

Congregation Profile

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of La Crosse is a 113-member congregation, drawing individuals and families from southwestern Wisconsin and southeastern Minnesota. Its history goes back to an informally-organized Unitarian meeting group in the 1950's, and an officially-chartered Unitarian Universalist Fellowship as of 1961. It has been lay-led throughout, although calling on the services of visiting ministers six to ten times yearly.

The Fellowship had utilized rented space until spring of 2007, when we purchased a building. We began holding regular services there in September 2007. We are proud of the fact that we found a building to re-purpose, rather than bearing the expense and resource use of building from scratch.

Governing authority belongs to an elected, seven-member Board of Trustees. Active committees currently include the following: Sunday Service, Religious Education, Social Justice, Music, Building & Grounds, Finance, Organizational Development, Adult RE, Personnel, Nominating, Stewardship, Member Services, and Green Sanctuary.

At present the paid staff members all work part-time. The staff is comprised of the Fellowship Administrator, Choir Director, Director of Religious Education, and nursery staff.

On an average Sunday, 88 adults attend worship services, and 30 youth attend Religious Education classes. Demographics of the congregation have tended toward a majority of members being middle-aged and above, but with a significant increase in younger families and children since 2007, when we moved into our own building. We draw a fair proportion of our membership from those employed in La Crosse's three institutions of higher education and two major medical centers. In addition, we have members whose work is or has been at the Trane Company, a large heating and cooling equipment manufacturer, and a number who work in the public sector.

Our Sunday attendance represents about a three-fold increase since the early 1990's. With that have come the usual growing pains, but we are proud to report that a number of visiting presenters, guest ministers and others, have commented on the energy and positive tone they detect on walking into our sanctuary.

La Crosse is situated in western Wisconsin at the confluence of three rivers: the La Crosse, the Black, and the Mississippi. The La Crosse area is in the Mississippi river flyway, with numerous large flocks of migrating birds passing through in spring and fall. The area is home to several conservation groups and environmental organizations, and has a city/county commission dedicated to promoting sustainability. Accordingly, we are pleased to be able to hold, at least twice each year, outdoor Sunday services that take advantage of this beautiful area.

Community life in our Fellowship includes covenant groups, a choir, crafters, adult Religious Education, Circle Suppers, monthly Friday evening social gatherings, and twice-yearly evening concerts. We are proud to be officially certified by the UUA as a "Welcoming Congregation".

On January 6, 2013, a congregational vote was held at our Fellowship on the following resolution:

Whereas: The Green Sanctuary Committee, working in conjunction with many other committees and individual members of our Fellowship over the last year-and-a-half, has increased Fellowship consciousness of environmental issues, and produced tangible changes in our practices in the areas of Worship, Religious Education, Environmental Justice, and Sustainable Living;

Be It Resolved: We, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of La Crosse, hereby endorse our congregation's application to be designated as a "Green Sanctuary" by the Unitarian Universalist Association.

The vote of the congregation: 50 votes in favor, 0 votes opposed, and 0 abstentions. A copy of the certifying letter appears as Appendix I.

Completion of Action Plans: A. Worship and Celebration

Project #1: Intensifying Attention to the Environment at our Sunday Services

**Lead: Barb Huning, Chair, Sunday Service Committee;
Member, Green Sanctuary Committee**

Project Description: This project aims to look at ways to remind people, each week, that our Sanctuary and the lives of our individual members are situated in the context of the natural world. We therefore undertook a two-step process to make that context readily apparent:

- a. Bringing living elements into the Sanctuary: Creating and maintaining beautiful seasonal arrangements of items from nature in the sanctuary, reminding us of our connection to nature. Shrubbery, plants, and cut flowers all would add to our focus on nature;
- b. Heightening awareness of the environment and environmental challenges, putting special emphasis on this during the Sunday morning service nearest the beginning of each season. We celebrate the delights, special activities, and inspirational qualities belonging to that season. We utilize multiple worship components: music and song, poems and readings, the welcome, language in the introduction to the sermon, sermon topic, and/or closing words.

Project #1 Outcomes:

- a. Natural and seasonal items in our Sanctuary:
 - Fresh cut flowers on the altar
 - Dried flowers in two pottery containers during fall months
 - Yule log and evergreen branches during winter
 - Potted flowering plants

b. Sunday Services Dedicated to Environmental Awareness & Aesthetics:

Spring 2011:

*Earth Day/Green Sanctuary kickoff service with ecology-focused readings, music, and sermon topic of environmental awareness

*Flower communion in May with celebration of nature's beauty

Summer 2011:

*Marsh Walk at Myrick Hixon Park with bird identification, songs, and poems related to the celebration of marshes and the marsh wildlife and ecosystem; discussion of environmental issues related to marsh preservation and challenges with city roadway issues and power line placement proposals.

*Joint Service with the Winona, Minnesota UU Fellowship, held at Perrot State Park, with environmental protection a focal issue.

Fall 2011:

*Rock and Water Homecoming Ceremony

Spring 2012:

*Earth Day Service: A Celebration of Gardens

*Flower Communion: Bloom Where You are Planted

Summer 2012

*Bird Walk at Myrick Hixon Park

*Perrot State Park Joint Service with the Winona Fellowship:
Theme: "Celebration of Water"

Fall 2012:

*Homecoming Rock and Water Ceremony

Spring 2013:

*"Water as a Fundamental Right", a two-Sunday Service set to be held on February 10 and April 21.

Timeline for Completion: This is an ongoing project; we are pleased with the number of substantive Sunday services conducted and aesthetic enhancements to our sanctuary that have been made between mid-2011 and December 2012.

Project #2: New Environmentally-Focused Fellowship Activities

**Lead: Barb Huning, Chair, Sunday Service Committee, and
Member, Green Sanctuary Committee**

Project Description: The goal of this project is to hold gatherings for worship and celebration outside the Sanctuary and/or outside the Sunday morning timeframe, that involve active member participation, and focus on providing a spiritual connection to the Earth, offering inspiration to members in their efforts to live their lives in accordance with sustainable practices.

