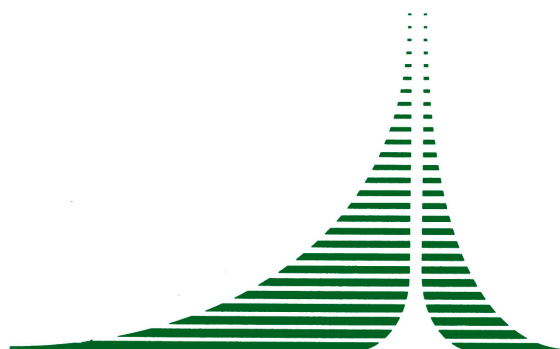




# Report of the Green Sanctuary Audit Committee



*The Unitarian Church in Westport*

June 13, 2005  
Prepared by Lynda Bluestein

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

The Audit Committee was convened by Jay Fountain to conduct an environmental audit of the buildings, grounds, practices and programs of The Unitarian Church in Westport to determine the Church's environmental and environmental justice "footprint".

The membership of the Audit Committee, Lynda Bluestein and Jay Fountain Co-Chairs, Richard Jacobs, Jim Perry and Mary Skarstrom, are knowledgeable and committed members of the church with regard to environmental practices. Over a three month time frame the Audit Committee met with and interviewed members of the church staff, volunteers in the church community possessing special technical knowledge in fields relating to the subject of this audit, and with experts from Northeast Utilities System, the church's supplier of electric power.

The Audit Committee considered the myriad opportunities and challenges of "greening" our church through a variety of lenses and from a number of different perspectives. The Committee's main focus was to establish benchmarks or a starting point for the Green Sanctuary Program. This audit included eight main areas:

1. Energy usage patterns and current conservation practices;
2. Compliance with local recycling procedures;
3. Church policies for use of non disposable materials/non-toxic cleaning supplies;
4. Church policies governing purchasing and investing;
5. Landscaping policies directing use of native species, landscape chemicals, etc.;
6. Lifespan Religious education programs relating to the environment;
7. Worship practices integrating the wisdom of the Earth;
8. Social action projects or activities relating to environmental justice.

### CONCLUSIONS

- The Committee noted that there were many missed opportunities to optimize energy efficiency when the renovation work was done on this building in 2000. In the future, the Church's governing board may want to establish policies that include the requirement to seek out consultation on energy savings when any renovation or restoration project is being planned.
- The four most important words: "TURN OUT THE LIGHTS!" The best way to conserve energy is to not use it unnecessarily. This results in pure savings—no capital expenditure needed. This Church – its governing board, staff, and lay leaders– need to institutionalize the awareness of our *shared* responsibility for saving energy. At every walk-through assessment we found lights left on, doors open, thermostats turned up when those spaces had not been used for days.

- While there is currently a de facto limited energy reduction strategy on going at the church to replace wherever possible all incandescent light bulbs and fixtures with energy efficient products, much more needs to be done. We had hoped to identify and apply for funding from the Conservation and Load Management Program which was designed to provide cash incentives to medium and large customers who upgrade the efficiency of their electrical equipment. For a variety of reasons, this funding source is not going to provide us any significant financial support.
- Recycling procedures – both for paper and for glass/aluminum/plastic are spotty at best, non-existent in practice. The few recycling bins that exist were not conveniently located to encourage use, and in both the main building and the Meeting House trash cans were observed to be full of recyclable materials.
- The church does not currently have policies for use of non disposable materials and non-toxic cleaning supplies. There appears to be a clear preference throughout our campus for use of disposables.
- Church policies governing purchasing and investing do not currently exist.
- Church policies regarding landscaping that would, for example, direct use of native species; landscape chemicals, etc. are currently non-existent. Our lawn is weedy and sparse and our grounds are a haven for invasive plants.
- Religious education programs relating to the environment for both children and adults, while present to some degree, need further development. This is currently in planning stages. The fourth grade RE class assisted the Audit Committee by conducting a parking lot survey of automobiles on a Sunday morning in May. RE also sponsored a workshop on Simple Living/Simple Play which reinforces the “greening” goals of responsible consumption and recycling. The theme for RE for the coming program year is our UU 7<sup>th</sup> Principle which should provide many more opportunities for children in RE to interact and work with the Green Sanctuaries Committee. There was one program in Odyssey on Sustainable Living that merits repeating next year.
- Worship practices that integrate the wisdom of the Earth have an established place in our congregation, but again, they are subtle. Some examples are the readings and recitations that invoke respect for the earth and for the interconnected web, the hymns and other music that also celebrate the earth and the beauty of nature.
- Social action projects are perhaps the most visible manifestation of our congregation’s commitment to economic justice. An environmental justice focus is not evident. The hiring of a Social Justice Director is an exceptional opportunity to increase the visibility of and directed focus of work of this congregation in the area of environmental justice.
- Among the more visible of the programs that are consonant with 7<sup>th</sup> Principle activities are those sponsored by the Green Sanctuaries Committee that include the

