



Commit2Respond and Climate Justice Featured at Portland GA

By Ellen McClaran, UU Ministry for Earth Board, First Unitarian Church of Portland, OR

This year's General Assembly (GA) promises to be one for the record books for environmental, ecological, and climate justice activists. There will be twenty workshops devoted to these justice issues. At the Public Witness, we will stand in solidarity with leaders of the Lummi Nation and other native peoples to honor their struggles with the effects of climate change and assaults from fossil fuel industries on their lands waters, and sacred sites – and we will commit to respond.

UU Ministry for Earth is honored to be sponsoring seven workshops! Check your program for the details and location of the offerings described below and be sure to come by our booth in the Exhibit Hall (#306), a.k.a. "Climate Justice Central." Hope to see you at GA!

Commit2Respond: SHIFT To a

Low Carbon Future, Thursday at 1:15 p.m. During this panel discussion, participants will learn direct action strategies to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon life-sustaining society.

Feeling Our Grief, Healing the Earth: a Ceremony, Thursday at 1:15 p.m. This interfaith, multicultural Ceremony of Grieving and Healing will help participants face their fears for Earth's future and turn them into energy for change.

Moving from Capitalism Towards an Ecological

Economy, Thursday at 3:00 p.m. This workshop will explore the relationship between capitalism and environmental justice and guides participants towards a shift from consumerism to grateful simplicity.

Commit2Respond: GROW Young Adult Leadership for Climate Justice, Thursday at 4:45 p.m. Outstanding young adults from UU Young Adults for Climate Justice will convene visioning conversations for all ages to help empower YAs for the climate leadership challenges ahead.

Transformation Without Apocalypse: A Moral Response to Climate Change, Friday at 1:15 p.m. In this lecture, Kathleen Dean Moore – naturalist, philosopher, writer, and ecological justice activist extraordinaire – will inspire attendees to embrace the climate

crisis as an opportunity to create the world that we and our fellow beings deserve.

Change the Story, Change the Future: a Living Economy, a Living Earth, Friday at 3:00 p.m. In this double workshop (ending at 6:00 p.m.), renowned author David Korten and panelists will introduce the themes of his new book and show participants how the power of stories can create paradigm shifts and deepen their spiritual commitments to sustained advocacy work. *cont'd on page 3*



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Unitarian Universalist
Ministry for Earth
NEWSLETTER
is published three times
per year by
UU Ministry for Earth
1034 SW 13th Ave.
Portland, OR 97205

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expressed by contributors
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Ministry for Earth
(UUMFE). Subscriptions are
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ABOUT UUMFE

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Ministry for Earth is a non-
profit organization whose
supporters envision a world
in which reverence,
gratitude, and care for the
living Earth is central to
the lives of all people. As
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Message From the Board

A Double Dog Dare Is In Order . . .

In a fit of spring cleaning, I moved and sorted some books and came across a few children's stories that were given to my older brother and me. You know, I have never read 'Treasure Island,' but I just might escape into the story someday soon. The wandering mind being what it is, the term 'double dog dare' and 'triple dog dare' popped up. Don't ask me how I got there; it's a mystery. But, the terms seemed useful as I considered how to grow our awareness and motivation to care for Earth and all life. If I 'double dog dare' you to do something and you do it, then I must also do that action. Hmmm. Maybe this has possibilities.

Our UUMFE
Newsletter reporters
and writers have
shared information
about the UU
Commit2Respond
campaign, the
upcoming UUA
General Assembly
opportunities,
provocative books
to read, and
marches to join. The
Commit2Respond
campaign for
climate justice is
an opportunity for
all of us and our friends and partners to consider, pledge, and respond to the challenges we face together. Together – sharing what we fear and feel, what we are learning, how we can work through challenges to move toward sustainable communities. Some of those challenges are huge when we view the big picture, but when divided into doable steps, we see opportunities to make connections and progress.



Irene and her brother Walter in the early 1950s

Here's where the dare process might inject a bit of fun and energy into our plans. If I 'double dog dare' you to join Commit2Respond, engage in a process to learn about an issue, and commit to meaningful action individually and in partnerships, then I must do the same process.

So, I Double Dog Dare you to join the Commit2Respond.org campaign for climate justice.

Now, if we can find someone else who wants to get in on the action and they Triple Dog Dare us, well, then, we just might have the start of a movement!

