

**Application for Formal Accreditation as a Green Sanctuary**  
**Prepared for the Unitaritan Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth**  
**May 10, 2009**

Congregation name: Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth

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Congregation Profile:

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth was founded in 1959, and we built our Fellowship building in 1995. Membership and attendance has increased in the past few years, and we currently have approximately 180 members and 50 friends. Average attendance on Sunday morning over the past year has been about 105. We have a full-time minister, a part-time Director of Religious Education, and very part-time office assistant, sexton, pianist, and choir director.

As we are located close to the scientific institutions in the village of Woods Hole, our membership includes a disproportionate number of scientists and engineers, both active and retired, many of whom specialize in ecosystem and environment-related fields.

Completion of Program Activities:

The UU Fellowship of Falmouth adopted its Environmental Action Plan in June of 2007. Following is a description of the activities we accomplished under this plan.

**Religious Education:**

**1. Encourage all members and friends to complete an energy audit of their own homes and driving patterns.** To encourage concrete thinking about our carbon footprints, Bill Jackson and members of our Men's Breakfast social group put together a carbon footprint calculator taking into account home heating via oil or natural gas, electricity use, and gasoline usage. Members of the Men's Breakfast group, and then members of the congregation at large, completed the calculation; about 30 people in total filled out the calculator. Led by John Crusius we also calculated a carbon footprint for the Fellowship as a whole, which included heating and lighting

of the meetinghouse, and fuel used in driving to and from Fellowship events.

As a result of this calculation we discovered the rule of thumb that home heating, electricity, and driving each account for roughly equal amounts of a household's carbon footprint. We also discussed the effects of diet; we read that converting from a standard American diet to a diet based entirely on plants would have about the same effect on one's carbon footprint as switching from driving an S.U.V. to driving a Prius hybrid.

Getting this basic feeling for our carbon footprints, and calculating a baseline carbon footprint, was useful. Some people had a lot of enthusiasm for competitive carbon-footprint reductions. Many of us, however, began to feel that we had done enough calculating and would prefer to start trying to take action. Thus we abandoned our initial plans to repeat the carbon footprint calculations annually.

Kevin Kroeger, a scientist in our congregation who studies nitrogen cycles, talked with us about the effects of excess nitrogen on the environment, and sources of nitrogen such as septic systems, tailpipe emissions especially from older vehicles, and fertilizer applied to lawns. Kevin put together a nitrogen footprint calculator which was introduced during our Sunflower Sunday service in August 2008 and was discussed in more depth at a Wednesday evening presentation in April 2009.

**2. Food and the Environment:** We organized a book discussion evening, discussing Michael Pollen's "The Omnivore's Dilemma," Barbara Kingsolver's "Animal, Vegetable, Miracle," and Nina Planck's "Real Food." As an outgrowth of that evening, several people in the congregation got together to purchase a side of grass-fed beef from River Rock Farm in Westport, Massachusetts (about 60 miles from our meetinghouse), in the fall of 2008. Raising beef entirely on grass by well-managed rotational grazing is good for the land, more humane for the animals, it eliminates the overuse of antibiotics that takes place in feedlots, and it results in beef with less fat and a healthier mix of fatty acids compared to feedlot beef. Grass-fed beef is generally provided frozen, in standard supermarket cuts, in October or November; our particular side of beef weighed 204 pounds and cost \$1600. We have been sharing it at cost with friends and members of the congregation. So far 12 families have sampled cuts from our side of beef and several others have expressed interest.

As part of our discussions on food and the environment, we sponsored a number of events jointly with the Adult Religious Education Committee. We invited a local farmer, Ron Smolowitz of Coonamessett Farm, to speak about farming and eating locally produced food; and we invited a member of our congregation who is an expert on aquaculture, Scott Lindell of the Marine Biological Laboratory, to speak on sustainable aquaculture. In addition, we sponsored several vegetarian and local-food potluck dinners, and we have been engaged in a lively ongoing discussion on the meaning of "ethical eating."

Lastly, on Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009, our Social Action Committee presented a Human Rights Celebration and Fair Trade Coffeehouse at our meetinghouse. It was a fundraiser for the Barnstable County Human Rights Commission and the Cape and Islands Gay & Straight Youth Alliance (CIGSYA). Fair Trade coffee was served and attention was called to fair trade tea,

sugar, and chocolate as well.