selling of Fair Trade Coffee and energy efficient light bulbs, the column in each issue of Soundings, and some bulletin board information.

Entering either building on our campus, a visitor with 'new eyes' would not get a sense that this is a congregation that plays a leadership role in the larger community by modeling environmental responsibility. The Audit Committee observed countless instances where steps had been taken toward more responsible consumption, or toward building environmental awareness but what was lacking was an overall sense that this was an important part of our religious life. What we found lacking was a unifying theme or focus that pulled together the threads of activities that reflect respect for the interdependent web. In many ways our physical plant and our practices deny that we "walk the talk" of earth stewardship. Follow through on our UU principles in tangible, outwardly visible ways is not immediately evident in our physical facilities.

A more detailed summary of findings in each of these eight areas of focus follows.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Audit Committee

Lynda Bluestein and Jay Fountain, Co-Chairs

Richard Jacobs, Jim Perry and Mary Skarstrom

LSB

June 13, 2005

## 1. Energy Use Patterns and Current Conservation Practices

### Definition of the problem:

1. Energy costs too high;
2. Wastefulness in our consumption of water, electricity and gas;
3. Various rooms and spaces in our buildings are often uncomfortable – too hot or too cold;
4. We, as a religious community, are not living in integrity with our stated values.

### Findings:

- There is no apparent energy usage strategy in current practice at this church. In kitchen main building, the stove has pilots always lit and therefore is always burning gas. The dishwasher is typically left on keeping a reservoir of water at 110° F.
- Buildings are lit when no one is using the space, lights frequently left on, thermostats left turned up too high, light fixtures not uniformly energy efficient.
- While it was noted that some lighting is being rewired so that, for example, it is not necessary to light the entire east side of the building when only one room needs illumination, the Committee saw little evidence of conservation practices in heat, water, electricity or gas.
- In both the main building and the Meeting House we found virtually all doors leaking – frames warped, sliders loose, warped, gaping. We noted in both buildings thermal breaks between upper and lower levels of glass in all areas where the movable glass walls are on tracks and therefore had not been replaced with double paned glass during the renovations.
- We noted the lack of water displacers in toilets and of aerators on many faucets.
- We observed, in several locations, instances where drapes, curtains or screens were placed in such a way as to trap warmed air between the occlusive device and the glass wall rather than prevent warmed air from escaping through the glass.
- There was nothing on our church website related to steps being contemplated or taken to increase our desire to reduce energy consumption.

### Recommendations:

- Begin a concerted educational program to “turn off, turn down and close up”.
- Install water displacers in all toilets, aerators on all faucets, energy efficient fixtures and bulbs, room occupancy sensors and daylighting controls.

## 2. Compliance with Local Recycling Procedures

### Definition of the problem:

1. In Connecticut recycling is state law for every resident, every business and all public and private institutions.
2. The church appears to be out of compliance with state law;
3. We, as a religious community, are not living in integrity with our stated values.