In gratitude, Irene Keim, UUMFE Board Chair ♦

cont'd from page 1

United for Climate Justice: a Young Adult Led Inter-generational Worship, Saturday at 1:15 p.m. Members of our UU Young Adult Climate Justice Network will offer a creative and inclusive worship experience that guides participants of all ages to dream big for a socially just and sustainable future.



Here are other workshops under the Climate Justice and Commit2Respond umbrella – see the GA program for dates, times, and details: <http://www.uua.org/ga/program/schedule>.

- Commit2Respond: Collaborate Like Never Before
- Divesting from Fossil Fuels: Working with Your Investment Committee
- Addressing Climate Change Through UUA Investments
- Commit2Respond: Building a New Community – Race, Class and Climate
- Climate Change and Emergency Services
- Climate Change Impacts on Human Rights: International Success Stories
- Bodies Count: New Way for Earth, Humans, Animals
- UN Sustainable Development Goals: Human Rights and Climate Change
- Commit2Respond: Become a Green Sanctuary
- Partnering with Original Nations & Peoples: Protect Cultures & the Earth
- Building Powerful Collaboration with Native Nations for Climate Justice
- Commit2Respond: ADVANCE the Rights of Climate-Affected Communities ♦

Highlights From Earth Day 2015

By Cindy Davidson, UUMFE Board, First Parish in Lexington, MA

This year, we continued our multi-year focus on different aspects of “Working Towards Sustainable Communities” by addressing the critical role energy production and consumption



plays in today's world and the challenges we face in bringing about a just transition to a low carbon future. In conjunction with the launch of the Commit 2 Respond campaign, we compiled the latest information and resources, including worship materials and our first-ever commissioned sermon, in order to suggest a range of faithful responses for congregational, small group and individual action. These materials, like the ones from earlier years, are only a keystroke or two away, ready for use at any time of the year for your educational and programming needs and reference. Please use them generously and share them widely! See <http://uuministryforearth.org/earth-day-2015>.

We continue to marvel at the variety and richness of worship services, events and activities that were shared by congregations who registered their Earth Day plans on our website this year. Congratulations to the UU Society of Schenectady (NY) who won the drawing for a \$50 gift certificate to the UUA Bookstore. Members of their Green Sanctuary Committee worked with their minister to present the April 19th Sunday Service, entitled



“Our Blue Boat Home.” The Green Sanctuary Players performed an original skit called “The Parable of the

Bottle,” both of which were rescued from the trash and redirected to the recycling bin. The minister's sermon expanded on other ways of caring for the Earth. Following the service, the Green Sanctuary Committee hosted a table of recycling information.

Among the other Earth Day-themed worship services were a multigenerational service titled “Earth, Wind & Fire” at UU Fellowship of

La Crosse, WI; an Earth Day Festival for All Ages during the regular worship time at UU Church of Bowling Green, KY, which was followed by an early May Day Maypole dance; the annual Earth Day service and subsequent “Trillium Walk” outdoor service at the Ginger Hill UU Congregation in Slippery Rock, PA; and the inclusion of a “Council of All Beings” for all ages groups in a two-hour service at the UU Fellowship of Jonesboro in Arkansas. Religious educators at the First Church in Belmont, MA worked with the Social Action Committee to focus on environmental themes throughout the month of April for grades 1-6. And, First Unitarian Church of Orlando, FL took its environmental ministry and ethical eating message into the community by exhibiting at Central Florida Earth Day, presented by Vegetarians of Central Florida.



We were also delighted to receive an update on the ongoing environmental justice ministry of Rev. Bob Murphy of the UU Fellowship of Falmouth, MA. Bob is one of UUMFE’s “Pioneers” and has been instrumental not only in our organization’s growth and evolution, but also in the founding of the Green Sanctuary Program and in co-sponsoring the 1994 General Resolution on Environmental Justice. He visited the UU Congregation of Naples, FL, guest preaching on “The Environmental Justice Revolution.” Then he led an environmental justice delegation to Havana, Cuba for a week-long program he co-organized with Eco Cuba Network, “Environmental Justice in Cuba: A Study of Cuba’s Environmental and Social Policy & Practice.” Participants learned about the impact of climate change in Cuba and various responses in the area of environmental protection and sustainable development; the group visited

Environmental Justice in Cuba: A Study of Cuba’s Environmental and Social Policy & Practice

In the City of Havana and the provinces of Western Cuba

April 20 – 29, 2015



One of the many farmers markets scattered across the island. The produce sold here supplements the basic ration to which all Cubans are entitled, as one of their economic, civil and human rights.