**3. Curriculum for children:** As we were beginning our Green Sanctuary process, our Director of Religious Education, Lisa Dunne, completed a curriculum about earth-centered religion for grades 1 through 6, and was using the curriculum in the classrooms for the first time. She continues to further refine this curriculum and to teach children about environmental responsibility and celebrating the earth.

**4. Green Sanctuary Wednesday evening series for adults:** Our Adult Religious Education Committee under the leadership of Win Munro recently began organizing an Adult RE program every Wednesday evening, and the Green Sanctuary Committee with leadership from David Dow and Jessica Mark Welch has taken responsibility for the program one Wednesday per month in 2007-8, and one every other month in 2008-9. The minister and other members of the congregation also initiate Green-Sanctuary-related programs which have been included on the list below. In addition to the book discussion, farming, aquaculture, and nitrogen footprint programs mentioned above, and vegetarian, local food, and ethical eating pot-luck dinners, other programs have included: A talk by Megan Amsler of the Falmouth Energy Committee and Cape and Islands Self-Reliance, about practical solutions for decreasing your carbon footprint; a showing of the film “Toxic Bust,” about the relationship between environmental toxins and breast cancer, and a discussion with Cheryl Osimo from the Silent Spring Institute, who was interviewed in the film; a showing of Al Gore’s film “An Inconvenient Truth;” a showing of a film, “Coastal Landforms,” about the geology of Cape Cod and what coastal homeowners should understand about protecting the coast; and a discussion of community wind power, described below. A complete list of the Green Sanctuary – related Adult RE programs from the past year and a half, with the attendance at each program, follows:

October 10, 2007: Toxic Bust (film showing) with Cheryl Osimo: 30  
November 14, 2007: Local farmer Ron Smolowitz on locally grown foods: 15  
December 12, 2007: An Inconvenient Truth (film showing): 12  
January 9, 2008: Local scientist Scott Lindell on sustainable aquaculture: 30  
February 13, 2008: Megan Amsler on tangible solutions for reducing your carbon footprint: 15  
(heavy rain)  
March 12, 2008: book discussion, The Omnivore’s Dilemma; Animal, Vegetable, Miracle; Real Food. 8  
April 9, 2008: Blue Vinyl (film showing): 6  
April 30, 2008: Ethical Eating discussion: 9  
May 14, 2008: Open forum on Community Wind for Falmouth: 42  
August 13, 2008: King Corn (film showing): 5  
August 20, 2008: Local foods potluck dinner and film “Coastal Landforms”: 18  
September 3, 2008: Biofuels, food prices, and global warming: 12  
September 17, 2008: Local foods potluck and film “Babette’s Feast”: 12  
October 1, 2008: Nature and Nature’s God (study group, Bob Murphy): 6  
October 8, 2008: Nature and Nature’s God (study group, Bob Murphy): 5  
October 15, 2008: Low-income fuel assistance and weatherization: 14  
October 29, 2008: Ethical Eating discussion: 10  
December 3, 2008: Book discussion, Tom Friedman’s “Hot, Flat, and Crowded”: 18

December 10, 2008: Community-based Weatherization (Chris Powicki and Megan Amsler): 21  
January 7, 2009: Obama's agenda: Energy and the environment; Poverty: 21  
February 18, 2009: Discussion of Ethical Eating guide: 13  
April 8, 2009: Local scientist Kevin Kroeger on nitrogen footprints: 8

### **Religious Services:**

**5. Sunday Services, Solstice and Equinox:** We have several Sunday services per year with environmental awareness, environmental stewardship, and environmental justice themes, such as Saltwater Sunday in September (a celebration of our Cape Cod heritage), Harvest in October, and an annual Earth Day service in April. Our active CUUPS group practices solstice and equinox celebrations open to people of all faith traditions.

**6. Sunflower Sunday:** As part of the Green Sanctuary process we have developed "Sunflower Sunday" in August as a Sunday service each year at which we can educate fellowship members, summer visitors, and the community about our congregation's environmental concerns. This has also been an opportunity to celebrate the installation of the congregation's solar panels and try to inspire members of the congregation to think about sustainable energy issues.

### **Environmental Justice:**

**7. Celebrations:** We sponsor two annual celebrations that affirm environmental justice: the Rachel Carson Harvest Dinner in October and the New Year's Day celebration in Woods Hole. The Harvest Dinner is a fundraiser for the local food pantries, and there is live music and brief speeches. The New Year's Day celebration begins with a gathering in the Woods Hole Community Hall to talk about energy justice, followed by a festive walk around Eel Pond in Woods Hole, with some people wearing costumes and performing folk dances. Both events are routinely covered in the local newspapers.

