceiling light, the living room table and floor lamps, bathroom vanity, and outdoor porch or post lamp.)
2. Ask three friends or family to replace three or more of the most used lights in their home with Energy Star Compact Fluorescent lights.
3. On the back side of this slip, identify one additional action item of your own choosing that will help combat global warming and promote greater harmony with the environment.

Here is a sampling of the individually unique additional items that members and friends pledged to do:

- Eat less meat.
- Purchase a Prius.
- Use the thermostat to reduce energy usage.
- Bike to work one day per week.
- Use reusable cloth shopping bags.

Dry clothes on a line outside rather than using a dryer.
Stop buying bottled water, filter my own water.
Buy a new Energy Star HVAC.
Install a drip watering system for yard.
Buy local produce more often.
Introduce my kids to public transportation and use once per month.
Ask my legislator to increase auto fuel efficiency standards to 40 mpg.
Pick up trash wherever I see it - everywhere and always.
Promote CFLs on my e-mail signatures & website
Drive slower in the slow lane rather than in my former fast lane.
Use a bicycle for local errands.
I will talk to supply people in my work place to consider purchasing LED exit signs in all 11 of our buildings.
Use less toxic household cleaners & spread the word.
Bike to farmer's market once a month.
Walk to work one day per week.
Use a power strip to turn off instant-on appliances.
Try to become a vegan.

Project 11: Raise funds and replace the Friends Meeting House refrigerator / Freezer with an ENERGY STAR unit.

Since we do not own the building we meet in, we first had to request permission from our landlord, the Visalia Friends (Quakers), and our offer to do this was accepted. Gaining this permission required some education, because some leaders of the Quaker congregation were reluctant to replace a perfectly good working refrigerator, and wondered how the manufacturing cost etc. could be environmentally sound. We explained that since the current refrigerator was 16 years old, it would save a lot of energy to convert to an Energy Star model, pay for itself in a few years, and the utility would recycle the old refrigerator in order to get it off the grid. Although our local utility would pay us \$35 and haul away the old refrigerator to a recycling center if we replaced it with an Energy Star model, our landlord did not want to do this, mindful of the precept "waste not, want not." They agreed to install a new Energy Star model at the Meeting House if our Fellowship would donate it, but they kept the old refrigerator in storage with the plan to eventually donate it to a local charity or poor family in need.

Starting in August, 2006, we began strategizing for how to fundraise to purchase the new Energy Star refrigerator. Katherine Singh and Janet Wood, members of our Green Sanctuary committee, co-chaired the "Refrigerator Subcommittee." They planned and executed a Rummage Sale held on October 21, 2006. Katherine and Janet spent 20 – 30 hours each, publicizing the request for donation of "quality cast-offs," sorting and pricing them, buying supplies such as street & yard signs, pricing labels, and tags, and placing ads and announcements in the media. At least 80% of our members, as well as many of our Quaker friends, donated items for the rummage sale. An additional, and unexpected source of donations were Katherine's neighbors, who had no affiliation with the

Fellowship at all, and in fact were members of a fundamentalist church. This neighbor and her husband also volunteered help the day of the sale, and since both speak Spanish fluently, translated for those of our many Spanish-speaking buyers; they could explain to them in Spanish when details were needed about the electronic items or how and whether something worked! So, the project turned out to be quite a worthwhile community-building effort!

At least 60% of our membership assisted at the sale itself, and many purchased items as well without haggling on the price! We had a lot of work to do, moving items, collecting money, negotiating prices with purchasers, etc. Some worked from the 5:30 a.m. set up and opening up to the end around 3 PM. Katherine says, “In the nine years Daljit and I have been in the Fellowship, I don’t recall any other effort done with such hard work and enthusiasm. I have no idea how you put an estimate or quantify the value of this ‘team building,’ but it was very gratifying. AND, we raised more than \$800 to buy the energy efficient refrigerator!”

Harold thinks: “Katherine’s secret for engaging so many members was that all volunteers were treated to a free breakfast at 5:30 on Sale day (home-made cinnamon rolls, fruit, juice & coffee) and lunch (home-made chili, corn bread, and peach cobbler!)!”

We had a large garage full of “quality cast-off” items to sell – re-use is always better than recycling! The few unsold items were donated to Visalia Emergency Aid.

