

DOING SOMETHING GREEN FOR EARTH DAY!

Happy Early Earth Day! This morning I want to invite you each to think about something green you can do today! This year the community celebration of Earth Day is a little early because the nearest Sunday to Earth Day is Easter this year. Senator Gaylord Nelson initiated Earth Day demonstrations in 1970 on April 22nd. It has been celebrated each year since by millions of people as a reminder of the environmental challenges facing earth's inhabitants. This year, especially in California, we are particularly aware of the environmental changes that have resulted in the current drought. While much of our country experienced more intense storms during the winter, California had fewer storms and much less snow and rain than normal. These changing weather patterns along with the trend of global warming will force changes in agricultural practices here in California, throughout this country and worldwide.

Over the more than 4 decades of Earth Days, there have been many community programs and activities to remind us of the environmental challenges facing people around the globe. Environmental concerns remain one of my top priorities as I consider the ways I seek to live out our 7th Unitarian Universalist Principle, *respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*. As a nation we are far more aware of the damage that pollution of air, water, and earth has brought. We have made progress in many areas, especially the smog in cities and the dumping of hazardous waste into waterways and landfills. As global population has increased, global temperatures have continued to rise and greenhouse gases continue to pour into the atmosphere. As the pollution of the atmosphere and oceans has continued, I have often become discouraged about the environment that we will be leaving our children.

Just being reminded to think green helps me to remember to not leave the water running, to collect the water as I am waiting for it to get warm, not to throw away recyclables, and to think about unnecessary driving!

The problems that we think about on Earth Day are ones that defy simple solutions. The pollution issues have built up over the last 300 years of human industry and technology. Barring a great and sudden catastrophe, humans will not readily give up all the labor saving devices and technological advances of modern times. Significant progress has been made in mitigating the worst or at least most visible effects of pollution here in the United States, but there is so much more that must be done to make human society sustainable on the earth.

The use of oil, coal, and other non-renewable power sources remains a significant imbalance in the sustainability equation. The general degradation of the environment worldwide also is unsustainable. Solar, water and wind power are growing sources of energy, but they remain only a minor part of the energy equation. Nuclear energy has been shown to be too costly and too dangerous to solve the still increasing need for power.

For over a hundred years, people have been increasingly dependent upon automobiles for transportation. For longer distances airplanes have been the mode of choice for the last fifty years. In many parts of the world, high speed passenger rail has been growing in popularity. Even with growing highway congestion in this country, intercity rail transportation has not yet won enough converts back from cars, and high speed rail is very expensive to build and maintain. Rail also has been blamed for drawing dollars away from highway and airport maintenance, though the public dollars spent in those areas dwarf spending on passenger rail.

The health of plants and animals on the earth is also a significant concern as land is taken out of agricultural production and away from forests to provide more space for human habitation. Some plants and animals have been protected, particularly in this country, but how many more species are now or will be at risk in coming years around the globe?

For 2014, both the UU Ministry for Earth and the Earth Day Network are emphasizing sustainable communities. Listen to these descriptions of their work:

UU MINISTRY FOR EARTH

Working Towards Sustainable Communities, Part 2

The need for sustainable communities continues to grow. To ensure an economically, environmentally and socially healthy, sustainable and resilient society for all communities in this world, we must work to address a wide range of interconnected issues. The growing income inequality in the United States leaves many vulnerable to increasing poverty, despair, and powerlessness. Ongoing environmental degradation linked to consumption-driven overuse of resources, unclean energy production, and industrial and agricultural practices defiles our land, air and water, often disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities. The unfolding of climate change, and increase in severe weather events, is stressing communities worldwide, many unprepared for change.

UU Ministry for Earth is continuing our focus on the role of communities of faith in building sustainable and resilient communities. Our faith calls us to act upon our shared morals and religious beliefs for the common good. Our compassion for all beings, our commitment to all justices, and our deep connections with and respect for the natural world, together, are powerful motivators for shaping a just and equitable world. Let us, one congregation and one community at a time, be the faith that has "left the building" to do just that. Imagine the potential of our collective efforts!

For Earth Day 2014, UUMFE is inviting congregations to connect to one or more issues that relate to realizing economically, environmentally and socially sustainable communities. We introduced this broad topic for Earth Day 2013, when we assembled information and resources on the [basics of sustainability](#) and the many facets of [building sustainable and resilient communities](#).

New this year is attention to the roles of waste, consumption and socially responsible investing in today's world and a sustainable future. The ways we use our financial resources, what and how much we choose to buy, and where we choose to invest, loudly proclaim our values. We believe Unitarian Universalists and UU congregations can use both their consumer and investor powers to support just and equitable solutions in the move towards sustainable and resilient communities. We invite you to explore the possibilities.

EARTH DAY NETWORK

Every year on April 22, over a billion people in 190 countries take action for Earth Day. From San Francisco to San Juan, Beijing to Brussels, Moscow to Marrakesh, people plant trees, clean up their communities, contact their elected officials, and more—all on behalf of the environment.

Like Earth Days of the past, Earth Day 2014 will focus on the unique environmental challenges of our time. As the world's population migrates to cities, and as the bleak reality of climate change becomes increasingly clear, the need to create sustainable communities is more important than ever. Earth Day 2014 will seek to do just that through its global theme: Green Cities. With smart investments in sustainable technology, forward-thinking public policy, and an educated and active public, we can transform our cities and forge a sustainable future. Nothing is more powerful than the collective action of a billion people.

As the global organizer behind Earth Day, Earth Day Network creates tools and resources for you to get involved with Earth Day in your community.

About Earth Day Network

The first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, activated 20 million Americans from all walks of life and is widely credited with launching the modern environmental movement. The passage of the landmark [Clean Air Act](#), [Clean Water Act](#), [Endangered Species Act](#) and many other groundbreaking environmental laws soon followed. Growing out of the first Earth Day, Earth Day Network (EDN) works with over 22,000 partners in 192 countries to broaden, diversify and mobilize the environmental movement. More than 1 billion people now participate in Earth Day activities each year, making it the largest civic observance in the world.

But Earth Day Network does not stop there.

All of EDN's activities, whether [greening schools](#) or promoting green economic policies at home and abroad, inform and energize populations so they will act to secure a healthy future for themselves and their children. With its partner organizations, EDN provides civic engagement opportunities at the local, state, national and global levels. At every turn, EDN works to broaden the definition of "environment" to include all issues that affect our health, our communities and our environment, such as greening deteriorated schools, creating green jobs and investment, and promoting activism to stop air and water pollution.

Over the last 40 years, EDN has executed successful environmental campaigns on issues ranging from climate change and drinking water to voter registration and saving the whale. EDN is a recognized leader in creating civically-oriented innovative programs with partners outside of the environmental movement to tackle new challenges.

The Green Cities Campaign

The Green Cities Campaign aims to protect the health and wellbeing of the world's most vulnerable populations by decreasing climate change emissions and create financial opportunities in the growing green economy. Much of the campaign will focus on the potential for new and existing buildings to be a major source of carbon reduction and models of efficiency. Globally, buildings are the largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions. Bringing new building innovations along with energy efficiency practices, financing mechanisms, renewable energy sources, and a renovated grid structure into more homes, schools, businesses and communities is critical, and will reap tangible rewards in the form of innovation, new jobs, improved economic stability, and lower energy costs.

The Green Cities Campaign objectives are to:

- Increase public awareness and build consumer demand for energy efficiency and renewables through education, social networking, and public policy campaigns;
- Mobilize key constituencies to create widespread support for progressive policies through communications, demonstration projects and grassroots organizing; and
- Generate concrete commitments for innovative and replicable initiatives from key stakeholders such as industry and government leaders around renewables, energy efficiency, and climate solutions.

Over the years, I have been involved in planting trees, scattering wildflower seeds, cleaning up along roads and in parks and church grounds, collecting cans, walking or biking rather than driving, and of course preaching about doing green things on Earth Day. Most of us could eat lower on the food chain every day, but each meal we add without meat or with chicken rather than beef helps the sustainability balance point. Each thing we recycle means less energy and resources will be needed to make stuff. Each time we use less water means that there will be more water available and less energy will be used bringing it to our homes. It isn't hard to find things that we could do in a greener way, for me the harder thing is to find enough ways to be green that it will make a difference. For that, I need all my friends to be green, too! The more of us that turn green, the better! (I'd say, Go Green!—but that's a phrase I just can't bring myself to say as a Bears fan).

So, Be Green! And Go out there and Do Green! May the Green be with You! Shalom, Salam, So be it Green, and Amen!