Project #2 Outcomes: During calendar year 2012, a gathering was held to mark each of the solstices and equinoxes. For the first three, the gatherings were held at a family farm outside the city, and utilized percussion by a drumming circle and poetry readings, as well as discussion of ways to live in harmony with the seasons. The gatherings also included a pot luck meal with seasonal dishes made from local ingredients.

For Winter Solstice 201 and 2012, we held a somewhat different ceremony. In place of the usual Sunday service morning time, we gathered in the evening, to conduct an experiential activity focused on heightened awareness of the impact of light, and its spiritual meanings. This member-led program, titled “The Light We Seek; The Light We Give”, was candle-lit and filled with music.

Timeline for Completion: This, too, is an ongoing project. The change of season is an outstanding opportunity to increase our attention, four times yearly, to the universe that surrounds us and sustains us. We can picture many ways to use the change of seasons as a marker for appreciating the interdependence between transitions in human lives and change/evolution in the larger web of existence.

Completion of Action Plans: B. Religious Education

Project #3: Teaching Youth Recycling Principles through Worm Composting Lead: Kathy Ivey, Fellowship DRE Director (through June 2012)

Project Description: Between late spring and the end of summer 2011, our DRE, together with a Fellowship member with considerable worm composting experience, launched a vermiculture (worm composting) project for our RE youth.

Project # 3 Outcomes: We are pleased to report that a number of our families started compost bins in their homes and gardens, utilizing some the principles learned by our RE youth in this curricular aspect. In addition, a composting demonstration exhibit was set up in the sanctuary at our Earth Day 2012 service.

By fall of 2012, under the leadership of a new DRE at our Fellowship, a rain barrel painting project was initiated. The plan is for those barrels to be on display at our Earth Day 2013 service, and then used at the community garden (see Project #5).

Project # 4: Environmental Education for Adults Using Films—“Food & Film Groups” Leads: Ingrid Iverson, Director, Adult Religious Education; Jennifer Sanborn, Fellowship Member.

Project Description: We are pleased to have successfully completed this project. The proposal was to utilize a listing of films that focus on food issues, generated by a Fellowship member and our Adult Religious Education Coordinator. The theme common to the films: examining the impact of food production and consumption on the interdependent web of existence.

Project #4 Outcomes: We set out to organize a covenant group to meet regularly to view and discuss the set of films. In fact, we organized two covenant groups, with approximately six members each. Home viewing took place, with the following a partial list of films viewed:

- Food, Inc. (2008);
- Food Stamped (2010)
- Fresh (2009)
- King Corn (2007)
- No Impact Man (2009)
- Our Daily Bread (2005)

Healthy snacks were served at the home screenings of the films. Discussion time was built in, with the group leader starting us off with a set of questions. We were able to add to our understanding of food and energy issues, and to challenge each other as to what changes we can make in our own lives to live more sustainably.

Timeline for Completion: We are pleased that each of the two covenant groups completed its film series as of June 2012.

Completion of Action Plans:

C. Environmental Justice

Project #5: Participation in a Community Vegetable Garden Project

Lead: Dave Boen, Member, Green Sanctuary Committee

Project Description: Kane Street Garden is a community project, located in a green space within the city limits of La Crosse, which serves multiple community purposes. It occupies a large enough space that considerable quantities of fresh produce can be grown annually. It offers opportunities for members of the community to utilize their talents at a time that many here, as in the rest of the country, are out of work. And it generates produce to be distributed to those less fortunate, with the majority of vegetables grown going to local food pantries and those volunteering at the Garden. Our Fellowship, under leadership of the Green Sanctuary Committee, set out to support this project in multiple ways.

Project #5 Outcomes:

- * Many volunteer hours were donated by Dave Boen and a number of other Fellowship members;
- * A fundraising concert at our Fellowship raised \$200 for Kane Street Garden, and promoted community awareness of both our Fellowship and the garden;
- * We used the \$200 gained from the concert to pay a contractor to install rain gutters on the large outdoor shed at the garden;
- * Dave & Debbie Boen donated the plumbing hardware and the rain barrels reported on below;
- * Rain barrels for use at Kane Street Garden were painted by the Boens;
- * Our RE youth will be decorating the barrels prior to their placement at Kane Street Garden.
- * The barrels will be displayed at our Earth Day 2013 Service.

We are pleased to have played a significant part in this multi-faceted project, which serves social justice goals by promoting multi-generational community involvement, raises awareness of the

environment and food production methods, and generates healthy food to help alleviate the suffering of those encountering food insecurity.

Timeline for Completion: The last remaining step, rain barrel decoration by RE students, will take place in the spring of 2013. The barrels will be displayed at the April 21st Sunday Service marking Earth Day, whose theme will be water in its spiritual and environmental justice aspects.

Project # 6: Collaborating with Myrick Hixon EcoPark (MHEP)
Lead: Ron Malzer, Co-Chair, Green Sanctuary Committee

Project Description: The La Crosse community is blessed with the presence of Myrick Hixon EcoPark, whose directors state their vision as follows: “to achieve community understanding of, and respect for nature, and to protect the environment for future generations.” The facility was completed within the last five years, and has a very beautiful setting facing onto to the entrance of the La Crosse Marsh, an unspoiled natural habitat in the city.

Our Green Sanctuary undertook an ambitious project to: 1) Raise money to co-sponsor with the MHEP a community education series dealing with the issues of global warming and climate change; 2) Obtain the speakers and facilitate the talks.

Project #6 Outcomes: We are pleased that both parts of the project were completed very successfully. We raised over \$300 in two dedicated events for this purpose: a concert, and a bake sale. The concert was held at our Fellowship, with the half the ticket proceeds going to the EcoPark; it was attended by Jeff Su, the EcoPark’s executive director. The bake sale involved 15 Fellowship members donating home-baked breads and pastries.