Once we raised the money (we netted \$874 after newspaper ad and other expenses), Katherine researched Energy Star models online and at local stores. She used both the energystar.gov website and Consumer’s Reports information. This was somewhat difficult, as many information sources focused on smaller-sized models, but the Friends requested that the replacement be the same size as the old refrigerator, 26 cubic feet. She researched both local appliance stores and national chains, she eventually obtained an Energy Star certified Frigidaire refrigerator at Lowe’s for a 10% non-profit discount. (Frigidaire (manufactured by Electrolux), Model # FRS6LR5EW6. Energy performance verified – SA c US eev 99491 – csa, 26 cubic feet, with ice maker and drink dispenser.” We note that Electrolux was one of the earliest companies to adopt the Natural Step Framework for sustainability.)

The new refrigerator was installed in late January, 2007, and is used by our Fellowship and the Friends, for both congregational and charitable purposes.

Project 12: Change to recycled paper products and green cleaning products.

Goods Routinely Purchased by UU Fellowship of Visalia and Proposed Changes:

Copy paper	Originally mostly regular paper - can use recycled paper from Staples, Office Depot or persuade Kinko's to reinstitute their "green" machine for photocopying programs and materials on recycled paper.
Stationery	Now regular paper – at next reprinting of church envelopes and stationery, will specify envelopes and paper with high percentage of post consumer waste content. (Recycled envelopes not available for printing at usual printing source – must research others.)
Mailing labels	Now regular Avery type labels – will search for recycled paper labels at future purchases
Printer Cartridges	UUFV has no office - encourage members to use refilled printer cartridges
Paper towels	Now Smart & Final, Scott, Jubilee - encourage members to purchase recycled paper towels for building use (as from Seventh Generation at Albertson's, etc)
Paper Napkins	“
Toilet Tissue	“
Facial Tissue	“
Cleaning Products	Now the Meeting House uses 409 and ammonia cleaners – but we are encouraging use of vinegar, baking soda, hydrogen peroxide with a presentation on non-toxic cleaning (presented to landlord Friends Meeting House in March 2007)
Dish washing	Now Cascade and generic liquid soap – encourage purchase of Seventh Generation-type soap from Albertson's or Trader Joe's and white or clear liquid soaps such as "Method" or Ivory to avoid artificial colors or fragrances
Garbage bags	Now re-use plastic grocery bags in small waste baskets and regular plastic bags for larger containers – encourage purchase of recycled plastic garbage sized bags
Light bulbs	Now using mostly compact fluorescent light bulbs

April Hill and Katherine Singh are leading an effort to change to green cleaning products and recycled paper products. At a spring 2006 presentation on non-toxic house cleaning, Teri Van Huss provided a summary of supplies and methods to our members. Janet Wood adapted the list and presented it to the Visalia Friends Meeting with the request that they replace their toxic cleaning supplies with the non-toxic alternatives. They agreed to discuss it with their cleaning service. We plan to follow-up soon to get the status of this.

We encourage everyone creating the orders of service to print them on recycled paper. Since most buy recycled paper for home use, we think this in fact does occur most of the time. We will need to educate local printers, such as Kinko's, to offer a copier supplied with recycled paper for copies of newsletter, etc. Members have surveyed local stores and found recycled copy paper at both office supply stores, paper napkins occasionally at discount stores and Seventh Generation toilet paper and paper towels occasionally at

SaveMart grocery store. We are currently working on making bulk purchases by mail order for recycled paper products, in order to reduce costs and simplify procurement by members and friends.

Additional Activities

In addition, we undertook several other “green” activities throughout the past year.

These include the following:

1. Additional Activity 1: Thoreau as Spiritual Guide

Our Fellowship sponsored a Summer Discussion Series on *Thoreau as Spiritual Guide: Walden as a Guide for Spiritual Renewal and Transformation* every Sunday from June 11, 2006 through July 30, 2006. This program replaced regular Sunday services for this time period when so many are away on vacation. We used both Thoreau’s *Walden* and the book *Thoreau as Spiritual Guide* by Barry M. Andrews. We had several community members – 2 from our local Sierra Club group – attend and actively participate (one, John Kamansky, led one of the weekly discussions and did an excellent job!) We found this discussion gave us an excellent grounding in the ideas and principles of “simple living.”