**8. Community Gardening, Fuel Assistance, and Weatherization:** The Falmouth Service Center is a non-profit organization in Falmouth that provides food assistance, fuel assistance, and other emergency services for people in need. A community garden has been established on land owned by the Service Center and an adjoining non-profit subsidized housing development. Members of our congregation, led by Bill and Ilona Geise, are active in organizing, managing, and gardening in the community garden, in which people can rent plots for \$10 per year, and agree to participate in work days and donate half of their produce to the Falmouth Service Center. We consider this an environmental justice project, as it increases access to local, organically grown produce for all.

Our minister, Bob Murphy, and other members of the congregation work with the Service Center and other local service organizations doing outreach and community education work on fuel poverty, fuel assistance, and weatherization assistance programs, and support disaster response services on Cape Cod and the Islands, which is an environmental justice issue because natural disasters often have the most catastrophic impact on the poor. The 'Boston Globe' published a major article about our congregation's environmental justice work on April 21, 2007. Our congregation's web site provides a link to the Globe article. Rev. Bob Murphy has been active

in environmental justice work for over twenty years among the Unitarian Universalists. In March, 2009, the UU Fellowship of Falmouth's Governing Board nominated Bob for a Guardian of the Future award in recognition of this work.

In the fall of 2008 and early 2009, with leadership from Bill Jackson, we developed a team of volunteers from our congregation who are interested in helping weatherize homes of other people in the congregation. This effort ties in with the work of a local organization, the Cape and Islands Renewable Energy Collaborative, which obtained funding from the Cape Cod Foundation in fall of 2008 to form a "Community Energy Corps" consisting of volunteer crews who will be trained in basic home weatherization measures, as well as related health and safety issues. These crews are to reach out to friends, neighbors, and people in need of basic weatherization services to provide a measure of immediate help and referrals to existing, state-funded programs. The organizers of the program, Chris Powicki of Water Energy and Ecology Information Services, and Megan Amsler of Cape and Islands Self-Reliance, spoke at our Fellowship on December 10, 2008, about their program and their hope that our team could help them field-test their ideas for community weatherization. Difficulties have been: plenty of volunteers willing to help, but few people asking for help; and a fear of incurring legal liability of one sort or another when offering services to the community at large. The Renewable Energy Collaborative plans to develop a waiver form and other resources to help with this problem.

**9. Alternative Gift Market:** In November of 2007 our congregation held its first-ever Alternative Gift Market, sponsored by our Social Action Committee. The second annual Alternative Gift Market was held in November of 2008, this time co-sponsored by our congregation along with the Falmouth Jewish Congregation and Falmouth's St. Barnabas Episcopal congregation. Among the available gifts were several that support environmental justice work, for example: tube wells to provide clean water to villages in India; fuel-efficient stoves so that impoverished people can cook with less effort and less deforestation; and bio-gas stoves, where methane from human waste is harvested as a cooking fuel.

### **Sustainable living:**

**10. Hot-Water Heater:** Our Buildings and Grounds Committee installed a small, energy-efficient hot water heater for our dishwasher in late 2007, allowing the main hot water heater to be kept at 120 degrees (as a safety issue as well as an environmental one). The hot-water heater for the dishwasher is left off most of the time, and is turned on only one hour before the dishwasher is needed. This system has been working well.

**11. Develop a program to encourage carpooling to UUFF services and events.** A group led by John Crusius has been formed to begin this process, cooperatively between the Green Sanctuary Committee and the Caring Committee, which seeks to encourage ride-sharing and is particularly concerned with elderly or infirm people who would appreciate rides to Fellowship events. By sharing rides, members and friends help to reduce gasoline use, air pollution, and parking lot crowding. We have counted the number of cars in the parking lot on Sunday morning compared to the number of people in the building, and have learned that on a typical Sunday there are 1.3 people per car. We plan to use this information in educating and inspiring the congregation.