### Findings:

- Recycling procedures – both for paper and for glass/aluminum/plastic are spotty at best, non-existent in practice. In the main building recycling bins were outside – trash cans were full of recyclable materials.
- There were insufficient number of blue bins for office paper recycling in the main office and none observed at the meeting house.
- We observed no recycling bins at all at the Meeting House and noted aluminum cans, plastic and recyclable paper in the same trash cans.
- We note an absence of church policies regarding responsible consumption – reducing, reusing and recycling.
- There is nothing on our church's website regarding our commitment to recycling practices.

### Recommendations:

- Immediately acquire more recycling bins for all facilities;
- Contact the haulers to make sure the church is in compliance with state and local regulations regarding the disposal of recyclable materials;
- Increase signs in kitchens and in administrative areas regarding where and how to dispose of recyclable waste materials.
- Involve our RE children in creating signs and posters urging reuse and recycling.
- Post – in a prominent place – the General Recycling Reminder from the State of Connecticut.

### 3. Policies for Use of Non-disposable Materials/Non-toxic Cleaning Supplies

#### Definition of the Problem:

1. There is a complete absence of policies that include purchase and use of recycled paper products, reusable dishes, cloth in stead of paper towels, and the use of non-toxic cleaners, soaps, and art supplies.

#### Findings:

- With few exceptions, kitchen supplies are disposable paper and plastic.
- Cleaning supplies could not be characterized as environmentally friendly.
- We found no evidence of use or preference for non-disposable materials in any area of the church, rather the contrary.
- There is nothing on our church's website regarding our use or contemplation of increasing use of non-disposable materials and non-toxic cleaning supplies.

#### Recommendations:

- The governing board and the Green Sanctuaries Committee members need to identify and implement a plan to write and approve of policies governing use of disposable materials and non toxic cleaning supplies.
- A sub committee of the Green Sanctuaries Committee should be charged with the responsibility for further developing recommendations regarding reducing our use of disposable materials in both kitchens.

## 4. Church Policies Governing Purchasing and Investing

### Definition of the Problem:

1. We need to have a way way, as a religious community to ensure that our investments are reasonably consistent with our values.
2. Neither Endowment Funds nor Operating Funds employ Negative Screens (avoiding investments in companies that are serious polluters, employ sweatshops, or have racist or sexist policies).
3. Neither Endowment nor Operating Funds employ Positive Screens (preferring investments in companies that provide a societal good as well as a safe and attractive return, such as companies with good environmental records).
4. There is no history at this church of pooling funds with other UU congregations in order to employ Shareholder Activism (using our shareholder voting power through proxy to encourage companies to adopt policies consistent with our UU values).

### Findings:

- The Endowment Committee does have a portion of the church's endowment funds invested in the Calvert Socially Responsible Index fund, while the remainder is split among the S&P 500 Index fund and some bond funds (neither of which conforms to a SRI standard).
- The Finance Committee reports no policies and procedures related to Socially Responsible Investing.
- There is nothing on our church's website that states our commitment to economic and environmental justice as screens for investing the church's financial resources nor were there any links to the UUA's SRI web pages.

### Recommendations:

- The Finance and Endowment Committees to be charged with looking into available resources for Socially Responsible Investing and propose action plans to adopt both short and long term financial management practices into alignment with our UU values.

## 5. Landscaping Policies Directing use of Native Species/Chemicals, etc.

Sherry Jagerson and Pamela Weil met on the church grounds on June 1, 2005 to survey the grounds and prepare this section of the Audit Report.

### Definition of the Problem:

1. All landscape practices should be organic according to the guidelines of the Northeast Organic Farming Association's publication, Organic Land Care Practices.
2. Our grounds should be free of invasive and non-native plants. The guide used for this audit was *Non-native Invasive and Potentially Invasive Vascular Plants in Connecticut (2003)*.