2. Additional Activity 2: Comments on Statement of Conscience

Our congregation, small as it is, actively reviewed and commented on the UUA draft **Statement of Conscience on Global Warming / Climate Change** which was considered at the 2006 General Assembly. We were initially concerned, along with UU Ministry for Earth and others, that the initial draft was too weak. We submitted our recommendations for strengthening the Statement. We were very glad to learn at the end of June that the statement had been significantly revised and improved. We posted information about the statement on our website, including extensive excerpts and two spin-off pages:

Climate Change as a Religious Issue:

http://www.uuvisalia.org/justice/climate_change.html

Personal Practices for Responsible Earth Stewardship:

http://www.uuvisalia.org/justice/personal_practices.html

Energy Efficiency Tips:

<http://www.uuvisalia.org/justice/energy.html>

3 . Additional Activity 3 – Advocate Clean Water in School Health Plans

As our Green Sanctuary efforts began, in 4/06, Fellowship President Don Chapin and VP Hill followed a suggestion by Fresno Metro Ministry and clean water advocates to send letters to all Tulare County school districts advocating that the State-required School Health Plans include a commitment to providing safe drinking water for all children and staff. While this letter was not a formal Green Sanctuary goal, it symbolizes the Fellowship's support for social justice and environmental action. The letter was sent to over 40 local school districts.

4. Additional Activity 4: Sustainable Living Discussion Course.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of our additional activities was our sponsorship of a 9-session discussion course on Sustainable Living from the Northwest Earth Institute, which we did on alternating weeks from mid-January 2007 until the last session on May 10, 2007. This was very successful and enjoyed by all participants. We had 13 participants in this program, including both members and several non-members of our Fellowship. (We had so many people, we split into two groups each week to allow for greater participation from everyone.) Three of our participating non-members were our Quaker colleagues; one of the non-members participating has now indicated she wants to join our Fellowship as a member. The feedback from our Sustainable Living group was extremely positive!

Most of us had already been doing many of the “green living” lifestyle tips, but others were inspired by the program to do even more than they had been doing. We are exploring doing one 4-week NW Earth Institute discussion course this summer in nearby Three Rivers, and another next fall.

5. Additional Activity 5 - Film and Environmental Education Programs:

- Conduct or co-sponsor film or speaker programs.
- Build on our co-sponsorship of Feb. 2006 speaker from Union of Concerned Scientists on Global Warming

Many of our members have attended other local environmental events, including presentations and film showings by the local Sierra Club and Audubon Society, bird watching and nature hikes, Arbor Day tree planting and Earth Day events, local public hearings on land use issues, and similar events.

- Hosted Film & discussion “Suzuki Speaks” – Done March 4, 2007. Highly recommended.

6. Additional Activity 6: Vegetarian Awareness

Our congregation has weekly potlucks, which are a highlight of our Sunday evenings immediately after the worship service. (We've never used paper products for this – the facility has two dishwashers and we use regular plates and glasses). In recent months, as a result of education about food choices and their environmental impact, an increasing

number of congregants are bringing vegetarian meals to the potluck. (This is particularly notable because our Tulare County is one of the largest dairy and beef producing areas in the United States.)

For our final celebration of our “Sustainable Living” course, our theme for the potluck was “International Vegetarian Cuisine.”

We also have received a template from a fellow UU congregation for creating a Vegetarian Cookbook, and we are hoping to work with one of our new members to put this together.

4. Program Evaluation

1. The most important benefit in participating in the program was that it brings home to us the importance of environmentalism as a tenet requiring specific changed behavior. It is not enough to be opinionated about environmental issues; we must also “walk the talk.”

Also, an important benefit for us was the community-building and infrastructure improvements working on the Green Sanctuary program gave us. By having specific goals and timelines, we worked together as a community more than ever before, deepening and strengthening relationships in the congregation in the process.

Furthermore, in the course of doing the project, we found we had to create or establish several things we had not yet done – things which might be thought of in a larger church as “ordinary infrastructure” – e.g. becoming legally incorporated, having our first church fundraiser, establishing an online library catalog, providing illustrated sermons with Power Point, etc.

2. The most difficult aspect of the program for our congregation to achieve is probably getting the time and money to implement a strong program. Because our congregation is so small, even expenditures involving a few hundred dollars can seem daunting. Moreover, there are so few of us - period – available just to undertake leadership in the congregation in order to conduct a standard program. We have no staff; this year we could only find enough volunteers to fill three of the four slots of our executive board. However, our Green Sanctuary Committee was blessed to have seven to ten people regularly attend meetings, which is more than any of our other Fellowship committees (which typically have only 1 to 3 members!).

