

UCE Green Sanctuary Assessment Report on Committee and Individual Survey Results, with Recommendations for Action Plan

This report consolidates the results of two surveys.

- A survey that asked volunteers and staff to consider the congregation's practices related to resource conservation and sustainable practices
- A survey that asked individuals and families to reflect on personal and spiritual practices, awareness and actions related to environmental issues and environmental consciousness

Based on the survey results, a list of "Next Steps" toward developing a Green Sanctuary action plan is presented in the final section of the report.

GREEN SANCTUARY ASSESSMENT SURVEY REPORT

In late October 2008, the Green Sanctuary Committee (GS Committee) developed a survey, based on the Green Sanctuary Manual examples, with questions that focused on aspects of congregational life related to property management and landscaping; administration (staff and Board); worship; religious education for children, youth and adults; social justice and community outreach.

Purposes of the survey were:

- to find out how well the congregation of the Unitarian Church of Edmonton reflects positive action for the environment
- to provide a baseline assessment of the congregations' actions and policies before proceeding with a Green Sanctuary Action Plan.

Committees and staff were asked to consider the congregation's practices for the three years from early September 2005 to end of August 2008. The following committees, board members and staff responded to the survey:

- Administration (Minister, in consultation with Church Administrator and DRE)
- Religious Education (DRE, Adult RE Committee)
- Finance (Treasurer)
- Landscape Committee
- Membership Committee
- Property Management Committee
- Social Justice Committee

A member of the Green Sanctuary Committee also interviewed the Project Manager who oversaw the renovation work on the new church building, and reviewed Renovation Steering Committee notes to identify the practices and policies used when choosing building materials and doing the renovations.

Survey responses are summarized below. The reporting sequence is the same as the survey question sequence. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of committees

or individuals who mentioned the topic/item.

1. What are our energy usage patterns and current conservation practices?

- Use programmable thermostat (2)
- Turn off lights and computers when not in use
- Bathrooms, 2 storage rooms, north vestry are on automatic (motion detector) switches.
- Lighting is florescent. (2)
- Copier has power saver mode
- Significantly reduced number of photocopies being made
- Restrict landscape watering to "life saving" measures
- Hold meetings right after church to save trips

2. What are our recycling practices?

- All offices and classes have recycle bins for all kinds of paper. (3)
- Efforts are made to reuse the second side of copied paper. (2)
- Bottles and such are recycled. (2)
- Light bulbs and batteries to the Eco-center.
- Cartridges [printer] are collected and returned

3. What are our existing policies for use of non-disposable materials?

- No formal policy
- We only use non-disposable plates, utensils, glasses and cutlery. (2)
- Try to stay away from materials that cannot be re-used or recycled [for RE program]

4. Do you have landscaping policies that direct use of native species, landscape chemical, etc?

- No

5. What existing church policies govern purchasing and investing decisions? Are your investments in keeping with your environmental and other social values?

- We don't have investments, just bank accounts (NOTE: Congregation voted to put endowment fund into purchase of current building)

6. What current religious education programs relate to the environment for both children and adults?

- There are parts of almost every curriculum that include environmental awareness and issues. Some curriculums are entirely environmentally based

7. What lessons/activities are used to help children understand their place in nature?

- Planting, talking about recycling and re-using, talk and do crafts around environmental awareness and our interconnectedness (as part of principles)

8. What adult programs/classes are offered to explore environmental themes and related faith issues? (Appreciation of natural beauty, globalization, interconnectedness, etc.)

- In the past year (2008), the Adult RE Committee has offered the following programs related to the environment and the Seventh Principle:
 - “Spirit of Life” - Workshop #4: Spirituality in Nature co-led by Bonnie Kyle and Brian Kiely
 - “Practical Spirituality – Flower Arranging” led by Gordon Ritchie
 - “Sustaining Wonder” (an exploration of environmental issues with a focus on the Seventh Principle of respect for the interdependent web of life) led by Karen Stevenson
- The “New U” class mentions the 7th principle.

9. Have you incorporated intergenerational learning experiences that encourage children and adults to learn from each other?

- The current garden has a columbine and several delphiniums started by the children in 2007. The nasturtiums were all started by the children in that year also. This continues a practice that began at the former church building, when the adults and children would plant seeds and bedding plants together during late May and early June.