We were very pleased to present these three educational events:

1. ***“Climate Change: Why Such Confusion?”*** **Presenter: Dr. Michael Jawson, United States Geological Survey Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center.** Date: October 27, 2011. This was attended by approximately 50 community members, who heard the strong the scientific evidence for the contribution of human activity to global warming.

#2. *“Aldo Leopold, Climate Change and the Timing of Seasonal Events.”*

Presenter: Dr. Stanley Temple, Senior Fellow & Science Advisor, Aldo Leopold Foundation. Date: April 19, 2012. Attended by nearly 100 people, the community audience had a chance to hear how the careful data recordings made by Wisconsin’s own pioneering conservationist Aldo Leopold are among our earliest sources of information pointing toward a changing biosphere.

#3. *“Climate Change: What Can We Do About It?”* **Presenters:**

***Glen Jenkins, Co-President, Coulee Partners for Sustainability**

***Amy Peterson, Administrator, La Crosse Planning & Economic Development Dept.**

***Sara Sullivan, Member, La Crosse City Council; Member, UU Fellowship of La Crosse.**

Date: October 25, 2012. This talk, attended by about 25 individuals, focused on action steps that could be taken locally to move toward a less-polluting and more sustainable community. It established a linkage between our Fellowship, two branches of our city government, and a key not-for-profit environmental advocacy group in our community.

Timeline: We plan to remain an active voice in the community by partnering with those organizations in the community that educate the public about threats to the environment, and mobilize action to protect the biosphere.

Completion of Action Plans D. Sustainable Living

Project #7: Utilizing the Fellowship Website to Promote Sustainability in Daily Life

Leads: **Ron Malzer, Green Sanctuary Committee Co-Chair;**
Dave Boen, Environmental Efficiency Educator Member, Green Sanctuary Committee;
Margaret Dihlmann-Malzer, Green Sanctuary Committee Co-Chair;
Ray Starrett, Member, Green Sanctuary Committee

Project Description: The goal of this project is to use the power of the web to deliver resource information about sustainability to the community, both to our membership and to all those who visit the congregational website: www.uulacrosse.org.

Project #7 Outcomes: Our first step toward achieving this goal was accomplished by committee member Ray Starrett, doing detailed research at the La Crosse Public Library. He compiled an outstanding list of concrete steps that individuals can take in their daily lives that will considerably reduce consumption of resources and/or release of deleterious substances into the environment. We are attaching his list as Appendix I to this accreditation document.

Having utilized library research to its capacity, we then began the process of locating internet links so that our Fellowship members could have web-based resources. We are pleased to have identified and certified as valuable each of the following:

1. The Coulee Partners for Sustainability's "*Local Guide for Sustainable Living*." An extraordinary piece of research, this 158 page guide to the La Crosse region's individuals and households is itself an encyclopedia of local information and decision-making principles. We are pleased to intertwine with much of the CPS work in our community, and are pleased that they are permitting us to post the entire book on our website in [.pdf](#) form.
2. The U.S. Department of Energy's "*Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy*" website (www.eere.energy.gov). An excellent guide to planning energy efficiency in the following areas: insulation, heating and cooling, water heating, windows, lighting, appliances, electronics, automotive choices, and renewable energy.
3. The website of the Empowerment Institute: www.empowermentinstitute.net. A tab within that website enables individuals to review their household energy use history, identifying for each a carbon footprint, and enabling alternative choices to be made in these areas.
4. The website www.350.org. This is an activist website, taking seriously the calculation of many environmental scientists that a tipping point is reached when the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere from exceeds 350 parts per million. Give that the current level is 392 parts per million, it advocates for dramatic governmental and individual action to avoid global catastrophe.
5. The Wisconsin Interfaith Power and Light website: www.wisconsinipl.org. This statewide group has the following mission: "to inform, train, and activate people of all faiths and faith communities to take

concrete steps in response to climate change through the promotion of energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy in order to protect Earth's ecosystems, safeguard public health, and ensure just, sufficient and sustainable energy for all."

6. The Green America organization, whose website is www.greenamerica.org, and whose mission is "to harness economic power—the strength of consumers, investors, businesses, and the marketplace—to create a socially just and environmentally sustainable society."

7. Our city has an official "Sustainable La Crosse Commission", composed of six citizens and five elected officials. We are fortunate and proud that one of the elected officials is City Council Member Sara Sullivan, a long-time UUF La Crosse member and former chair of our Sunday Service Committee. The commission is tasked with reviewing the "City and County of La Crosse Strategic Plan for Sustainability." Their website, www.cityoflacrosse.org/index.aspx?NID=1835, provides ongoing postings of information about environmental aspects of developments in La Crosse County.

8. For those needing assistance in paying for and reducing their energy costs, the website of The Wisconsin Home Energy Plus Program, www.homeenergyplus.wi.gov, is a valuable resource.

9. A state research and advocacy group, Wisconsin Environment Research and Policy Center, identifies environmental problems in the state of Wisconsin, and then seeks to "educate the public and decision-makers, and help the public make their voices heard in local, state and national debates over the quality of our environment and our lives." Their website: <http://wisconsinenvironmentcenter.org/>.

10. For purposes of home cleaning product selection, the Environmental Working Group has produced an exceptionally valuable site (see p. 11): <http://www.ewg.org/guides/>.

Finally, during 2012, one member of the Green Sanctuary Committee has made a point of putting an environmental tip-of-the-month into the Fellowship Newsletter. For 2013, our www.uulacrosse.org website will include a section called "Green Sanctuary Committee Tips", that will be updated monthly to reflect new information and events helpful for sustainable living and advocacy at the local and national levels.

Timeline: We plan to have this section of the congregational website up and running no later than February 1, 2013.

Project #8: Selecting Fellowship Supplies that are Earth-Friendly

**Lead: Kathy Schnitzius, UUF Board President;
Member, Green Sanctuary Committee**

Project Description: The premise of this project is that it is often difficult to balance the need for quality merchandise with earth-friendly principles such as buying locally, and identifying items that do not damage the ecology. We moved forward in this area by doing two things: 1) Communicating to our Building & Grounds Committee the importance of including attention to green principles in the purchasing of building and cleaning supplies; and 2) Developing, a comprehensive list of available paper goods and cleaning products.

Project # 8 Outcomes: Prior to the Green Sanctuary initiative, our Fellowship practice was to use a variety of cleaning products, with little attention to environmental impact. Many had been brought in and donated by various members as the need arose.

Green Sanctuary Committee meeting discussions were held to review cleaning supply selection, with four criteria in mind: 1) the safety of our members; 2) the avoidance of adverse impact on the environment; 3) product effectiveness; and 4) locally availability.

One Green Sanctuary Committee member tested products for their effectiveness, and generated the following list of recommended items meeting the criteria above: .

- Toilet Bowl Cleaners
 - *Seventh Generation, Emerald Cypress Fir*—PFC and Walgreens
 - *Ecover, pine*
 - *CLR Bath and Kitchen Cleaner*
 - *Ecover Cream Scrub*
 - *vinegar*
- Dish Liquid
 - *Ecover Dish Liquid*--PFC
 - *Seventh Generation Dish Liquid(not Clementine Zest or Citrus Ginger)*—PFC and Walgreens
 - *CitraSolve Dish Liquid*—PFC
 - *Mrs. Meyer's Dish Liquid(not Lemon Verbena)*
- All-Purpose Cleaner
 - *Seventh Generation Natural Glass and Surface Cleaner*—PFC and Walgreens
 - *Simple Green Naturals Surface Care*
 - *Simple Green Concentrated Cleaner*
 - *Ecover All Purpose and Glass and Surface Cleaners*
 - *Method All Purpose Cleaner*—Target and other places
 - *Mrs. Meyer's Surface Scrub*
 - *Vinegar, baking soda, and washing soda*
- Sink Cleanser
 - *Bon Ami*—widely available
 - *Ecover Cream Scrub*
 - *Vinegar, baking soda*
- Paper Products
 - Recycled folded towels from Tundra online
 - Recycled toilet paper from Tundra online, or *Earth Friendly* available at Woodman's
 - Hot cups and lids from Tundra online—recyclable and compostable

When and if the above products are not available, efforts to find suitable eco-friendly products will be made utilizing the Environmental Working Group's website: <http://www.ewg.org/guides/cleaners> to help determine safety. Products are given a letter grade.

It is suggested that grades of A, B, and C are acceptable, with an effort to stay in the A and B grades, when possible, with consideration of local production, too. J. R. Watkins and Mrs. Meyer's products are locally produced.

Timeline: A principal goal of this project is for the choice of Fellowship supplies to serve as a model for individuals in their choice of supplies for their homes. We will propose to our Board of Trustees that a policy be passed to require review of this listing prior to Fellowship cleaning supply purchasing. To help members in their selection of household cleaning supplies, the list will be posted to the Fellowship website, and revised periodically, with the aim of keeping strong our members' consciousness about environment-friendly choices.

Project #9: Making the Fellowship's Exterior Space Greener

**Lead: Margaret Dihlmann-Malzer, Co-Chair, Green Sanctuary Committee, and
Member, Building & Grounds Committee
Joe Veenstra, Chair, Building & Grounds Committee**

Project Description: The last year-and-a-half has seen a strong increase in the Fellowship's focus on making purchasing decisions and setting operational practices that are earth-friendly and sustainable. The garden area of our building is not large, but it is directly in front of our main entrance, and faces West Avenue, a principal La Crosse thoroughfare. We decided, therefore, to take better advantage of an opportunity to communicate to members, visitors, neighbors, and the community at large that we are serious about using natural resources wisely.

Project #9 Outcomes: We replaced about two-thirds of our grass with native plants, and added a new tree. We are now mulching the garden area. Combining these steps, we have significantly reduced our requirements for water and fertilizer. The shade of the new tree will be decreasing summer energy needs as well.

After initially considering the use of rain barrels to capture storm water runoff, we found a better option: incorporating two rain garden/retention ponds into the newly landscaped area. The downspouts on that part of the building flow directly into those rain gardens.

Timeline: The Building and Grounds Committee will monitor, in an ongoing way, the health and attractiveness of our exterior space. By making that space greener, we are making a statement that is both aesthetic and principled.

Project #10: Developing a More Energy-Efficient Building

**Leads: Dave Boen, Member, Green Sanctuary Committee, and
Member, Building & Grounds Committee;
Margaret Dihlmann-Malzer, Co-Chair, Green Sanctuary Committee, and
Member, Building & Grounds Committee**

Project Description: A Green Sanctuary must have, as a centerpiece, a building that is as green and long-term sustainable as is possible within the constraints of the congregation's budget. Although our congregation is relatively new to building ownership (five years in our first building), we nonetheless have worked hard, particularly in the last year-and-a-half, to make our building increasingly energy-efficient.

Project # 10 Outcomes: Since May of 2011, we have done each of the following:

1. Increased the insulation level in the attic by adding R-50 material.
2. Installed a programmable, set-back thermostat.
3. Mounted double-layered cellular blinds on all west-facing windows in the building, and over the largest of the north-facing windows. These shades offer increased insulating value, and help limit both afternoon heat gain in the summer and overall heat loss in the winter.
4. Began a practice of replacing, as needed, all CFL bulbs with higher-efficiency LED's.
5. Decided to address the problem of air gaps by the doors. We sealed the gaps around the exit doors, and made a decision to replace our front doors with ones highly rated in the Energy Star rankings.
6. Connected our hot water heater to a timer so we only heat the water when it is needed.
7. Removed our dishwasher, with a decision to not replace it.
8. Replaced our electric street-facing entrance and exit signs with painted arrows in the driveway.
9. Gathered information on what it would take to install solar panels to power our outdoor lighting. One member of the committee (DB) works professionally in the area of heating and cooling equipment and education, and he has attended several state-wide conferences on this process.
10. Audited total energy usage before and after steps #1 through #7, above. The results: We achieved, per cooling or heating day, respectively, a 30% reduction in electrical energy needed, and a 5% reduction in gas needed (see table below).

We are pleased to have made a significant dent in our annual energy costs, and in our carbon footprint. In addition, many of our members were involved in the building improvement work, resulting in additional group awareness of energy saving measures and how to implement them.

**Energy Use Comparison Year 1: Oct. 2010 - Oct. 2011, versus
Year 2: Nov. 2011 - Oct. 2012**

	<u>Year One:</u>	<u>Year Two:</u>
Days Included	365	337
Heating Degree Days	8435	6280
Therms of gas used	1006	710
Therms of gas/Heating Degree Day	0.119	0.113
Cooling Degree Days	655	816
KW of electricity used	9660	8332
KW electricity/Cooling Degree Day	14.75	10.21
Cost of gas (dollars)	1181	854
Cost of electricity (dollars)	1241	1116

Information sources: Xcel Energy Bill History Report provided by utility; Wisconsin Department of Administration Cooling Degree Day and Heating Degree Day information.

Timeline: Making our building as energy-efficient as possible is a process of many steps, and is ongoing. Through the diligence of our Building & Grounds Committee, energy efficiency will always be highly prioritized in decisions about building policies and practices.

Completion of Action Plans: E. Additional Projects

Project #11: Tying in to the ‘Got Water? Defending the Human Right to Water’ initiative of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Leads: Kathy Schnitzius, President, Fellowship Board of Trustees, and Member, Green Sanctuary Committee; Ron Malzer, Co-Chair, Green Sanctuary Committee

Project Description: The abundance of clean water for drinking and bathing is taken as a given in most Western democracies. But the worldwide distribution of water parallels that of many other key resources: unequal. Droughts and chronic water shortages are now present in much of the world. Flooding is a natural phenomenon, but one that increases in frequency in populated areas where environmentally-destructive practices are in place. In parts of Africa and Asia, intense heat is a constant challenge. In many parts of the world, obtaining potable water is very costly in human effort, and not always successful. The goal of this project is to heighten congregational awareness, and to take steps consistent with the UUSC initiative to address the issue of access to water as a human rights issue.

Project # 11 Outcomes: Because of a variety of logistical factors, this was the project we tackled last. Green Sanctuary Committee did make it our #1 priority between October 1 and December 31 of 2012.

1. We made arrangements through the Sunday Service Committee to present a two-part series on “Defending the Right to Water.”

a. Part One will be held on February 10, 2013. Presenters will be Green Sanctuary Committee Co-Chair Ron Malzer, Fellowship Board President Kathy Schnitzius, and Fellowship member Kristie Neve. It will be focused on “The Politics of Water”, with these three components:

1) Local—the potential impact of the increasingly-large local frac sand mining industry on the ecology in our Seven Rivers Region;

2) National—US policies regarding water “ownership” and its environmental justice dimensions; and,

3) International-- “Water: Our Thirsty World”—based on the outstanding April 2010 National Geographic special issue devoted fully to the topic of the devastating impact of the lack of clean water on the resource-poor nations of the world.

b. Part Two will be held on April 21, 2013, our Earth Day celebration. The principal theme will revolve around water, in both its spiritual significance, and the importance of local and global activism to promote access to clean water as a human right.

2. We have ordered buttons and magnets from the UUSC that identify and promote activism for the human right to water. By having members wear these buttons at points throughout the year 2013, we

hope to build upon the momentum generated by our February/April two-part service, and have our Fellowship members take action on this vital issue.

3. The Green Sanctuary Committee has circulated the UUSC “Got Water” link to enable our members to press the US Congress to provide full funding for the Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act. We will utilize the February 10 service to give all attending an opportunity to take part.

Timeline for Completion: As described in the Outcomes section, we plan on raising awareness of this issue throughout calendar year 2013.

Project #12: Improving Fellowship Practices in Waste Management & Recycling
Lead: Ray Starrett, Green Sanctuary Committee Member

Project Description: This project is designed to review practices at Fellowship gatherings with an eye to reduction in waste generation. We set out to : a) systematically analyze, throughout a variety of gathering types, including Sunday services, committee and task force meetings, youth conferences, and concerts, the ways in which excess waste is being generated; and b) decrease the amount of disposed waste, employing the basic principle of “Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle”.

Project #12 Outcomes:

The Green Sanctuary Committee used portions of several of its committee meetings to identify likely places, situations, materials, and sources of waste associated with the La Crosse Fellowship's building use procedures, and did the following:

- 1) We identified as the easiest improvement to make the placement of clearer markings on the recycling receptacles so that members would use them, whenever appropriate, rather than the general waste receptacles.
- 2) We targeted coffee cup disposal as a major source of unnecessary waste. Accordingly, we did each of the following:
 - *Printed multi-color signs for the coffee area, reminding members to bring their own washable coffee mugs to Fellowship services and other events;
 - *Made routine the purchase of compostable cups for guests and others who had not brought their own coffee mugs with them;
 - *Made it a practice to gather the cups for composting.
- 3) Fellowship paper disposal has been reduced by several steps;
 - * Distribution of the monthly newsletter has been switched from printing about 100 copies a month for the sake of all members and guests, to fewer than 20, by limiting print copies to those visiting and those without access to e-mai;
 - *The multi-page weekly Order of Service bulletins are now gathered after the service from all except those who wish to keep them; they are recycled;
 - *Choir music sheets and program lyric sheet inserts are saved for re-use.

Timeline for Completion: This is very much an ongoing project. We plan to continue spot audits to see what is going into our bags for general waste, to detect areas where excess use can lead to use reduction, and to see where disposable items can be replaced by recyclable ones.

Accomplishment of Program Goals

A. Built awareness of the significance and complexity of environmental issues

We are pleased to report that we have built this awareness among three groups: our Green Sanctuary Committee, our congregation, and the community as a whole.

The Green Sanctuary Committee conducted its monthly meetings with specific project agendas, but there was not a meeting that passed without someone calling to the other members' attention a major piece of news regarding climate change issues. Besides formal recommendations and actions taken by Green Sanctuary Committee, committee members traded notes about advocacy steps we can take and home supply purchase decisions we can make as individuals.

Regarding the congregation as a whole, we believe that our projects, spanning the generations, communicated clearly both the incredible beauty of the interdependent web, and the extent to which its health is imperiled. From our youth who experienced the importance of slimy worms, to the adult members of the congregation who learned, in our Food and Film groups, about the power of decisions we make as we walk the aisles of our neighborhood supermarket, our congregation's awareness of the web and its workings has advanced considerably.

For the community as a whole, we believe that our three-part educational series, co-sponsored by our Fellowship and the community EcoPark, gave the attendees—an average of more than fifty across the three talks-- a sense of what is at stake in our environment and what steps we can take to protect it.

B. Encouraged personal lifestyle changes

Changes in our individual lifestyles can be seen at our Sunday services, and can be heard about at our coffee fellowship time. On Sundays, particularly in good weather, we now often see the main bicycle rack full, with bicycles of those arriving later being parked in the overflow rack. The number of individually-owned coffee mugs has increased, with a decreased use of paper cups. The recycling bins in the coffee area, and the box for paper recycling, are being utilized more heavily. The dishwasher is gone, with volunteers washing dishes by hand instead. Paper plates are used less frequently. Fellowship members are well aware of the advantages of compact fluorescents, and have been actively replacing their home incandescent bulbs. From what we hear in discussions in our Fellowship, an increase in energy efficiency is happening not just in our building, but also in individual members' homes.

C. Engaged in community action on environmental issues

The keystone of our outreach to the community on environmental issues was the three-part educational series described in Project #6 (above). A Fellowship bake sale gave us the seed money we needed. From it, we could support our beautiful city EcoPark in the form of rental fees for the three presentations. We were also able to pay speakers' fees to utilize incredible educational resource individuals in Western Wisconsin to cogently present the scientific background on climate change and global warming. Those attending Dr. Jawson's presentation acquitted a wealth of information pointing not only to global warming but also to the demonstrated impact of human activity on climate change. Those attending Dr. Temple's talk heard directly from a Senior Fellow at the Aldo Leopold Foundation. Dr. Temple's presentation reviewed how the wildlife research of the great environmental

pioneer Aldo Leopold in Sauk County, Wisconsin, led him to proclaim, in the 1940's, his much-cited land ethic, which places enormous value on the complexly interactive biosphere, and on countering threats to it. The series concluded with a three-member panel presentation by environmental advocates, that focused on actions that we can take working at the local level. We anticipate ongoing relationships with Myrick Hixon EcoPark and Coulee Partners for Sustainability, as well as multiple opportunities to continue pressing the city to limit intrusive advertising billboards, and to continue to promote bicycle-friendly and pedestrian-friendly streets.

D. Strengthened the connection between spiritual practice and Earth consciousness

Our Sunday Service Committee took the lead in this area, putting together a significant number of presentations to deepen our spirituality, drawing on the power of our Seventh Principle. Seasonal celebrations are now routine for our Fellowship at Winter Solstice and the two equinoxes. Earth Day is anchored into our Sunday Service calendar for an earth-focused celebration/worship. One Sunday service each year takes place at the Myrick Hixon Marsh Trail. Led by a Fellowship member who is a professional wildlife researcher, it focuses on the interdependence of the elements in the natural world.

Flowers and shrubbery are brought to our sanctuary with some frequency. One member of our Green Sanctuary Committee has delivered a homily, both at our Fellowship and at the one in neighboring Winona, Minnesota, reviewing the philosophical underpinnings of our Seventh Principle and the history of its implementation by the UUA. In summary, awareness of the earth, in all of its beauty and complexity, is a cornerstone of our worship endeavor.

E. Worked to heal environmental injustices

Our Green Sanctuary projects targeted two areas where environmental injustices need to be addressed: food insecurity in our community, our 2012 focus, and the international crisis of the shortage of potable water, which is the Green Sanctuary Committee theme issue for 2013.

Regarding food insecurity, we need to start by saying that our Fellowship, on an annual basis, pays congregational membership dues to AMOS, the La Crosse region's interfaith social justice advocacy group that is under the umbrella of the Chicago-based Gamaliel Foundation. The current AMOS Treasurer is the past chair of our Fellowship's social justice committee.

One of AMOS's task forces is devoted to addressing the problem of food insecurity, and during 2012, a Green Sanctuary Committee co-chair (rm) represented our congregation on that task force. One of the projects involved donating Crock Pots to those in need, combining the donation with classes on utilizing the slow cooker to prepare healthy meals. Another AMOS Project is "Share the Bounty", where volunteers set up tables at several of the areas farmers' markets, accepting donations of fresh produce from both producers and purchasers, that are then taken to local food pantries. At least five members of our fellowship have served volunteer shifts on this project. We similarly are proud of our multi-faceted involvement with the Kane Street Garden, documented in our reported outcomes for Project #5 (above).

We have put in place for 2013 mechanisms to educate ourselves about the urgency of acting to remedy the severe water shortages in many places around the globe. "Water: Our Thirsty World", the special edition (April 2010) of National Geographic, is our starting point. It drives home the message that tens of millions around the world have lives that revolve around obtaining water, and those lives are terribly

diminished in health quality by its lack. On February 10, three Green Sanctuary Committee members will co-present on “The Politics of Water”, and provide concrete action steps that individuals can take. These steps will be drawn from those on the UUSC website that promotes water justice advocacy. While one congregation can bring only a few ripples of change, it is our hope that similar efforts by like-minded congregations around the country can help reduce food insecurity in America, and water shortages around the world.

Program Evaluation

A. 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?

1. We have seen our congregation move forward on blending spirituality with environmental stewardship.
2. The Green Sanctuary program has given us a sustained focus on environmental issues.
3. There is now an impetus for energy savings in our building, with a green environment in our front yard.
4. Those in leadership positions are more aware of choices we can make for sustainability.

---others to be added by members at January 6th meeting.....

B. What has been the most difficult or challenging aspect of the program for your congregation to achieve?

Barriers of three different types needed to be overcome:

1) Financial resources. There are many things we would like to be able to do for which we simply do not have the financial means at this time, only five years into the mortgage on our building. We address this in an ongoing way by budgeting in what we can as funds allow, and flag for future changes more costly green-oriented changes;

2) Time resources. We, as a Green Sanctuary Committee, were well-aware starting out that a group of approximately ten, many of whom wear multiple hats within our lay-led congregation, would be challenged to accomplish a dozen initiatives. We addressed this problem by very active interface with other Fellowship committees, making sure that we were facilitators as much as doers.

3) Communication to the Fellowship as a whole. While we consider 10 active Green Sanctuary Committee members in a congregation of just over 100 members to be a very good participation rate, we still want to be sure that our positive energy and motivation were passed along to the more than 90% of our congregation not on our committee. During the initiatives phase, two aspects were very visible to Fellowship members: Changes in our physical space, and in our Sunday services. As we move to a new phase of our Green Sanctuary work, those changes remain in place, and we look forward to adding a website to serve as a continuing reminder of green resources available, and sustainable living choices that individuals and families can make.

C. 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?

Culture change usually takes place slowly; only rarely does a single step produce dramatic movement. The type of cultural change we have seen in our Fellowship comes from having taken a series of steps, and seeing their cumulative impact.

One member noted a new Fellowship attitude regarding sustainability: "Always ask questions." What she meant by that is that when attending a Fellowship leadership group, be it the Board, a standing committee, or an ad hoc event planning group, it is important to raise the issue as to whether greener options are available—and that is happening increasingly. Our Board President is giving consideration to making a request to each Fellowship committee, that it include language, in its annually-revised mission statement, addressing the issue of earth-friendly policies.

Another part of culture change is more visible. Coffee cups at meetings are now more likely to be reusable and brought from home. Cleaning supplies seen in Fellowship bathrooms and closets are more likely to be earth-friendly, and that in turn helps influence members' thinking about similar products for their homes. Recycling bins are noticed more and used more consistently. Work has been completed on imbedding rain gardens in the front of our building. Rain barrels painted by our youth will be donated to the community. There is pride in what has been accomplished and in what is being done in an ongoing way.

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

The Green Sanctuary Committee plans to continue to serve our Fellowship. Meetings will likely shift from monthly to quarterly, but the mission remains the same, and there are multiple ways we will continue to fulfill it. The Board/Committee Chair meetings, occurring three to four times yearly, will continue to have representation and advocacy from our Green Sanctuary Committee. Regular updates on green living will be posted to the website, providing article links, organizational resources, and home-focused suggestions for Fellowship members, as well as notices regarding upcoming local environmentally-focused events.

E. 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?

Regarding ongoing community activism, we are pleased to report the following:

1. We have received an inquiry from the Myrick Hixon EcoPark as to whether our three-part environmental community presentation series could evolve into an ongoing partnership; we will explore this.
2. Multiple members of our Fellowship are active volunteers at the Kane Street Garden, a city-sponsored effort that uses community volunteers to generate fresh produce for those lacking in food resources. Our Fellowship, by holding a dedicated concert, raised funds for that organization. Our

active participation will continue through 2013, during the spring-to-fall active season of the Kane Street Garden.

3. One member of our Green Sanctuary Committee has been the strongest voice in the community for updating our transit plan to make it friendlier to bicycle and mass transit commuters, thus easing traffic on highly-used roadways. His activism will continue.

4. Multiple members of our congregation serve on committees of AMOS, the local chapter of the interfaith organization that is under the umbrella of the Chicago-based Gamaliel Foundation. Our past Social Justice Committee Chair serves as the treasurer, with significant participation by UU members on the task forces for Restorative Justice and Healthcare Access. Of most relevance for Green Sanctuary work, one committee member served in 2012 on the AMOS Food Insecurity Task Force, with several Fellowship members volunteering for the “Share the Bounty” program that distributes donated farmers’ market produce to local food pantries. These involvements will continue.

Regarding community impact:

Just as a series of actions can have cumulative impact on Fellowship culture, multiple involvements by Fellowship members in community activism can help change the culture of our Coulee Region. While we do not look to loudly trumpet our UU identity as we work in the community, we do believe the efforts documented in this application increase the community awareness of our dedication to the Seventh Principle as a touchstone in our lives, and help influence others in the community to act in similar ways.

We have three aspirations for new community activism work in 2013:

1. We have participated in a number of educational and food-oriented events sponsored by the Coulee Partners for Sustainability. This non-profit organization, founded by Glen & Carolyn Jenkins, two retired educators in our community, has been a strong voice for changing the way we think about food production and consumption, energy use, and the state of the environment as a whole. We plan to pursue a closer relationship with them

2. On October 30, 2012, a front page story in the La Crosse Tribune began as follows:

“Sustainable urban agriculture could soon take root in downtown La Crosse, thanks to a creative solution by a community partnership. Western Technical College, Hillview Urban Agriculture Center and Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare announced Monday that they are teaming up to create the Urban Landscape and Agriculture Center.”