Another difficulty is the physical location of our Fellowship at the Visalia Friends Meeting. The facility is about 8 miles outside the center of town, making dependence on fossil fuels very difficult to avoid in order to attend our church services. This is balanced in part by the fact the building is shared with the Visalia Friend, and other community groups like the South Valley Peace Center, thus reducing the individual footprint

compared to what it would be if we were each to have our own facility. The spiritual refreshment of the natural beauty we have at this location would be hard to give up, especially when we realize that it is doubtful that our auto dependency would be changed in town (city buses do not run beyond 4 p.m. on Sundays, and bicycles are still not a realistic option for most people given the safety concerns of our current lack of bicycling infrastructure.)

3. Positive changes in our congregation's culture are many.

Don Chapin, President Emeritus of our congregation, says, "Our members are converting to CFLs, using non toxic household cleaners, purchasing hybrid cars, changing their buying habits, changing their driving habits, reducing their home energy usage - to name a few."

Dorothy Osak, a member of our Green Sanctuary Committee, says, "I think the positive changes are that we are even more committed to do the right thing since we saw success with this. I am working more on how I can lessen my footprint through cautious use of resources – especially I aspire to drive less. And. I can more "naturally" talk to fellow citizens now because I have a deeper understanding and experience of living it."

Anonymous evaluations from our "Choices for Sustainable Living" discussion course reflect these changes:

"I am much more aware of the many possibilities for sustainability."

"I'm back to hanging washed clothes out, planting vegetables, and pulling out old books on the environment."

"I'm going to introduce some vegan meals into my routines."

"I think more about how my habits affect the Earth's ability to recover from human abuse. I'm working to leave less of a footprint."

"I'm more aware about what I buy and try to be more concerned about where the things I buy are going when no longer used. I started composting."

"I'm filtering my water instead of buying bottled water now."

Because our Green Sanctuary effort has been such an inspiration, we expect it to continue to be a crucial part of our program in the coming years.

4. We continue to aspire to live out our Green Sanctuary commitments in the future. Our Green Sanctuary Committee will continue, probably with a fewer number of projects but still covering all four areas of congregational life: worship, education, social justice, and sustainable living. Because such a large percentage of our congregational members participated in this program, and our Green Sanctuary program was in fact our biggest social justice work for the year, we expect to continue a strong environmental emphasis in the future.

Some of the ideas being floated for next year include the following:

- A. Re-using instead of recycling plastic soda bottles – fundraiser - Terracycle Plant Food <http://www.terracycle.net/> will pay 5 cents per 20 oz. soda bottle returned & they pay the shipping
- B. Recycled Paper, CFL & LED lights - bulk purchasing
- C. Ensuring non-toxic green cleaning at Meeting House
- D. Religious Education – adult discussion groups (probably NWEI course on “Global Warming” in Three Rivers in the summer, and for the fall perhaps David Korten’s *The Great Turning* discussion, or another NWEI Discussion Course)
- E. Summer Campout
- F. CFL and LED promotion via Interfaith Power & Light
- G. Vegan Holiday Cookbook
- H. Worship Programs ideas on Environmental topics for next year
 - Environmental Investing
 - Blessing of the Animals
 - The Great Warming video
 - Sponsor local school assemblies with Eco-Music e. g.– ZunZun <http://www.zunzuntunes.com/> or Enuf! <http://www.enufwaste.com/> or Bill Oliver <http://www.mrhabitat.net/>

5. Ongoing role in the wider community: We hope that our CFL donation program might be followed by some of the larger churches or non-profits in our city. Similarly, we recently learned that our local utility is planning to do an even larger program to distribute CFLs to low-income families. Even a local hardware store was giving away free CFLs for Earth Day. I consider it a success when something like recycling or using CFLs no longer has to be pushed as the “environmentally correct thing to do” but instead becomes institutionalized into the culture as just the normal and responsible way of doing business.

A local Jewish synagogue, Beit Shalom, has expressed interest in collaborating with the Fellowship on an environmental action in 2007. We will begin by offering the Interfaith Power & Light program and discuss individual projects. We hope to promote the IPL programs with other organizations, since more religious institutions are recognizing the importance of their role in environmental “stewardship.” The city of Visalia has committed to the “Cool Cities” Climate Protection program, and the time is right to move on this common ground.