**12. Install a solar photovoltaic system on the lower south-facing area of the UUFF roof.**

We began a capital campaign for a photovoltaic system shortly after adopting our Environmental Action Plan in June of 2007. The congregation was very supportive of the capital campaign, which was concluded successfully within several months and raised \$22,545 from 47 donors. A steering committee obtained four bids, and negotiated the purchase of a system that was approximately 20% larger and 20% cheaper than the original estimate. The up-front cost of this system was \$33,780, but the final cost to the Fellowship was only \$18,660 after a rebate of \$15,120 via the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC) small renewables initiative program. As the capital campaign raised several thousand dollars more than the final cost of the system, the extra money was put toward re-roofing of the section of the roof that would be under the solar panels, as this area would need re-shingling soon and we did not want to have to move the panels to accomplish later roof work.

Marvin Grosslein, Buildings and Grounds Committee co-chair, wrote the following detailed report: “The array of 24 solar photovoltaic collectors was installed on a south-facing roof of the UUFF Meetinghouse and hooked up to the electric grid on June 18, 2008. The system is projected to produce about 5000 kilowatt hours (kwh) of electricity annually which represents about 1/3 of the total electricity used at the meetinghouse in the year ending June 2008. In addition to the direct savings on the electric bill, we can sell renewable energy certificates (RECs) generated by the PV system at a rate of about 6 cents per kwh. Factoring in the current cost of electricity (about 22 cents per kwh) offset by the PV system and the sale of RECs, the savings achieved in the first full year of operation are estimated to be about \$1400. At that rate the system would pay for itself in about 13 years, and since electric rates are expected to increase, the payback period will decline accordingly.

“The PV modules are warranted for 25 years, and will likely achieve a design life at least twice that. Over the first 25 years of operation the system would be expected to offset an estimated 157 tons of carbon dioxide, 900 pounds of sulfur dioxide, and 560 pounds of nitrous oxide, assuming that the bulk of electricity continued to be generated through burning of fossil fuels in the same manner as is the case in the USA today. Of course it is hoped that greenhouse gas emissions will decline through increasing use of alternative energy sources (such as wind, solar, tides, nuclear) and cleaner burning fuel technology. But this example illustrates the contribution just one PV system can generate over time, and suggests the potential cumulative power of adding alternative energy sources to the national grid through the actions of individual citizens and non-government organizations.”

As a follow-up to the installation of the solar panels, we have been encouraging members of the congregation to consider installing solar panels on their own roofs. A group of interested homeowners met in November of 2008 to hear presentations and ask questions of the solar panel steering committee and of Tom Wineman of Solar Works, who installed the Fellowship’s array. In addition, members of the Green Sanctuary committee have spoken with the director of the Falmouth Service Center (non-profit food pantry and community service organization) to discuss the Service Center’s own needs to weatherize their building and perhaps install solar or wind power. The Service Center intends to follow up and we will assist where possible.

**13. Conduct investigative research and preliminary discussions on possible installation of a wind turbine,** perhaps a large, utility-scale turbine financed as a Community Wind project. Led by Win Munro, David Jewett, and others, we organized a discussion at our meetinghouse about Community Wind for Falmouth in May of 2008, attended by a panel of experts including Megan Amsler of Cape and Islands Self-Reliance; Dan Webb of Webb Research, a small private company attempting to obtain permits to construct a utility-scale wind turbine in Falmouth; local politicians, and representatives of the local utility. There is a great deal of enthusiasm in the community for a community wind project. We would like to make sure that such a project, if it comes to fruition, would benefit low-income residents of Falmouth and/or non-profits that serve them, such as the Falmouth Service Center. One difficult step, which needs to occur early on, is determining how the organization should be structured, which will determine which kinds of federal or state incentives it can benefit from. In May 2008, Massachusetts passed its Green Communities Act which may be helpful. A follow-up discussion is planned for June 2009.

**14. Purchase “green” electricity.** In response to a recommendation from the Green Sanctuary Committee and the Buildings and Grounds Committee, in May of 2008 our Governing Board voted to purchase “Cape Light Compact 100% Green” electricity for the Fellowship building. We encourage members of the congregation to do the same for their own houses.

**15. Restoration of native plants to the meadow adjoining our Meetinghouse:** The Buildings and Grounds Committee continues its environmentally friendly landscaping and is embarking on a new effort to re-introduce rare and locally extinct meadow plant species that once inhabited the sandy savanna-like prairie on Cape Cod, before European colonization of North America. Native eastern prairie grass and forb seeds were spread on the meadow adjoining the meetinghouse in Fall 2008 and *Asclepias syrica* (native milkweed) seeds in winter of 2008-9. However, it may be difficult for seeds to become established in a meadow already filled with non-native grasses and plants, so on May 9, 2009, the project continued with the planting of 100 plants in the meadow; more plants will be added soon. Phil Zimmerman, co-chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, writes: “If we are lucky and diligent, we may be able to bring our site back to a condition where once again it contributes seed, nectar, fodder and habitat for a web of life long gone from our immediate area and is able to better contribute to the important role it plays on the Atlantic flyway.”