energy programs, community health programs, organic gardens, and more in Havana and western Cuba. Bob points out, “Cuba’s experience challenges people in the wealthy nations – including many progressives – to ‘think again’ about environmental justice and what it requires.” (Learn more at <http://www.ecocubanetwork.net/environmentaljustice2015/>)

As always, if you have a story or photos to share, from any one of the 365 “Earth Days” please send them to us at office@uuministryforearth.org. We would love to include them on our website or Facebook page or in our next newsletter! ♦

The Hole Story

*By Rev. Earl W. Koteen, UUMFE Board,
Berkeley Fellowship of UUs, CA*

I am a child of the 1950s, the first television generation. One of the joys of the Internet is to be able to replay images from our childhood vaguely remembered and now seen through adult eyes.

My parents would not allow me to watch TV during the week. They occasionally made exceptions, like The Bell Telephone Science Hour. To encourage them to repeat such exceptions, I told them how much I learned watching these

shows. This was easy to do because even as a child I wondered why education couldn't be more fun, more colorful.

Later in life I would say that I learned more science during that hour than from a full semester of school. While this remark had some truth to it, it more reflected of my lack of diligence as a student than the quality of the teaching.



A Science Hour image that I remembered was of Florida going underwater and of tourists looking at the sunken cities through glass-bottomed boats. Recently, I found the 1958 clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-AXBbuDxRY>) about global warming and sea level rise. I had forgotten that it was connected to global warming and included pictures of polar glaciers calving.

The first image stayed in my mind because I wanted to ride in one of those glass-bottomed boats. Visiting the polar ice caps wasn't on my to-do list.

The possibility of climate change was presented as being rather speculative and did not frighten me. We didn't live in an area due to go underwater. We did live fifteen miles from the White House. Nuclear annihilation was a much more near and present danger.

This has been a rather long introduction to The Hole Idea, a 1955 Looney Tunes cartoon (http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x86eu4_the-hole-idea_shortfilms). (WARNING: Contains 1950s misogyny.) It was the only cartoon dedicated to the portable hole, though this was a trope used in many cartoons at the time.

I hope if you followed me this far, you are wondering what on earth do portable holes have to do with climate change. Well, first I need to insert one more piece into the puzzle.

The missing link (or is it the missing hole?) is

"Autobiography in Five Short Chapters" (<http://www.dwlz.com/Motivation/tips26.html> or see following page), a favorite in twelve step groups. If you're not familiar with it, please take a moment to read it before continuing this article.

There are many reasons that people do not engage in climate justice activism. Certainly one of them is the emotional toll that it takes. It's like being in the backseat on the road to perdition. You can see where we're headed, but nothing that you do dissuades the driver from accelerating and the other passengers from cheering her on.

We have had many victories in the climate justice movement, and there is a growing awareness of our collusion in creating an uninhabitable planet. But this awareness grows slowly while environmental degradation accelerates.

Climate justice activism is a marathon, not a sprint. You have to pace yourself. You have to think strategically.

The "Autobiography in Five Short Chapters" is too simple for this journey. There are many holes on the path, and like portable holes, many of them are unpredictable. Many are thrown there by media paid to mislead us. When you fall into one of these holes, it is perfectly all right to sit there for a while until you gather the emotional strength to climb out again. And there is no point in berating yourself: Some holes are simply unavoidable.

May you always return to the wisdom that you can make a difference. Faith is the power to dust yourself off and once again enter the fray. May you be blessed with it, and by it, and by the companions on your journey.

"Tourists in glass boats would be viewing the drowned towers of Miami . . ." ♦



Autobiography In Five Short Chapters

by Portia Nelson

– one –

I walk, down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost . . . I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

– two –

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place, but it
isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

–three–

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it there.
I still fall in . . . it's a habit, my eyes are open.
I know where I am.

– four –

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

– five –

I walk down another street.

home? And, when we do respond, are we ready to help everyone in the community? Then, once the initial needs for essential services are met, are we prepared to look at systemic changes that may need to be made in our communities?

The Commit2Respond climate justice campaign provides an

opportunity to engage in reflection, learning, and action around the challenges of climate change and the impacts on our communities. For the recent Climate Justice Month – World Water Day (March 22) through Earth Day (April 22) – the campaign sponsors developed reflections, daily practices, and worship materials. All of these resources are available for your continued use in the coming months. Check out the BLOG tab at <http://www.commit2respond.org/> for a wealth of inspiration as we consider the long-term commitments we will make when working on climate justice.