Worship

10. How well and how often does our worship integrate the wisdom of the Earth?

- Three to four services per year, explicitly. 3 – 4 other times it will feature as an aspect of the service. (A list of environmentally themed services will be included in the final report as an attachment)
- Social Justice Committee submits worship service suggestions. This committee has done the worship service at least once a year since 2006. (A list of themed services, noted above)

11. How is environmental awareness and Earth wisdom integrated into Sunday worship? – sermons, music, readings, meditations, etc.

- Readings and meditations often have an earth-centered component. (A list of environmentally themed hymns and readings will be included as an attachment to the final report)

Social Justice / Action

12. How is earth care a part of your overall social action program?

- We sell gently used items [church garage sale]
- We donate gently used items [e.g. winter coats] to local charities
- We donate unsold used books to the shingle manufacturer.
- We recycle. We have 3 people hauling to the bottle depot. This means families that are already coming to church do not create additional carbon footprints by making another trip to the bottle depot. (2)

- Support at marches, and rallies including Environmental and Peace
- Committee members in Raging Grannies
- Donation decisions-sharing our abundance.
- Fund interest to iHuman

13. Do local community groups use your facilities for programs that serve disadvantaged groups/environmental groups, other?

- In addition to the groups that use the facility we reach out to them with yogurt containers, clothing and the mitten tree.

Membership / Chorealis / Library

14. Do you have a paper use policy?

- We use email to communicate as much as possible.
- We have cut back on brochure distribution.
- We use the second side of paper already used on 1 side.

15. Do you ensure that the environment is mentioned in your literature?

- No responses to this question

16. Does the library contain environmental or globalization literature?

- There are books on issues such as the tar sands in the Social Justice section of the library [clarified during discussion at Council of Committee Chairs meeting, May 23/09]

Other

17. What skills or experiences do congregation or committee members possess that you can draw on for ongoing planning and support?

- All staff are growing in awareness and are willing to look at this and adapt to new policies
- Member with long time study and involvement with environment; connections could identify guest speakers for worship services or leaders for educational programs (2)
- Common sense.
- Writers, organizers, teachers, accountants, activists

Additional comments

- We have several suggestions for what we might do better. For example, we would like to see the Board and /or the congregation create clear policy and practices regarding the use of paper, cups, etc.
- Have received many requests for a chemical free yard maintenance program
- As garden ages less watering will be required
- As garden ages manure and other organic renewable additives will benefit the garden more than chemical fertilizers do
- Actions we recommend:

- Turn old tablecloths into napkins
- Central recycling of household batteries
- Plant sales
- Gently used Xmas ornaments sale
- When we become accredited this will be added to "The New U".
- Hold meetings after church saving duplicate trips
- Need to advertise in newsletter the environmentally friendly services available here
- Add environmental articles to Sunday Service
- Towels-linen on a loop, washcloths as one use towels-options of both disposable and washable
- Washer/dryer to support reusable practices
- Ethical cleaning products-change for the health of our janitors. Change for the health of our planet.
- Green contractors-find them, use them, copy them.
- Audit \$\$
- Cleaning supplies:
- Kitchen cleaning products:

Conclusions

UCE appears to have a culture that already practices recycling and resource conservation

- The building is equipped with programmable thermostats in each of the heating zones, and there are motion detector switches in the Vestry and in rooms where people enter and leave frequently - the bathrooms and two of the storage rooms.
- Of the eight committees/staff that responded, six mentioned recycling and re-use of paper.
- Beverage container recycling is a practice that benefits the congregation's finances as well as keeping materials out of the landfill, so receives support for multiple reasons.

Data gaps to fill

Clarify responses in key areas.

Obtain data on actual usage kJ of natural gas, as costs provided by Finance Committee reflect market price of natural gas, as well as rate of consumption. Consider how to obtain, if actual bills are not on file somewhere.

Obtain consumption figures for electricity and water as well as natural gas.

SUMMARY - INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Finding out how individual members of the congregation practice positive actions for the environment is a key step in UCE's Green Sanctuary Assessment phase. Awareness

of the current knowledge and practices of individuals and families will be used to help the develop programs that support and enhance what members and friends are already doing at home, at work and in their communities.

The working group developed a survey that could be completed easily and quickly online. Print copies of the survey were also available for those who did not have computer access.

Participants were asked to consider their practices – as an individual or as a family - during the past three years (ie. From January 2006 to March 2009) in four key areas:

- connections between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness
- personal lifestyle
- awareness of environmental issues
- actions on environmental issues and environmental justice

The committee received 56 responses. 47 were on-line and there were nine print submissions. Print responses were entered online by one of the GS Committee members, to make tallying of results easier and more consistent.