### Findings:

- The lawn is weedy and sparse. It is evident that chemicals are not used to "green it up". This is good, although it is not as healthy as it could be for the amount of foot traffic it receives and applying organic fertilizer would be beneficial.
- The grounds are a haven for invasive plants. We identified the following invasive vines, shrubs and trees:
  - i. Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)
  - ii. Honeysuckle (various species)
  - iii. Tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)
  - iv. Winged Euonymus (*Euonymus alatus*)
  - v. Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*)
  - vi. Asiatic Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)
  - vii. Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)
  - hviii. Wineberry (*Rhus phoenicolasius*)
- A map of the property is needed. We didn't know where the boundaries are and where the wetlands begin and end.

## Recommendations:

Our recommendation is that a Landscape Committee be formed to address the problems that were found in our audit. The Landscape Committee may offer church members an opportunity to walk around the grounds and identify invasive species that will be removed. This Committee could also obtain a map of our property.

The invasives should be removed, and if possible, replanted with native species. The plant removal is beyond a do-it-yourself project. Professionals should be hired to do the heavy work. Church volunteers can assist.

At the back of the parking lot there is a culvert running down to the creek. An infiltration system of some sort should be installed to filter the oil and grease generated by cars in the parking lot to prevent it from getting into the creek.

Pamela Weil  
June 10, 2005

## 6. Lifespan Religious Education Programs Relating to the Environment

### Desired Practice:

1. Teach at least one children's RE environmental course per year.
2. Conduct Simplicity Circle, a Responsible Consumption Study/ Action Group, or another adult education group focused on environmental concerns.
3. Lead an annual field trip to a power plant, recycling facility, landfill, incinerator, organic farm, or other facility.

### Findings:

- Our Religious Educators have planned an entire program year for 2005-2006 that will be centered on the theme of our Seventh Principle.
- The children in RE are eager to participate in "greening" projects and there is ample evidence of support from the Director and Asst. Director of RE as well as from the entire RE Committee.
- Religious Education at our church is further 'ahead' in its work on Seventh Principle projects and activities that the rest of the congregation – the children shall lead us!
- The Odyssey Program's (Adult RE) spring 2005 Calendar did not offer any courses or classes or seminars related to the UU's Seventh Principle.
- There were several justice and social concerns items included in RE curricula found on the web pages for RE on our church's web site.

### Recommendations:

- Support the work in RE planned for next year by including children's stories in the sanctuary that touch on 7<sup>th</sup> Principle topics;
- Involve children in RE in creating art to support our "turn off, turn down, recycle and reuse" initiatives;
- That the Odyssey Committee actively solicit programs on sustainable living, environmental best practices and/or earth focused topics in the coming year.
- Include more environmental conscious and awareness materials and links on our website – including energy saving tips and links to energy efficient or green products for the home and garden.

## 7. Worship Practices Integrating the Wisdom of the Earth

### Description of Desired Practice:

1. Dedicate at least one Sunday worship per year (hopefully more) to the environment.
2. The minister and minister of music will incorporate environmental prayers, meditations, hymns, choral offerings and readings in regular worship.
3. Sermons and celebrations of ministers related to the environment, eco justice and leadership in Seventh Principle activities will be evident in worship practices.

### Findings:

- The church has had a Sunday worship service dedicated to the environment (Barbara Fast's first sermon in pulpit was for Earth Day) but this is not currently an annual expectation.
- The minister often recites and offers readings that celebrate the earth and our interdependence.
- The minister of music began creating and offering a Summer Solstice music worship service more than a decade ago.
- Many of the congregational hymns that are frequently sung celebrate seasons and earth focused spirituality.
- For our 'joys and concerns' candles a wooden vessel filled with sand is used – subtly connecting with earth and natural elements. Candles used throughout our church are not, however, eco-friendly all natural vegetable wax and beeswax candles with no petrochemical-based paraffin wax

### Recommendations:

- Direct purchase of candles to not petroleum based products in the future.
- A missed opportunity was to lift up the fact that Associate Minister Barbara Fast purchased a Prius. This could have been celebrated more on bulletin boards, in Soundings and perhaps with a press release to the local paper offering an opportunity to discuss our UU Seventh Principle. In the future, lift up such instances of our walking the talk of eco justice and protection of the environment as religious practice.
- Say more from the pulpit about our religious practice of protecting the earth.

