

Senior Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees

October 2021

Report on Priority End 1.3.5 – *Minimize our impact on the Earth and work to heal our planet.*

Executive Interpretation: I take this end to mean that we, as a congregation and congregants, are doing all we can to minimize our use of resources and our carbon footprint. This will include how we schedule meetings, the use of vehicles, the use of supplies and other metrics that can be shown to reduce our impact. In addition to this we must commit ourselves to our on-going efforts in creating a change in habits and outlook that we can enculturate in and among our congregation and the broader communities we serve.

Report:

1. Past: TUCW has had a long history of showing concern for the planet and its future. In 2009 we earned the designation of UUA's "Green Sanctuary" for our work to implement energy saving measures throughout our campus. In addition, we educated many in our congregation on the need to live more sustainably. A full scale energy audit was done on our building in 2016. As a result of that audit we enrolled in an energy saving program through the state of CT and Eversource to change over almost all of our lights to LED. This led to thousands of dollars per year in savings. Unfortunately, our heating use, while declining somewhat because of new protocols among staff, has remained high in large part because of our single pane glass walls.
2. Present: The pandemic has helped to lessen our footprint. We have reduced use by approximately 10% since March 2020, although that number is rising again as more and more people return to in person meetings at the church. Our new skylight and glass walls around the chancel should reduce our footprint further. We did have a group interested in climate change in 2018-20 but they are currently inactive.

3. Future: I believe we need a more comprehensive approach to meeting this end over several years. Our current capital improvement plans will go a long way towards improving our foot print, including, replacing all glass with thermopane, replacing boilers and installing solar energy over the south parking lot. I am convinced solar energy is a “must do” project in the next five years.

I hope to form a Climate Justice Team in early 2022, in conjunction with the work our Intern Minister Kim Warman is already doing with the youth. Hopefully, this team will audit our energy use and meeting practices and then educate the congregation on how we can change. Internally, I and the staff can determine if further measures towards energy savings are needed. I hope to also explore the impact meeting in person (other than Sunday) has on our environment. One of the advantages of zoom meetings is that it saves on dozens of car trips to get to and from the church. We might also join in coalition with other community partners, especially those led by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). Climate justice is intimately connected with racial justice and we would do well to explore how we can contribute to the cause of justice for all. I see this as a long term project with great potential.

Summary: I would say we are about 20% in line with this end. Recycling and driving a hybrid car alone are not going to save the planet. Greater sacrifices will need to be made. In order to prepare for those sacrifices we need to educate and commit to a long term strategy of change. Fittingly, our youth group is leading the way already. We would do well to join them.

Impact on Limitations:

3.2- Treatment of Congregants, Friends and Visitors

No negative impact

3.3- Treatment of Staff

No negative impact

3.4- Financial Planning / Budgeting

More financial resources will need to go capital improvements in energy efficiency and renewable energy

3.5- Financial Conditions & Activities

There is a potential for operational savings

3.6- Continuous Operations Plan

No negative impact

3.7- Asset Protection

No negative impact

3.8- Compensation & Benefits

No negative impact

3.9- Communication and Support of the Board

No negative impact

Respectfully Submitted, Rev. Dr. John Morehouse