**16. Connections to Green Sanctuary efforts in the denomination and to other congregations in Falmouth:** Based in part on our discussions as part of this Green Sanctuary process, our minister, Bob Murphy, and our Governing Board wrote a study and discussion topic called “Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice,” which was accepted by the UUA’s 2008 General Assembly for national study among the member congregations and has been a great success. We are continuing to discuss this topic and encourage the denomination-wide discussion on the issue. Several members of the Green Sanctuary Committee have been taking part in the UU Mass Action “Green Sanctuary Conference Calls” among a number of congregations in Massachusetts. In March, 2008, our Governing Board presented a proposed business resolution called “The Green Revolution in Religion,” which was accepted by the governing board of the Ballou Channing District. Looking forward, Rev. Murphy has agreed to draft a new statement about energy issues to be called “Energy, Peace, and Justice,” which he wants to present in Falmouth after the 2009 General Assembly, and for which he is currently

seeking comments. Our congregation's Social Action Committee, along with Unitarian Universalist congregations in Barnstable and Brewster, and numerous other religious and secular groups, co-sponsored an Energy Justice Forum at the Cape Cod Community College on November 16, 2008. Subtitled "Helping to connect for a warm, safe, dry, and mobile society," the forum provided information about energy conservation, public transportation, and low-income fuel assistance strategies.

Our Green Sanctuary team has had a presence at a variety of local events such as Earth Day celebrations and other environment-related gatherings, and we have spoken at these events with members of non-UU congregations who become interested in the Green Sanctuary program. One of our members telephoned all the religious organizations in town to find out which of them have environment-related groups or committees with whom we could make common cause. Results were decidedly mixed; a few of the people he spoke with laughed off the idea ("we save souls, not the environment"), but two or three other congregations were actively interested.

In 2009 our congregation received an Energy Superstar award from the Energy Committee of the town of Falmouth. The Falmouth Democratic Town Committee invited Jessica Mark Welch, the chair of our Green Sanctuary committee, to speak about our Green Sanctuary efforts at their monthly meeting on February 18, 2009. The award will be officially presented at a meeting of the town Selectmen later this year, at which event we hope to have a chance to tell the Selectmen what we are doing and why.

Our Social Action Committee hosted an energy issues fair on October 15, 2008, and provided energy exhibits to the Falmouth Hospital. We hope in the future to do more work with other religious organizations on Cape Cod and in other places in the Ballou Channing District in developing sustainable living and environmental justice projects.

## **Accomplishment of Program Goals**

**Building awareness of societal environmental issues:** Before we started the program, members were discussing global warming and household energy audits. During the process, we have been talking about ocean acidification; community gardening, the environmental impact of different kinds of foods, and the surprisingly large effect that food has on your environmental footprint; toxins in the environment and the likelihood that toxic exposure is especially high in low-income communities; natural disasters, which likewise often have a more dramatic impact on low-income people; weatherization assistance and why it supports environmental justice; and the relative merits of solar photovoltaics, solar hot water, large-scale wind turbines, all-climate heat pumps, and long underwear. We are achieving a broader view of environmental issues and their complexity.

**Generating commitment for personal lifestyle changes:** Our carbon footprint calculators have helped get people thinking and talking about their own family's carbon footprint and how to reduce it. Leaving the car in the driveway, or getting rid of it entirely, is difficult in this community, spread out and public-transit-challenged as it is, but we are seeing quite a few hybrid



vehicles in the parking lot, and some people are biking or walking more when they can. More people in the congregation are scheduling household energy audits, eating vegetarian food and grass-fed meat, and trying to figure out ways to heat their homes in an environmentally friendly way. About a dozen families in our Fellowship are considering taking the major step of installing solar photovoltaic or hot water systems on their own homes, though to our knowledge none has yet taken the plunge who had not done so before our Green Sanctuary project began. Reusable canvas grocery bags are beginning to catch on. We keep talking about long underwear and how much money it can save you on your heating bill. It is difficult to change habits, but incrementally it seems to be happening.