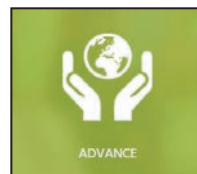
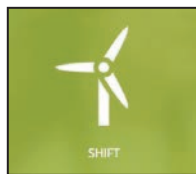
The campaign has identified three areas of focus for action in addressing the challenges with the following goals: to SHIFT to a low carbon future; ADVANCE the human rights of affected communities; and GROW the climate justice movement. Suggested actions are illustrated and commitments suited to your communities are encouraged.



Commit2Respond Campaign Offers Resources and Connections

By Irene Keim, UUMFE Board, UU Church in the Pines, Weeki Wachee, FL

When our neighbors experience catastrophic events like the recent earthquakes in Nepal, the world races to help with supplies and equipment and people. We offer our hopes and prayers and resources to the affected communities. Back home, such traumatic events present us with challenging questions: Are our communities ready to respond should we be called to act closer to



Included on the Commit2Respond website is a SHARE forum for all who have joined the campaign to see and contribute ideas and projects

for individual and congregational actions. One of the goals of the campaign is to connect with one another to be inspired and renewed to develop/continue long-term actions in response to climate change. Please share your stories so that we may learn from your works.

Commit2Respond has been presented through the contributions of many people and organizations. To date, nearly 4,000 individuals have joined the campaign and almost forty organizations and 140 faith communities have endorsed Commit2Respond. At present, the campaign has a coalition of eight sponsoring organizations: Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM), Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA), Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice (UUCSJ), Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Collaboratory (UU EJ Collaboratory), Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA), Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth (UUMFE), and Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). ♦

Book Review: Crude Justice by Stuart H. Smith

By Bob Keim, former UUMFE Board, UU Church in the Pines, Weeki Wachee, FL

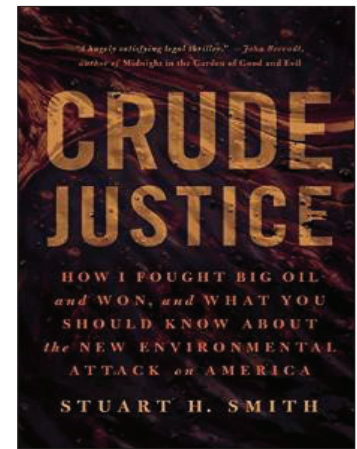
“Until one day in 1989 when the telephone rang. On the other end of the line was Winston Street. And things were never going to be the same for me.”

Thus began what has been a career in environmental law for Stuart H. Smith of New Orleans, a journey that has taken him through some of the least-known, most egregious violations and hidden workings of American energy resource production life. And it’s a story every Unitarian Universalist (not just UUMFE members) should read and then get “Mad as hell, and I’m not going to take it anymore” about. And they should do so now, not sometime in the future – because very

dark and dangerous things are happening now, under our very feet, and his new book Crude Justice (Benbella Books, 2015) tells some truly nasty stories.

Smith’s journey begins with a case other lawyers would not take; after all, who wants to fight Shell Oil or Chevron’s hordes of highly-paid, well educated, legal resources on behalf of clients with “thick as molasses” southern accents and lifetimes spent cleaning up clogged sections of oil pipelines? But then, what if this set of clients is a pair with moxie; what if they’ve been doing some of their own research and can provide “sophisticated discovery, typically that would be the work of an attorney or paralegal or – in a complicated case like this – a consultant with highly specialized knowledge” that Shell and Chevron were knowingly bringing them, over extended periods of time, clogged pipelines laden with TERM (technologically-enhanced radioactive-material). That is, either radium-226 or radon laden pipes, measured at readings many times EPA recommended levels of exposure, for them to clean, meanwhile either not telling them, or keeping such information deeply under wraps and hard to find. Their particular story comes to the point where state environmental agents measure radiation levels in their facilities, yards, gardens, trees, in their water, and on their children’s bicycles, then closes down their business and suggests that they move away – far away.

In the end, it comes down to money: “But the Streets showed me a different side of the Big Oil behemoth, a system that valued profits over people, that didn’t care who got caught in the process, and was perfectly content to try to cover its tracks if necessary. It is our job as trial lawyers



to make the costs of doing good less than the costs of doing bad.” Meanwhile, corporate defense lawyers specialize in obfuscating the issues and “casting what they considered reasonable doubt,” usually with a bombardment of statistical information the jury has trouble following. In the end in this case, justice prevails, as records Chevron worked to hide are discovered and the corporation is forced to settle out of court.



