

Annual Report 2010-2011
Green Sanctuary Task Force/Environmental Action

Chair: Sharon Baiocco*

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1. Overview: The Green Sanctuary Task Force/Environmental Action Group's mission is to transform Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church, Unitarian Universalist into a beacon of environmental sustainability and justice. We strive to educate, inspire, and create opportunities for TJMC members to lead more environmentally sustainable, just and spirit-filled lives. We seek to model sustainable practices and eco-justice advocacy for members and the wider world.

2. Accomplishments: We are on schedule to complete our 12 Action Projects for accreditation as a Green Sanctuary in January 2012. We held two worship services, including one in the fall where ministers from the UU Congregation of Charleston, WV preached and a Green Sanctuary Mother's Day service. The Board approved a Sustainability Covenant in June, and we are beginning to educate the congregation on its implications. We offered two adult faith courses on community sustainability and health, two Earth Friendly Friday talks, and two mini-green workshops. The RE children created an "I Love Mountains" quilt in the fall and learned about trees in the spring. Our tree stewardship project included check-ups and trimming of our campus trees by arborists, tree identification, a Sacred Tree Tour and a pamphlet (soon to be published). We purchased new videos and offered three Environmental Action film nights as part of the Social Action Film series. We helped upgrade our energy efficiency by selecting shades for the ramp windows and proposing energy-saving features as part of the Buildings and Grounds Task Force. Our garbage is now recycled at no cost in single-stream recycling. We are analyzing our utility bills to determine whether we have reduced our energy usage. We held our first Carpooling Challenge Sunday with prizes for carpoolers in May, as well as a Mother Earth Brunch to help educate our congregation about sustainable and healthy food choices. Our environmental outreach and advocacy included sermons or talks by TJMC members about MTR at three other churches, attendance at a Conservation Lobbyist training session in Richmond, numerous responses to calls for action via our green e-list, and meetings with our U.S. senators. We have been an incubator for formation of Transition Cities Charlottesville/ Albemarle. We have published two Green newsletters, contributed to the national Green Sanctuary blog, and posted web pages and regular announcements in the church bulletins and Friday emails.

3.Goals: We hope to organize “cottage conversations” about ethical eating, and continue working on our action projects. By December we will prepare a presentation to the church about our programs to date and ask for approval of our Green Sanctuary final application. We hope to use more of the UUA materials for our programming, and the chair is attending General Assembly to find new support and resources for our projects. In the fall we may arrange another site trip to view MTR, this time in SW Virginia, and develop a policy statement about memorial trees for use by the Board. We will continue to table and offer programs to educate and engage our congregation in fun, sustainable, healthy activities.