**Motivating UUs to community action on environmental issues:** Our installation of solar panels on the Fellowship roof was a project of our Fellowship community that received strong and swift support. Once we had done a great deal of research and thinking, and convinced ourselves that this expensive high-tech solution was the right solution, action followed quickly and successfully. More of us are helping with the community garden, providing locally grown, organic food to ourselves and our neighbors who use the local food pantry. Our new Alternative Gift Market, which has an environmental component, has been a great success and is widening to include more members of the community outside our congregation. Our community wind planning group is highly motivated, though we are trying to undertake an extremely large and complex project and the first steps are difficult ones.

**Building a connection between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness:** Environmental and earth-centered themes come up frequently in our Sunday services as well as solstice and equinox services, and we now have a number of services with specifically environmental themes: Saltwater Sunday in September, Harvest in October, Earth Day in April, and Sunflower Sunday in August. At the April and August services in particular we specifically celebrate our Green Sanctuary process and commitments. Rev. Bob Murphy encourages interfaith cooperation in environmental protection programs. Bob is especially interested in environmental justice themes in the Abrahamic traditions and he has presented several sermons and workshops that discuss the Hebrew Bible and stewardship. Bob is also interested in religious naturalism and in the varieties of Celtic spirituality. Many of the people who choose to live on Cape Cod have a deep appreciation for the natural world and an experience of spirituality that is connected with nature; it is a short step from there to environmentalism and we are fostering this connection as we can in our services.

**Building awareness of, and rectifying, environmental injustices:** Several years ago the term “environmental justice” produced mostly puzzled looks in our congregation. Getting from puzzlement to understanding has been a lot of fun and a creative journey. Community gardening, weatherization assistance and fuel assistance, disaster response services, an alternative gift market selling tube wells and bio-gas stoves, and the beginnings of a community wind or community solar project that is designed to benefit people who don’t have capital as well as people who do: we’ve been talking about all these and about why they are environmental justice projects, and people are beginning to get it.

## Program Evaluation

Please evaluate the effect the Green Sanctuary Program has had on your congregation. This narrative should be approximately 3 pages, and include the following questions:

- What do you believe has been the most important benefit your congregation has gained as a result of your participation in the Green Sanctuary Program?
- What has been the most difficult or challenging aspect of the program for your congregation to achieve?
- Have you been able to discern positive changes in your congregation's culture as a result of the activities you accomplished? If so, what are they?

Before we started the Green Sanctuary process, our congregation had:

- three Sunday services per year focusing on environmental issues and a sense of place (Saltwater Sunday, Harvest, Earth Day); an active CUUPS group with religious gatherings practicing earth-centered spirituality; a New Year's Day walk in Woods Hole with a focus on the environment, environmental justice, and fuel poverty.
- a new curriculum developed by the Director of Religious Education for grades 1-6, focusing on earth-centered traditions, earth-based spirituality, and religious ideas about the seasons;
- an energy-efficient building with abundant natural light, five separate heating zones, and generally good insulation, as shown by several recent energy audits;
- environmentally friendly landscaping policies and practices, with use of native plants and minimal use of water and fertilizer, formalized in the 2005 "Statement of UUFF Landscaping Principles";
- a habit of using reusable mugs for coffee hour, and reusable plates, flatware, and tablecloths for dinners, made simpler by installation of a restaurant-quality dishwasher which washes these items quickly and efficiently;
- a major annual festival of waste reduction, reuse, and recycling, a.k.a. the Yard Sale;
- weekly "walkabouts" and kayaking trips, which provide good fellowship and encourage familiarity with our natural environment;
- monthly cleanups of litter on Sandwich Road, as an environmental service to the community;
- an annual Rachel Carson dinner, focusing on sustainable living and raising money for local food pantries;
- organic community gardening, with produce donated to the Falmouth Service Center food pantry, as an environmental justice project and one that encourages familiarity with the soil and the cycles of the seasons;
- work on the issue of fuel poverty, and referring low-income people to programs that help them make energy-saving weatherization improvements to their homes, as an environmental justice issue.

In other words, we had a thriving, environmentally-sensitive community.