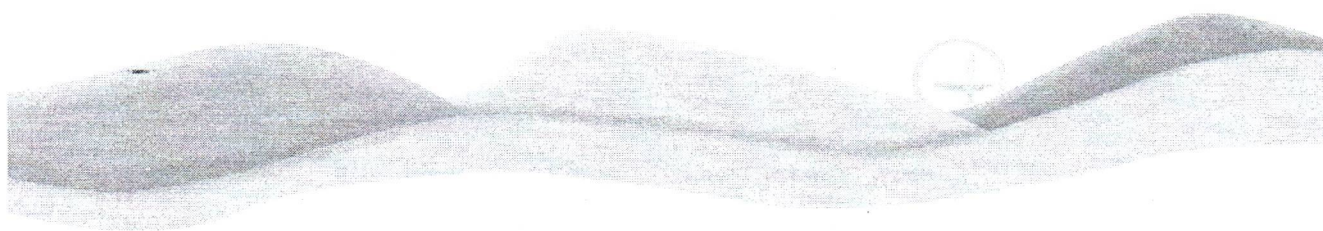
This is exactly the type of development we are looking to see in the community as a whole. It helps send the message that new methods of growing and consuming food are being explored and extended, as a way to protect our individual health, and the environment that sustains us all. We plan to support this exciting community partnership in any way that we can.

3. Dr. Mary Pipher, psychologist, best-selling author (“Reviving Ophelia”), and member of the Unitarian Church of Lincoln, Nebraska, is at this point in her career spearheading an effort for environmental protection, conducting a campaign that we believe will be a model for many others to

come. Picking up on the point that realistic fear about the future of the environment can lead to paralysis rather than activism, Dr. Pipher has formed a combination support group/Stop the Keystone XL Pipeline action group, that to date has mobilized enormous political outcry in Nebraska. We own a DVD of a speech in which Dr. Pipher previews her scheduled- to-be- released (June 2013) book “The Green Boat: Reviving Ourselves in Our Capsized Culture.”

Following in the footsteps of Dr. Pipher, the Jenkins’s, and the organizations noted above that are stepping forward to make this a greener community, we stand prepared to take what we have learned, inside our congregation and in the community at large, to be a force that honors and implements the Seventh Principle of our faith: the covenant to affirm and promote “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

APPENDIX I: CONGREGATIONAL VOTE



January 6, 2013

This is to certify that a congregational vote was held today on the following resolution:

Whereas: The Green Sanctuary Committee, working in conjunction with many other committees and individual members of our Fellowship over the last year-and-a-half, has increased Fellowship consciousness of environmental issues, and produced tangible changes in our practices in the areas of Worship, Religious Education, Environmental Justice, and Sustainable Living;

Be It Resolved: We, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of La Crosse, hereby endorse our congregation's application to be designated as a "Green Sanctuary" by the Unitarian Universalist Association.

The results of that vote:

50 voted in favor; 0 voted in opposition; 0 abstained.

Sincerely,

Kathy Schnitzius,
President, Board of Trustees
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of La Crosse

APPENDIX II: Action Suggestions for Individuals and Households Submitted by Fellowship Member Ray Starrett

These are areas where use of life's necessities and routines can move toward sustainability, based on a systematic review of two library references. The first, abbreviated "GO", is: *"GET OUT! 150 Easy Ways for Kids and Grown-Ups to Get Into Nature and Build a Greener Future"*; Judy Molland, Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis, MN (2009). This book is highly recommended as a resource for review in making our lives greener. ** = varied resources- See Ray Starrett.

Appliances

GO: 85 An Energy Star appliance uses less energy than a standard appliance

** 34 & 35: Purchase or make a solar oven

Cleaning

GO 71: With vinegar

** 111: Stay clean the natural way

Food

GO 86: Avoid buying endangered species fish

GO 88: Reduce beef consumption for health and saving

GO 92: Eat out at a green restaurant

GO 94: Eat more leftovers; waste less food (microwaves freshen some foods)

GO 128 & ** 22: Compost food waste

Home Heating and Cooling:

GO 111: Adjust window shades to cool in summer and warm in winter

GO 112: Post funny signs near light switches as reminders to turn off lights

GO 122: Adjust thermostat to reduce heating and cooling/ use timing thermostats

GO 123: Be a draft detective and stopper to conserve energy

Packaging

GO 64: Think about packaging!

GO 66: Choose refillable containers

GO 68: No plastic or paper bags (bring and use your own cloth bag(s))

GO 78: Buy in bulk for less packaging and often less price

GO 119: Pack lunches in reusable containers

Paper

GO 110: Avoid the "Print" button (or at least save and use the second side of no longer-needed sheets)

** 19: Pay bills on-line

** 27: Use narrow margins

Plants, Trees, & Gardens

Appendix II (continued)

GO 38: Plant trees to absorb CO₂

GO 44 & **: Plant vegetable in a variety of settings (large & very small)

** 48: Plant an ozone garden

Recycle & Reuse

GO 65: Use recycled products

GO 72: Buy durable cloths for kids

GO 73: Learn fabric facts

GO 75: Donate and buy used clothing

GO 95: Use cloth napkins

GO 97: Buy a living Christmas tree, then plant later

GO 100: Donate or consign used items

GO 103: Start a toy swap

GO 107: Clean and repair shoes

** 51: Use rechargeable batteries in flashlights, toys, etc.

Transportation

GO 33: Bicycles

GO 81: Buy locally produced food

GO 99: Leave the car at home

** 81: Hop on a bus

** 120: Share the ride

Water

GO 28: Do efficient watering of plants

GO 79: Cap bottled water (i.e. don't use or at least reuse bottle)

GO 113: Turn off water between use when brushing teeth

GO 116: Be a water leak-seeker and fixer

GO 132: Mulch around trees and plants

** 86: (several water efficiency tips)

** 72: Fill a rain barrel for garden, washing car, etc.

Misc.

**70 & 71: Host bats and use less toxic pest spray

** 97: "Spicy Insecticide" soap keeps bugs away

** 127: Start a neighborhood pool of rarely used tools, ice skates, etc.

More Information

** 26: List of eco websites