Smith goes on to lay out environmental justice cases filed in the face of state and federal policies shaped by the Reagan years and the takeover of many lower federal and state courts, not to mention state governors' offices and legislatures by conservative Republicans working to undo environmental protections put in during more liberal times. Many of these cases have far worse grounds than his early work with the Street brothers, yet the outcomes are not always as successful.

In addition, he warns us about high-level partnerships that have grown up between energy-resource companies and legislators, of how more and more laws are actually written by business lawyers, and how money is always a critical factor. He spends a good deal of time discussing the contradiction of the Deepwater Horizon disaster and subsequent rush of oil companies permit applications to work in the Gulf of Mexico, not to mention the federal government's quickness to approve such applications (hmm, collusion?).

More than ever, while Smith's book recounts important work done by an educated, committed legal firm, he calls us to join such frays as we can: "There are countless others fighting Big Oil and Gas in their own hometowns – who take on the frackers at rural town hall meetings, or who stage noisy protests against the Keystone XL. I urge you

to join them." And he speaks of his work with a combination of the typical vision of a southern lawyer and the realization as to what he's fighting for: "Betting big – and winning jackpots for my clients – has been the thrill of a lifetime. But we can't roll the dice on Planet Earth."

At times this is a challenging book to read. It's hard not to get disgusted or angry at the way these corporations and politicians work, and what they're willing to risk for the holy dollar. But then, if you can read it without getting "mad as hell" at times, either you're stronger than I am or you've been on the battlefield a whole lot longer than I have. Still, it's a book a lot of people ought to read. And then they should take advice UUSC's Charlie Clements once gave me: "Once a day, every day, call whoever's in charge, tell them you're unhappy and ask them what they're going to do about it." ♦

Update From the Environmental Justice Collaboratory

By Matthew McHale, UUMFE consultant and candidate for UU ministry, Oakland, CA

Over the past months, Commit2Respond and Climate Justice Month (which you can read more about on page 6) have been a major focus of the Environmental Justice Collaboratory, with Collaboratory members contributing vital leadership on the steering committee and many of the work teams.

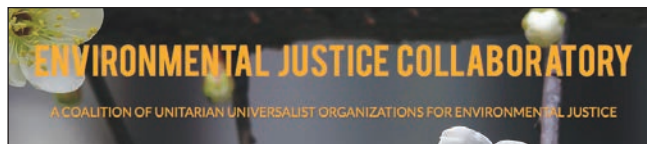


One team that deserves serious recognition is the resource development team, which includes Collaboratory members Rev. Peggy Clarke, Kat Liu, and Jennifer Nordstrom. Additional team members were Rev. Sofía Betancourt and Tim DeChristopher. Together they collected, curated and wrote the reflections for Climate Justice Month's daily emails. If you missed the reflections,

which really are a wonderful resource, you can find all of them on the Commit2Respond blog at <http://www.commit2respond.org/news>.

Now that Climate Justice Month is over (it will be back next year!) the work continues in a variety of ways and EJ Collaboratory members continue to contribute: the creation of a **Climate Activist Network Team**, which is beginning to envision and develop an activist network; and a **Religious Education Team**, which is collecting/curating Climate Justice-focused religious education resources, particularly for children and youth, and developing resources where gaps exist.

While supporting Commit2Respond, the Collaboratory is also moving forward with our own work plan as well. Following are just a couple highlights.



Climate Justice Course for Seminarians: One of the needs identified by the Collaboratory is for curriculum at our seminaries that will prepare our future ministers to be leaders in the work of environmental/climate justice. This spring Michael Hogue, professor of Theology at Meadville Lombard Theological School and one of the organizers of the Collaboratory gathering, taught a new class, “Cosmos and Ethos.”

In the class, students explored the climate crisis as a planetary reality, a moral phenomenon, a religious concern, a social justice tragedy, and a problem of political economy. Students also conducted research on climate change and climate justice in their home communities, which represented every region in the US and included rural, urban and suburban communities. The students then moved from identifying the problems to exploring solutions in post-capitalist alternatives such as the commons movement and forms of eco-democracy and eco-socialism, and engaged with Religious Naturalism as a framework and praxis for

living into these alternatives.

One of the students, Christina Hockman, articulated one of her profound learnings from the course: “Those of us who are blessed with not having to spend every waking moment trying to meet life’s most basic needs have a responsibility. The responsibility is to look after those who are vulnerable – vulnerable to all kinds of injustices, including climate change. It’s those who have the least who have the most to lose. The irony is that by saving the most vulnerable – our poor, our hungry, our climate – we can save the world.”