## 8. Social Action Projects or Activities Relating to Environmental Justice

### Description of Desired Practices:

1. This church will explore and establish collaborative practices with both local and regional environmental justice organizations, and identify at least one partnership for work on a specific issue each year.
2. Pass an all-church resolution committing to an all- church environmental project for a year, and carry it out.
3. Offer at least one environmental justice speaker, workshop, or program each year.

### Findings:

- The Social Action Committee has adopted the Beardsley School and has joined with other communities of faith in Habitat for Humanity buildings.
- The cell phone recycling program and a link to Collective Good is on our church website under Social Action, as are several social justice programs and our Partner Church initiatives. However, other than the cell phone recycling (collections no longer are at this church) no environmentally dedicated programs appear on the church's website under Social Action.
- There is no link or other material regarding our seven UU principles directly on our church's web site. While there are links to the UUA and Metro NY District's websites, there is no page of our own describing our principles.

### Recommendations:

- The Green Sanctuaries Committee sells and promotes Fair Trade Coffee but this has not been lifted up as a social justice initiative.
- The Green Sanctuaries sells energy saving light bulbs but again, this has not been connected to our work as a justice seeking religious community – a missed opportunity.
- When the new Director of Social Justice is hired, the Audit Committee recommends that a review of potential links to eco-justice work in our larger faith community as well as in our neighboring towns in Connecticut be explored.

## Summary of Recommended Immediate Actions

1. Weather strip and/or replace all doors
2. Remove junk from heating vents in East Wing
3. Drapes in Frank's office trap heat between glass and the drape rather than serve to conserve energy.
4. Get a timer for the light switch in the women's bathroom on the main floor.
5. Turn off the dishwasher.
6. Investigate a fix for the pilots on the stove.
7. Put aerators on all faucets.
8. Buy more recycling bins – label them properly then model using them.
9. Replace current heating with coils under the platform area (where piano sits).
10. Cover the piano with an insulated material so that the temperature in the sanctuary can be lowered by 10 degrees.
11. All seams between glass and wood in the sanctuary and in the Meeting House are a big opportunity for savings.
12. More sophisticated controls on the campus' external lights are needed, controls that are programmable by day of week that, that adjust to ambient light, and have auto turn-off features. Ideally the on/off program would coordinate with an e-calendar: no meeting = no lights. To increase awareness of the users of our facilities perhaps a standard e-mail on facility usage could be sent out to the person requesting space before every meeting.
13. Follow up on doors: Bob Santiago to get information on the number of doors/locations so that we can get an estimate of the costs for weather stripping and re-gasketing all doors. (in progress)
14. The church needs to begin a capital fund drive for energy technology acquisition for our future. Need around \$100,000.
15. Downstairs in Nursery School: immediate "quick hit" install the storm windows on all of the doors that currently have only jalousie windows and screens. Also add weather stripping and bottom sweeps. (Note: in Nursery School room there is more than an inch gap at the bottom of some doors.)
16. Missing gasket on door in chapel.
17. Order a Test Smoke Kit to evaluate air loss on doors into major classroom areas. Install T-Astrical moldings on doors into the classrooms to reduce the drafts.
18. To increase awareness of the users of our facilities perhaps a standard e-mail on facility usage could be sent out to the person requesting space before every meeting.
19. This Committee has observed and recorded so many instances of wasteful practice that bringing in a 'name" speaker for a Congregational Meeting might be indicated to kick off a campaign for more energy awareness