

RE-ACCREDITATION ARTICLE

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PART 1: UUSS is a Green Sanctuary Congregation

When you go to the UUSS website, you may have noticed three insignia links at the bottom of the main webpage: one for Unitarian Universalist Association, one for Welcoming Congregation, and one for Green Sanctuary. UUSS is a member congregation of all three of these larger UU organizations.

A small group of FUSS members became interested in Green Sanctuary in 2006. We worked with the manual published by UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE). In 2009 we became an accredited Green Sanctuary congregation. We have worked hard on the responsibility of our Green Sanctuary status. Our work on UUSS Governance in 2017-18 included composing this statement of purpose:

Green Sanctuary Statement of Purpose

With reverence for the interdependent web of all existence, Green Sanctuary works to inspire environmental awareness, action, and justice through education, celebration, example, alliances, and advocacy, both within our congregation and with the larger community.

Green Sanctuary is much more than the small group of environmentalist UUSS members who occasionally invite you to join us for an outing, a discussion or a lunch. We're in communication with UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE) and several other UU related organizations including Create Climate Justice and NYUUJ (J= Justice). This connects us with a network of UUs who are involved in important intersectional issues.

We advocate for changes that are necessary to stop environmental and climate degradation. We work with several groups in the larger community that are involved in this work, including NY Renews, Climate Can't Wait, Progressive Schenectady, Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition (CRICCC). We share opportunities for you to advocate with us through Circuits, emails, Facebook, and our table at the back of the Great Hall.

We're working on the important issue of improving the energy efficiency of UUSS buildings and operations. We very much appreciate the work on this problem taken on by the infrastructure Advisory Committee, under the guidance of Richard Westergard. Their work has been turned over to the Board of Trustees. Under the leadership of Randy Jennings, the Buildings and Grounds Team is an on-going advocate for the greenest solutions that are available for our many maintenance challenges.

The Green Sanctuary Team met and worked with both the Infrastructure Advisory Committee and the Buildings and Grounds Team. We are very grateful that they share our concern for the environment and our concern to choose the most sustainable solutions while trying to work within our budget. That's really quite a challenge.

There are many other instances and occasions where our congregation's inclination toward a green perspective is evident. For example we have noticed a good number of energy-efficient vehicles and some bikes parked around UUSS on Sunday mornings, as well as a number of UUs on the CDTA bus to Albany on climate action days. In our worship services our ministers often focus on environment, climate, and intersectionality in readings, stories, poems, observations, prayers or sermons. The importance of intersectionality is spoken of in worship services, as well as the programs of other groups including the Antiracism Team in their series of book discussions; both the Women's Alliance and EBWA have included programs on environment, climate, and intersectionality. Our Religious Education program is working with a curriculum that includes nature study.

As an accredited GS congregation, it is important to be aware that program choices of environment, climate, and intersectionality are an integral part of the thinking of various congregational entities, not an edict from the Green Sanctuary Team.

PART 2: Reasons for re-accreditation

In 2021 UUMFE notified us that it is time to work toward re-accreditation. We will be in contact with a group of congregations involved in this process and we can learn from each other. We work together to care for the Earth in stewardship, continuing the UU tradition of respect for the web of all existence, of which we are a part. We are learning new ways of working toward these principles, as our planet increasingly needs the help of those who understand the stewardship responsibility. We take this responsibility very seriously because it carries forward the UU values of love, respect, caring, activism.

During our 16 years of Green Sanctuary work we have learned much about the needs and resources of our environment, climate, community, buildings, congregation and ourselves. We have built a strong basis for continuing this work and an awareness of the importance of continuing into the future. Our work is far from completed. Like the Haudenosaunee, we must take responsibility for preparing Earth and our own small part of it at 1221 Wendell Avenue for the Seventh Generation who will inherit it from us.

Part 3: How you can help with re-accreditation

UUSS is a Green Sanctuary Congregation. The Green Sanctuary Team is a small group of UUSS members who have volunteered to take on the responsibility of guiding and documenting UUSS in its progress toward continuing as a Green Sanctuary Congregation, living as closely as possible according to the Seventh Principle, "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part." If you share a strong concern about the health of our beautiful planet, please consider becoming a member of our Team. Here are some of the ways you can participate in our re-accreditation process as a member of the GS Team:

- Write Green Sanctuary articles for UUSS and UUMFE
- Research information
- Fill out re-accreditation forms
- Conduct congregational member surveys
- Help prepare and attend GS Sunday table
- Attend monthly GS Team meetings on Zoom
- Create attractive posters for our table
- Participate in advocacy efforts in person and on Zoom
- Other?

Here are things everyone in the congregation can do:

- ✓ Be a responsible environmentalist
- ✓ Help others learn how
- ✓ Read articles we post on the GS webpage and share with friends
- ✓ Contact your representatives about environmental issues (NY Renews website makes it easy)
- ✓ Contact GS about environmental problems at UUSS
- ✓ Contact GS with good environmental news we may have missed

UUSS members have been actively involved in local environmental activities and organizations long before Green Sanctuary was established. The following list includes both independent and Green Sanctuary initiatives but it is certainly not all-inclusive. If you are aware of items that could be included, please let us know; we need your input to document UUSS as a Green Sanctuary Congregation. Let's see if we can make this list even longer!

- The RE Curriculum features frequent nature study
- The work of the Infrastructure Committee emphasized energy efficiency
- New roof for dome includes more insulation
- Ordering new furnaces delayed to find greener solutions
- Incandescent lights have been replaced with LEDs

- All new doors are insulated
- Sunday worship services often include environmental subjects
- Programs for Women's Alliance and EBWA often include environmental topics
- Anti-racism book discussions include environmental justice issue
- Many UUSS members participate in environmental justice advocacy
- Earth Circles (discontinued but not forgotten)
- Many community projects were initiated and supported by UUSS members, including Vale Urban Garden, Roots & Wisdom and Electric City Food Coop
- GST supported and helped organize the 2022 Earth Day March and Rally in Schenectady; also an earlier one in 2006