Environmental Justice Book: The Collaboratory also recognized the need for more in-depth reflections on the spiritual grounding for environmental justice and its practice from a UU perspective. That was the inspiration for the upcoming book Crossing Lines: Embodying our Environmental Justice Commitment. The book, co-edited by Rev. Manish Mishra-Marzetti & Jennifer Nordstrom and published by Skinner House Books, is still a work in progress – right now eighteen UU theologians, activists and organizers are contributing the reflections, which will make up the core of this vital work. It’s still several months out, but we can’t wait for it to be published.

There is more going on, which you’ll hear about soon. If you are interested in supporting the work of the EJ Collaboratory, feel free to contact me: matthewmchale@outlook.com. ♦

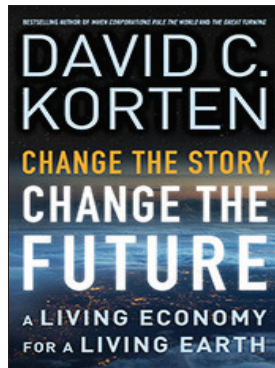
Review of *Change the Story, Change the Future: A Living Economy for a Living Earth*, by David Korten

By Rev. Rose Edington, Minister Emerita, UU Congregation, Charleston, WV

This book resonated with me so much when I was reading it, and provoked so many conversations on how stories frame our lives with my spouse (Mel Hoover) that I can’t wait to hear

author David Korten's GA workshop on saving Earth's future by changing our Story. Instead of operating from the concept that Earth is a dead rock to be used up, Korten points to the necessity of embracing the story that Earth is alive, sacred, and supports all life.

Both hopeful and realistic, Change the Story, Change the Future: A Living Economy for a Living Earth opens with Korten telling his personal story of good intentions to help "developing" countries by bringing them the Western style of life, his disillusionment with the effects of Westernization on "developing" nations, and with economic theory and corporate power that hold sway with a Story of "Sacred Money and the Market." To counter that harmful story and coalesce people power Korten puts forth a much needed Sacred Life and Living Earth Story, which is both new in its approach for addressing globalization and old with roots drawn from indigenous religious wisdom.



As an example of how my personal story inter-related with Korten's book, I refer to my growing up in Appalachia. I experienced the limits of a biblically based religion alongside the freedom of roaming the hills and feeling at one with nature (one of the reasons I feel so affirmed by our 7th principle). I appreciated Korten's dissecting Christian theologian Marcus Borg's statement: "Tell me your image of God and I will tell you your politics." If your image of god is as a distant patriarch, you are more likely to buy into a hierarchy of righteousness and a politics of domination, authority and competition for power. If your image of god is as a universal spirit manifest in all creation you are more likely to operate from a politics of cooperation, compassion and sharing. Which image of god frames your personal story, as well as society's? Which image frames the stories of those we elect to office? Since both views

are biblically rooted, we can emphasize Earth's Living Story with people whose biblical views are different from ours but that we want to influence for the good of Earth.

For Korten to distill twenty years of research and new awarenesses into a concise and readable book is quite amazing. I want to bust my budget buying copies of this book for the many people I want to share it with. Change the Story, Change the Future: A Living Economy for a Living Earth is both challenging and easy to understand. Questions for each chapter make it an excellent resource for all kinds of book discussion groups – from those wanting to better understand global dynamics, to those wanting grounding for their environmental justice action, to those wanting to use it as a jumping off point to deepen their theological understandings for creating a viable future. It is especially appropriate for UUism as it strongly reinforces our 7th principle of respect for the interdependent web of life. This line from the Peter Mayer song in our hymnal is an apt illustration for the breadth and depth of Change the Story, Change the Future: "The wide universe is the ocean I travel, and the Earth is my blue boat home."

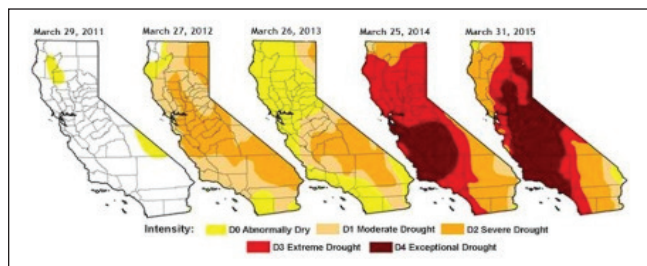
Change the Story, Change the Future: A Living Economy for a Living Earth will be available at the UUA Bookstore in the exhibit hall. Join me at his workshop Friday June 26 from 3-6pm and immediately after David will sign copies of this book as well as his 20th year update of the critically acclaimed When Corporations Rule the World. ♦

California Drought Reveals Pervasive Inequities

By Kat Liu, UUMFE Board, First UU Society of San Francisco, CA

The headline screamed across the page: "NASA Scientist Predicts California Has One Year of Water Left!" (1) Famiglietti later said he was misquoted and that he was talking about our

reservoirs, only part of our overall water supply. But it doesn't take a NASA scientist to know that, four years into record drought, California is in bad shape. Photos of would-be lakes and snowcaps show a state that is drying up.



Given the urgent need for effective action, it was alarming to read comments in response to the article. People blame green lawns, swimming pools, and ultimately overpopulation. This thinking mirrors the messages from our state officials: don't water your lawn, take shorter showers, put a brick in your toilet tank. While I am entirely in favor of xeriscaping and other personal practices that lessen our impact on Mother Earth, the reality is that it is neither the number of residents nor our "water-wasteful ways" that are taxing California resources. Estimates vary widely yet still tell a similar story:

- About 20% of California's water goes to residential use. All the toilets, showers, bathtubs, washing machines, dishwashers, lawns, and yes, even swimming pools, in residential properties amounts to no more than 20% of total water use.
- About 80% of California's water goes to agriculture, most of which is exported out of the state and even out of the country. Just the amount of water needed for the miles of almond orchards alone is the same as domestic water use for the state's entire 38.8 million residents. Residents are fined \$500 for over-watering lawns but corporate farmers are not required to use the most water-efficient irrigation techniques.
- Despite dire drought, California continues to allow fracking, which uses billions of gallons

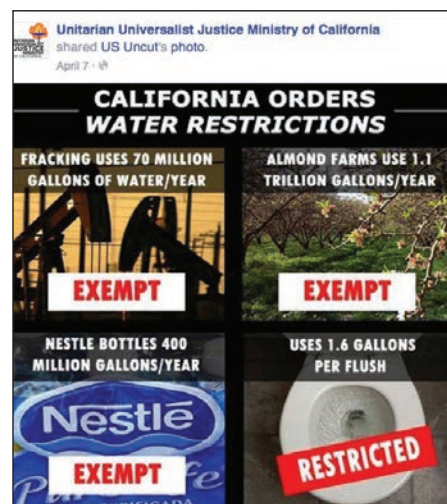
of water per year. But that isn't the only strain that fracking poses on California's water supply. Once the water has been used and irreversibly contaminated with chemicals and heavy metals, it's disposed of underground, where it has contaminated potable ground water. (2)

- Despite dire drought, California continues to allow private companies to bottle our water and sell it for their profit. While residential water use is increasingly monitored, companies like Nestlé, under its Arrowhead and Pure Life brands, extract water without any regulation from local agencies.

California's water crisis is so severe that Gov. Brown declared a state of emergency last year and recently signed a \$1 billion emergency-spending bill (3) to address the situation. But if you look at the bill, it leaves corporate interests intact while putting ever more pressure on residential "water wasters." Telling residents, who collectively comprise no more than 20% of our annual water usage that we need to cut back, while placing no restrictions on corporate interests that make up more than 80% of

water usage does not make sense. Some might argue that we need to support farms because of the economy and jobs.

However, Gov. Brown supports diverting essential water from the smaller, family-owned farms and fisheries of the Sacramento River Delta in order to bolster the larger, corporate-owned farms of the Central Valley. These same corporate farms use chemical pesticides that have poisoned the local water



supplies of the people who live near and work for them.

Some might argue that we need to allow fracking for the oil and for jobs. However, federal officials have cut their estimate (4) of the amount of recoverable oil in the Monterey Shale deposits by 96%. (In other words, less than 1/20th of original estimates.) Yet we would poison precious water so that fossil fuel companies can squeeze out what little profits they can.

One can only conclude that despite the urgent need for change, state officials continue to favor the profits of corporations over the best interests of the people. (In fact, declaring a state of emergency gives Gov. Brown even more power to protect corporate interests.) And in that respect, what is happening in California is instructive to the rest of the country.