Demographics

Dwelling

- 61% of those who responded live in a house
- 24% live in apartment or apt-style condo
- 15% live in a townhouse

Location

- 63% of those who responded live within 5 km of city centre
- 24% live within the city, but more than 5 km from city centre
- 9% live in suburban community
- 4% live in rural area

Frequency of Attendance

- 78% of those who responded attend almost every Sunday
- 12% attend about once a month
- 10% attend three or four times a year

Length of time attending UCE

- 45% of those who responded have been attending UCE for more than 20 years
- 15% have been attending for 10 to 20 years
- 19% have been attending for 5 to 10 years
- 19% have been attending for 1 to 5 years
- 2% have been attending less than one year

Participation in congregational activities related to sustainability

- 82% of those who responded have participated in the garage sale through donations, working a shift or helping with set-up

- 72% have participated in the book sale
- 74% participate in beverage container recycling
- 43% participate in the donation of yogurt tubs
- 70% donate used winter clothing
- 87% recycle Orders of Service and other paper
- 87% receive the newsletter electronically

Experiencing/appreciating natural beauty

- Walking (49 people indicated “always” or “frequently”)
- Gardening (32 people indicated “always” or “frequently”)
- Hiking (44 people indicated “frequently” or “sometimes”)

Activities that provide inspirational / ethical framework

- Being outdoors (98% of responses)
- Inspirational / spiritual readings (89% of responses)
- Friends / support (85% of responses)
- Environmentally themed worship (77% of responses)
- Prayer / meditation (61% of responses)
- Pet companionship (57% of responses)

Personal lifestyle to be developed

Programs for the congregation to undertake

52 of the survey participants responded to this question. 4 participants skipped this question.

Workshops on sustainable practices

- 75% of those who responded selected this as one of their top three preferences
- 40% ranked it as their first choice

Worship services about earth-based religions/spirituality and/or environmental ethics

- 73% of those who responded selected this as one of their top three preferences
- 29% ranked it as their first choice

Simplicity Circles

- 48% of those who responded selected this as one of their top three preferences
- 18% ranked it as their first choice

Chalice Circle with an environmental focus

- 23% of those who responded selected this as one of their top three preferences
- 0% ranked it as their first choice

Community action (focus to be determined through discussion groups / consensus

- 67% of those who responded selected this as one of their top three preferences

- 12% ranked it as their first choice

As community action / environmental justice is a required component for certification, given the lower ranking as a first choice, the projects/action items will need to be relevant and have some visible results in order to engage the congregation. A comment provided by a survey participant sums this up quite well:

“I find our congregation talks a lot, but does little when it comes to causes. I think ACTION-related, measurable activities in the city/community are needed to increase our effectiveness and raise our visibility.”

NEXT STEPS

1. Fill in the data gaps identified for the Committee and Staff Survey and complete the lifestyle summary in the summary for the individual / family survey
2. Check with committee chairs regarding committee responses to draft policy statement (circulated to chairs May 23/09)
3. Edit the draft policy to incorporate committee feedback, clarify terms such as “green” and add to the draft policy a purpose statement (e.g. to affirm current energy conservation and recycling practices, to provide consistency and clarity for building users, and to raise awareness of these practices among members / friends (particularly new ones), renters and the wider community.)
4. Develop criteria to consider for trade-off analysis on suggestions such as replacing paper towels with cloth ones (e.g. environmental, social, financial factors, Public Health requirements.)
5. Approach the group that planned the new kitchen and social hall to get information about intended design elements that could enhance resource conservation, encourage use of non-disposable dishes, etc. Include kitchen plan in the congregation’s action plan.
6. Work with Worship, Religious Education and Adult RE Committees to develop action plans for Worship and Religious Education focus areas. For example, the Adult RE Committee plans to organize a session on “Green Cleaning” and an intergenerational session on where our food comes from.
7. Engage congregation in developing plans for Earth Justice and Sustainable Living focus areas.
 - a. Develop a short list of possible Earth Justice projects, to help participants focus on activities that meet the Earth Justice criteria (see page 25 of the GS Manual)
 - b. A suggestion was made at Council of Committee Chairs meeting, during discussion of the assessment survey that UCE work with other churches in the city centre – perhaps through the Interfaith Council - and approach City of Edmonton / Edmonton Transit regarding enhanced transit service on Sunday mornings to support

and encourage use of transit for travel to church services. This idea meets the criteria of collaboration addressing an issue in the community, and merits further consideration.