What have we gained from our involvement with the Green Sanctuary program? Most tangibly, a set of solar photovoltaic panels on the roof. We had been debating the installation of solar panels for about a year, but there was difference of opinion about whether this high-tech, expensive solution was the best solution for us, or whether there were simpler, cheaper, and more effective options. Completing an Environmental Audit and an Environmental Action Plan helped us to think broadly and thoroughly about our congregation and the environment. When we concluded that installing solar panels was one of the most effective ways to reduce our carbon footprint, we could make that recommendation with the confidence that we had considered all the reasonable alternatives. Differences of opinion of course still existed; for example, should we spend the \$20,000 to put in solar panels now, or save that money as a down payment on a large wind turbine which would produce much more power more efficiently, but might be time-consuming and controversial to install? Would it be better to just purchase green electricity from the local utility, which would be about 10% more expensive in perpetuity, rather than producing our own green electricity by spending capital and then recoup the investment over time with lower electric bills? We were, however, able to reach a consensus for immediate, concrete and tangible action.

We have also benefited from an extended conversation within the congregation about environmental issues. Members with expertise and enthusiasm have been sharing their ideas, in the formal Wednesday evening adult religious education programs, and less formally during social events at the meetinghouse. We have discovered that the other members of our congregation are a wonderful resource for information, inspiration, and group action.

Early on in this process, I had a kind of conversion experience, when I read an article in the New Yorker magazine on ocean acidification and the possibility that because we are pumping carbon dioxide into the air, within a century there could be no place in the ocean where corals and other shelly creatures would be able to build their shells. (“The Darkening Sea”, November 20, 2006, by Elizabeth Kolbert.) Suddenly I no longer felt that atmospheric change was a problem that I could ignore; suddenly I felt I had to do something personally, something significant, in my own life, now. But what? Even if one were willing and able to commit to purchasing a different car, a set of solar panels, or a different furnace, which of these things would make sense to do? It is not a simple question to answer. But now I feel that when one of us has one of those conversion experiences, he or she doesn’t have to face all the questions alone. We have a network of people in the congregation who have thought about the same problems and are eager to help each other find the answers, and eager to encourage each other to make changes in our individual lives and our collective life together.

Making changes, of course, is also the most difficult and challenging part of the matter. When we conducted our environmental audit, we determined that our carbon footprint as a congregation came about equally from electricity, from heating the building, and from driving to Fellowship events. We addressed the electricity component by installing solar panels and purchasing “green” electricity for the remainder of our needs. A change in the way we heat the building will have to wait until we build an addition or until our existing furnaces reach the end of their useful life, but we have tentative plans for heating via solar hot water, passive solar, or an air-to-air heat pump run with green electricity. But the third component, driving, is thornier. We could make an immediate reduction by use of carpooling. But carpooling requires adjusting your schedule to accommodate someone else, getting ready a bit sooner in the morning, being

social when you may not want to be, staying late because your carpool buddy is attending the Social Action Committee meeting; it requires a kind of commitment that is not easy and sometimes not practical.

We have found, however, that carpooling is much more popular when it takes the form of offering a ride to someone who would otherwise be unable to attend services or events. This does not decrease our total carbon footprint, and in fact may increase it, but makes the Fellowship more welcoming and inclusive, and we celebrate this kind of carpooling and will strive to promote it further. As far as the carbon footprint is concerned, perhaps driving falls into a category similar to home heating – we will do some work around the edges with bicycling and carpooling, but a solution to the problem will come when we can replace our older vehicles with hybrids and 100% electric cars that are recharged with green electricity.

- What are your intentions/aspirations for continuing to live out your Green Sanctuary commitments?

- 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?

We will continue our environment-related Sunday services and special services, our celebrations of environmental justice, our adult RE series, and our environmentally-aware education of children. We will try to identify opportunities as they arise to make a significant difference in energy efficiency and shrinking our carbon footprint, such as with careful decisions about how to heat any eventual extension to our building. We plan to continue organic community gardening, and continue holding Alternative Gift Markets with an environmental component.

We feel strongly about trying to make a community wind or solar cooperative a reality. This will be a large and complicated project, more appropriate to be carried out by a town or community group rather than by our congregation only. We hope, however, to ensure that it retains an environmental justice component even as it becomes larger than the Green Sanctuary program of the UU Fellowship of Falmouth.

We intend to have the Green Sanctuary committee continue to meet, as a way of focusing the congregation's many, disparate environmental efforts, and keeping environmental issues high on the congregation's priority list.

We feel that recognition as a Green Sanctuary helps give us credibility, and encourages people to take notice of our efforts and perhaps to try to replicate them in their own congregations.

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Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Mark Welch, chair, Green Sanctuary Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth