



Green Sanctuary
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
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Application for Green Sanctuary Candidacy

Congregation Information

Date of submission –May 31,2017

Congregation Name – Berrien
Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship (BUUF)

Address - 4340 Lincoln Avenue,
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Web site - Berrienuu.org

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Minister or Congregation Leader
– Jim McConnell

Congregation Profile

Berrien Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (BUUF) was started in 1959. It currently has 30 voting members. We have a part time Religious Leader, part time Office Administrator and a part time Religious Education Director/Program Director. We have recently averaged about 35 people at our Sunday morning Services, including about 5 school aged children who are provided religious education for the second half of each service. We are known as a liberal voice in a majority conservative Republican leaning county in SW Michigan. Our Fellowship sits on 5 acres which are half wooded and half cleared of trees. The middle is meadow with a 6kv solar electric installation (installed Oct. 2015). Refer to Attachment 1. We have been working towards greater sustainability for many years but only declared to ourselves at our June 2015 annual meeting to seek Green Sanctuary. We wish to forever incorporate 7th Principle understanding in all of our actions. We

declare that we are connected to everything in this sacred web of life. We declare that it is up to us to protect and be in awe of this beautiful home.

BUUF staff

Religious Leader – Jim McConnell

Director of Religious Education/Program Director – Dave Sarra

Office Administrator – Hilary Johnson

Green Sanctuary Committee

The Green Sanctuary Team is dedicated to making BUUF a Green Sanctuary. We will hold quarterly meetings before BUUF Sunday Services to plan the required assessments and actions.

Our first GS committee meeting was held in January 2016. In attendance were Harvey Johnson (Leader), Jim Fuller, Julie Williams, ~~Lisa Thorne~~, Tom Hackley, Jim McConnell, Roger Brewin, ~~Renee Kauffman~~.

Our most recent quarterly GS committee meeting was April 16, 2017. In attendance were Harvey Johnson, Gloria Weberg, Julie Williams, Linda Lobik, Dave Sarra, and Jim McConnell.

The Green Sanctuary committee seeks to prepare and implement the concept of the interconnected and sacred web of life that we are all a part. We seek to minimize our impact on our shared home we call Earth. We believe that this is our duty. Many of us have been working on Green Sanctuary concepts for many years.

UU Identity and Spirituality

We affirm and promote the seven principles that guide all UUA congregations. Many stretch the first principle to include the inherent worth and dignity to all living things, from bugs to trees. Many of us view the earth as one living organism or one living system. We are all dependent on functioning and health earth systems (air, water, soil) for our own health and wellbeing. All of our actions will eventually come back to us in this circular and interconnected world. This is the cosmic law of karma that ancient philosophies speak. All of our actions therefore, have biologic as well as moral consequences. It is our environmental responsibility and our moral imperative to affirm and promote our interconnectedness.

Environmental Assessment 3 Parts

The assessment has three parts

- 1) Professional energy audit. An energy audit was provided by Thomas Hackley, BUUF member and trained energy auditor. Jim Fuller assisted in the audit. Harvey Johnson, Treasurer, provided gas and electric billing and usage history (Attachment 2).
- 2) The congregational assessment and
- 3) The environmental justice impact of congregational practices (covered in the EJ portion of the application).

The congregational assessment includes an assessment of:

1) Worship and Celebration (JM) – BUUF is currently providing earth based worship services at least quarterly.

2) Religious Education (DS) — while we follow all seven UU principles in our Religious Education Programs, we began in FY 2015/2016 to focus on our 7th principle with our youngest students by teaching the *Circle of Trees* curriculum. This current year (FY 2016-2017) our young students (ages 4-8 years old) have followed the UUA *In Our Hands: Peace and Social Justice* curriculum. This course has a lengthy component focusing on our 7th principle which we have taken advantage of during this year's early and long-lasting spring.

Both last year and this current year our high school students have followed the *Building Bridges* curriculum and within that curriculum we discuss how UUism compares with other faiths in terms of attitudes and behaviors towards our global environment. We are including our high school students in our planning process to eliminate BUUF's lawn areas which are ultimately degrading to our environment.

Our Adult RE Programs cover many areas of interest including those appropriate to becoming a Green Sanctuary. At our April 2017 brunch, we had a lively discussion after watching Caitlin Doughty's Ted Talk titled *A Burial Practice that Nourishes the Planet*. Many members of our fellowship have expressed an interest in natural (or green) burials and we are following up on this.

3) Sustainable Living. Electricity by solar (majority), local and wholesome food at coffee time. Fair trade coffee.

Grounds – We have 5 acres of property. We maintain approximately 1 acre of grass and gardens. See attachment for grounds map. We have been cutting approximately 1 acre of grass during growing season for years. This was done by contracting to a service which used gasoline mowers and cost approximately \$1000 per year. Starting spring 2016 we stopped paying the service and started cutting the grass ourselves with a rechargeable electric mower that was donated by a BUUF member.

Parking lot - We have let our asphalt parking lot become water permeable which lets water soak into the earth rather than run off somewhere else.

Location - Our BUUF property is approximately 2 miles south of Saint Joseph, MI and most attendees drive cars to BUUF 5 to 20 miles. Some members use bike transportation in favorable weather.

Transportation – **There** is no public transportation in this lightly populated county. BUUF members car pool when possible. Some bike riding in good weather.

Facilities - **We** have 4 Low flow toilets. We have a programmed heating/cooling system to minimize the energy demands of the building.

Kitchen - Recycle all possible materials. Only run dish washer when full.

Food – We try to provide vegetarian options at all events and potlucks.

recycling/re-useable - We have been recycling all possible paper, plastic, metal items using commercial service since 2001.

office and cleaning supplies – ordinary cleaning products and office supplies.

Energy use – We have HVAC system, refrigerator, dishwasher, oven, and lighting. Heat pump (air to air) used to heat/cool when available.

Investment policies – Our Endowment accounts. In 2014 we began converting funds to UUA common endowment fund (UUCEF) since it has a sustainability screening and our Endowment policy called for Responsible investing.

Congregation policies – Green Sanctuary policies are incorporated into the Endowment Policy in the form of requiring socially responsible investing of BUUF endowment funds. Part of our endowment funds are in UU Common Endowment Fund which has socially responsible screening of investments. BUUF is in process of converting all endowment funds into UUCEFs.

Congregational committees – Green Sanctuary committee starting in 2015 took over building & grounds committee. Sunday service committee schedules and coordinates services. Committee on Ministry acts as liaison between congregation and minister (Jim McConnell). Endowment Committee manages 4 endowment funds (UUCEF general & restricted, Fifth Third bank general and restricted). RE committee guides religious education. Aesthetics committee balances aesthetics with GS principles into building and grounds changes.

Environmental Justice Assessment

The first step in the process was learning what Environmental Justice means. We concluded that Environmental Justice acknowledges that all actions have environmental consequences and that the poor and powerless usually feel the consequences the most. For example the poor in rural Louisiana and Alaska, and

islanders around the globe will be the first to feel the changes in climate such as rising oceans.

The process for the assessment on the BUUF Environmental Justice status involved gathering information from Green Sanctuary members during meetings, e-mail and Sunday conversations. Assessment information was also gleaned from informal discussions with BUUF members. Beginning summer 2016, BUUF provided volunteers to work at Fresh Start Children's Garden, in Benton Harbor (an adjacent marginalized community).

Action Plans

Environmental Justice *(1 required)*

Project Title: *Environmental Justice Film*

Assessment Result you are addressing: We determined that BUUF members and the community could benefit from learning more about Environmental Justice issues. We determined that a continuous education program was necessary to inform our members and the community of Environmental justice concepts and recommended actions.

Project Description: A monthly Environmental Justice Film provided free to the community to educate on issues and actions. GS committee chair with input from GS team members selects a monthly film. A poster is created and posted at BUUF, on the website, in the weekly BUUF e-mail Announce and at various community locations. September 2016 began monthly Environmental Justice Film series. After the film we have a brief discussion on the film and actions that can be taken to promote environmental justice in our lives and community. See attached Attachment 3 for list of films to date.

Timeline for Completion: Continuous monthly.

Lead: Harvey Johnson

Project Title: *Fresh Start Children's Garden*

Assessment Result you are addressing: We determined that BUUF was taking no actions to address environmental justice beyond our Sunday Service presentations.

Project Description: Provide hands on labor to plant, weed and harvest a vegetable garden located on 1108 May Street, Benton Harbor. Emma Kinnard (269-325-9455) has lead a community garden for several years focused on children in Benton Harbor. She has been demonstrating community action, self-sufficiency, and empowering children and adults of Benton Harbor. Organizer Marvin Haywood (269-338-2964) is helping schedule in 2017. BUUF will supply volunteers on Thursdays at 5 pm. (Starting May 18, 2017) and Saturday at 10 am. Volunteers will provide 1-2 hours of community service each week during the growing season.

Timeline for Completion: Continuous during growing season.

Lead: Harvey Johnson

Worship and Celebration Projects (3 required. One should be related to environmental justice. Show how the projects are relevant to the different age groups present in your congregation. One should be ongoing for the foreseeable future.)

Project Title: Earth centered worship services

Assessment Result you are addressing: We determined that BUUF has been providing change of season, earth based services for many years (spring equinox, winter solstice, summer solstice, fall equinox). Equinox and Solstice services have been provided at least since 2001. In addition, there have been other earth based Sunday services lead by Jim McConnell and lay service leaders.

Project Description: Earth centered Sunday Services

Timeline for Completion: Continuous.

Lead: Jim McConnell and Sunday Service Committee

Project Title: Water Service

Assessment Result you are addressing: Limited Connection to the earth

Project Description: celebrates interconnected Web of Life.

Timeline for Completion: First Sunday in September

Lead: Dave Sarra, RE Director

Project Title: Farm worker environmental exposures

Assessment Result you are addressing: No education on farm worker environmental conditions.

Project Description: Have scheduled Ben O’Hearn with Migrant Legal Services to speak during Sunday Service July 16, 2017

Timeline for Completion: Continuing

Lead: Julie Williams

Project Title: Tree celebration and planting

Assessment Result you are addressing: No hands on earth celebration and stewardship.

Project Description: Plant/transplant sapling trees on BUUF property during volunteer work sessions. Also, during a Sunday Service around Arbor Day 2017.

Timeline for Completion: Harvey Johnson.

Lead: Julie Williams

Religious Education Projects (3 required. Show how they are relevant to the different age groups present in your congregation. One should be related to environmental justice. One should be ongoing for the foreseeable future.)

Project Title: Three Sisters garden

Assessment Result you are addressing: Lack of hands on gardening

Project Description: Children and adults will plan and plant a small garden (5x 20 ft.) containing corn, beans and squash. This is the way of North American peoples as appropriate for the land. The

garden was begun (cutting sod west of parking lot on April 29, 2017. The next step will be planting seeds in groups 1 foot apart. During Sunday RE lessons, one child plants three seeds together (1 corn, 1 bean, 1 squash pumpkin). Children and adults will learn of native planting food production traditions and environmental appropriateness. For example, the beans take nitrogen from the air and sequester into the soil via root nodules. This example of appropriate soil maintenance can be done on large scale food production to reduce the need for nitrogen fertilizer additions in the form of liquid ammonia.

Timeline for Completion: Starting in 2017 and continuing each growing season as demonstration of earth systems and cycles (plant, grow, harvest, compost, plant, grow, harvest.....)

Lead: Dave Sarra

Project Title: Wilderness Area

Assessment Result you are addressing: Protection of our environment by leaving it alone.

Project Description: Both young students and adults will learn about our local environment by leaving the majority of our property untouched. We will research the various plant and animal life on our property and learn about invasive species. Members of all ages who are interested will visit local plant and wildlife centers to educate ourselves on matters relating to environmental justice. We will learn how humans have changed our environment for better and for worse.

Timeline for Completion: This will be an ongoing project and will be adapted to fit the needs that may arise in the future.

Lead: Dave Sarra, DRE

Project Title: Natural/Green Burial Option

Assessment Result you are addressing: Reduction and/or elimination of cemetery space in our local community, and environmentally friendly re-composting of human bodies.

Project Description: Phase one would be education of the fellowship and then the broader community of the option of natural/green burials. Phase two would be making use of the one funeral home in Berrien County which offers natural/green burials. Phase three would be researching the possibility of our fellowship using our property for a natural/green burial site, or purchasing additional property and going into the business of natural/green burials ourselves. While this project might be of most interest to those planning their death, this topic as it relates to our environment should be an educational component for students of all ages.

Timeline for Completion: Phase one and two could be completed within one year. Phase three would depend on the willingness of our fellowship to do such a thing. At the end of year one we should know whether or not our fellowship is interested in phase three of this project. All three phases could continue in perpetuity.

Lead: Lisa Fuller, current Board President, brought this option to our attention. Either she or Dave Sarra, DRE, will be the lead person.

Sustainable Living (4 required, at least 1 must address climate change. At least 1 must reflect on and if possible address a result from the congregational environmental justice assessment. One must be ongoing into the foreseeable future.)

Project Title: Generate electricity from solar power

Assessment Result you are addressing: Electricity mainly sourced from Nuclear, gas and coal which are non-renewable sources.

Project Description: Installed 6kw solar electric system October 2015. Reduced utility generated electricity approximately 60% in 2016 reducing combusting fossil fuels to atmosphere. This is our main way to minimize climate change. This system should continue for at least 20 years making electricity from the sun power instead of extracting and burning fossil fuels. Had public solar/earth day open house April 23, 2016 to inform community on feasibility of solar electric.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing into the foreseeable future.

Lead: Harvey Johnson

Project Title: Native planting in BUUF yard

Assessment Result you are addressing: Excessive lawn to mow.

Project Description: Annually, reduce lawn by approximately 100 square feet and convert to native plants. Milkweed, sunflower, viburnum tree natural fence. May 2017 started by digging 5' x 10' vegetable garden (3 sisters; corn, bean, squash). This planting ties with Religious Education. Children and adults will learn of native planting food production traditions and environmental appropriateness. For example, the beans take nitrogen from the air and sequester into the soil via root nodules. This example of appropriate soil maintenance can be done on large scale food production to reduce the need for nitrogen fertilizer additions in the form of liquid ammonia.

Timeline for Completion: May 2017 and then annual.

Lead: Hilary Johnson

Project Title: Window replacement

Assessment Result you are addressing: Reduce energy consumption

Project Description: We hope to replace one window per year for 10 years. We have approximately 10 windows that are single pane and in poor condition.

Timeline for Completion: One window per year for 10 years.

Lead: Jim McConnell. JM has experience as a journeyman carpenter. He has assessed the windows and thinks that BUUF can order windows and install with BUUF volunteers.

Project Title: Light bulb

Assessment Result you are addressing: Reduce energy consumption

Project Description: BUUF has approximately 76 compact fluorescent or incandescent light bulbs in the building. We hope to replace 20% per year (14)

Timeline for Completion: 5 years.

Lead: Harvey

Communications Plan

Green Sanctuary information and activities are communicated to the fellowship via weekly Announcements, Order of Service, website, posters.

Invitation to attend and participate in meetings and activities are by above methods.

We plan to:

- *Share practical information about environmental issues and sustainable living strategies with members of the congregation; via weekly Orders of Service, via weekly e-mail Announce.*
- *Invite participation in your many program activities; via weekly Orders of Service, via weekly verbal announcements during services, via weekly e-mail Announce, and posters.*
- *Collaborate with other groups, organizations, or communities within and beyond your congregation; communicate with Fresh Start Children's Garden via Emma Kinnard (269-325-9455) and Marvin Haywood (269-338-2964).*

Application Instructions

Using this format, submit your electronic application to uua_greensanctuary@uua.org . If you cannot email the application, please contact Brent Jurgess bjurgess@uua.org, Administrator for Congregational Life at the UUA, for snail-mail instructions.

There is a one-time \$100.00 application fee, which should be submitted by check. Mail your check to 24 Farnsworth, Boston, MA payable to the UUA. IMPORTANT: clearly indicate it is your Green Sanctuary application fee and include your congregation's name and City, State.

For additional information and advice for preparing your application, feel free to contact Karen Brammer via email at kbrammer@uua.org or by phone at 603.380.1603.