On a spiritual level, policies that blame residents also hint at the pervasive, destructive belief that humans are somehow inherently bad for the environment (e.g., “overpopulation” or “too many of us”). This forces us into a false choice between caring for our own welfare and that of our Earth and sibling species. (No wonder so many people decide not to care!) In reality, it isn’t the number of people we have in California so much as the inequitable distribution of resources, heavily favoring corporations and the extremely wealthy. (People with much bigger lawns and swimming pools use much more water.) The drought has made the untenable nature of this inequity more apparent. Our environmental problems that are caused by bad social and economic policies could be remedied if we had the will to change. ♦

(1) <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-famiglietti-drought-california-20150313-story.html>

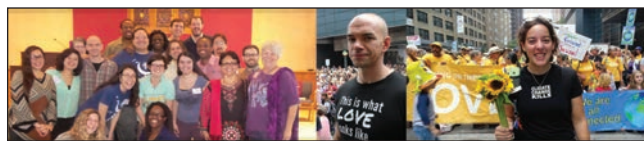
(2) <http://www.nbcbayarea.com/investigations/Waste-Water-from-Oil-Fracking-Injected-into-Clean-Aquifers-282733051.html>

(3) <http://gov.ca.gov/news.php?id=18906>

(4) <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-oil-20140521-story.html>

GROW Climate Justice Young Adult Training Planned for August

By Aly Tharp, Network Coordinator, UU Young Adults for Climate Justice, Plano, TX



We did it! With the help of 122 amazing donors, the GROW Climate Justice training (<http://uucsj.org/grow/>) – a five day workshop for young adults to develop community and capacity as climate justice organizers – surpassed its fundraising campaign for \$15,000! We raised a total of \$16,060 in one month. As the network coordinator for the UU Young Adults for Climate Justice (UUYACJ), I am thrilled and deeply grateful for this support from the UU community at large, including many UU Ministry for Earth supporters (visit our website at <http://www.uuyacj.org>). Thank you, to all who helped us reach this goal.

“GROW” stands for “Grounded and Resilient Organizers Workshop.” It will take place at the Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center in Chicago, IL, August 7–11. The cost per attendee (for room, board and programming) is \$200 plus individual travel expenses. Additional scholarship is available for those with demonstrated need. One way that you can still support this important work is to encourage young adults to submit applications! *ALL* spiritually grounded, young adult activists are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. We are seeking a diverse group of attendees with a wide range of justice and community-minded organizing backgrounds, since climate justice is an incredibly intersectional analysis for creating positive social change.



The GROW Climate Justice training started with the vision and hard work of activist and Harvard UU seminarian Tim DeChristopher (<http://www.timdechristopher.org/>). Tim has fostered collaboration between the UUYACJ and the UU College of Social Justice and brought together a team of world-class facilitators to create this deeply enriching and multi-faceted program: branching from sessions in art and music for movement building, to spiritually grounding practices for activism, to deepening anti-oppressive and strategic organizing skill-sets. We thank you for helping us to spread the word about this monumental opportunity! ♦

Northwest Earth Institute Updates Its Climate Change Curriculum

By Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board, First Unitarian Church of Portland, OR

On May 26, Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI) will launch its newest curriculum: *Change Is Our Choice: Creating Climate Solutions*. The focus of this five-session discussion course is climate action in your own life, church, and community



to increase resilience and begin to mitigate the effects of climate change.

NWEI is introducing a new format for this curriculum – an interactive e-book rather than its normal printed book. Video and audio

elements are integrated with the text content and action plans to enrich the discussion course experience. This course is designed for people who have a basic understanding of climate issues and are ready to learn how to tackle the problems and create effective change.

Many readers may remember the original discussion course, *Global Warming: Changing*

CO2urse. It was published in Feb. 2007, following the adoption of the Statement of Conscience on the Threat of Global Warming/Climate Change at the 2006 General Assembly. Since then hundreds of UUs have taken this course and been inspired to work on climate justice issues. Much has changed in the past nine years and the publication of *Change Is Our Choice*, with all new content, is sure to inspire both old hands and new converts to step up the the challenge ahead.

Order *Change is Our Choice* or other courses at <http://nwei.org>. Please choose UU Ministry for Earth in the “affiliation” section of the order form at checkout and NWEI will donate a small percentage of the fees to us. ♦

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Your donation to UU Ministry for Earth will enable further development of the services and resources we offer, which can help you, your congregation, and district/region to fulfill your vision of Earth celebration and justice.

UUMFE is a 501c3 non-profit organization. Our Vision is of “. . . a world in which all people make reverence, gratitude, and care for the living Earth central to their lives.”

For more information, visit the UUMFE website at uuministryforearth.org and click on the blue DONATE button.



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