



[www.uuministryforearth.org](http://www.uuministryforearth.org)

Volume 15, Issue 2 Winter 2016

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

[illegible]

Map of worship services – Fuchsia = scheduled,  
Green = completed; find this map online at:

<http://www.uuministryforearth.org/campaign-news>

Contact the UU Young Adults for Climate Justice to let us know that you are interested in this campaign: [uuyacj@gmail.com](mailto:uuyacj@gmail.com). We hope to succeed in this campaign

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

**U**U Ministry for Earth continues to focus attention on helping congregations engage successfully in the work of realizing sustainable, just communities. We notice many commonalities in the work of Environmental Justice and the work of Climate Justice, and note the increased urgency and growing public attention being paid to the demand for just resolutions of both area-specific and global crises. We ourselves are particularly energized and encouraged by the visions and progress of those who we learn are working collaboratively on these issues with community, regional, and interfaith partners.

As Earth Day 2016 approaches, and with the national outrage over the Flint, MI water crisis on our minds, we return our focus to Environmental Justice. We invite you to consider how your congregation or team can engage with whatever EJ challenges exist in your area. In UUMFE's 2016 Earth Day materials, we revisit "Our Place in the Web of Life," our EJ curriculum, and share stories from UU congregational leaders who have become environmental justice activists and advocates.

To help your congregation mark Earth Day with a special service, our worship resources feature a timely sermon cont'd on page 3

2 Message From the Board Chair  
3 Earth Day 2016 (cont'd)  
The Climate Justice Gospel (cont'd)  
Honor Congregations – Thanks!  
4 UU College of Social Justice Journey  
My War Against Hope

- 5 The Paris Agreement Opened Doors  
7 New Energy Curriculum from NWEI  
8 The Whale and the Supercomputer Review  
9 Tim DeChristopher Inspires UUs  
10 Connecting To Earth Through Art  
11 Commit2Respond  
12 Not Enthusiastic About Paris Agreement



Unitarian Universalist  
Ministry for Earth

Unitarian Universalist  
Ministry for Earth  
**NEWSLETTER**

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

The points of view  
expressed by contributors  
are their own and not  
necessarily those of UU  
Ministry for Earth  
(UUMFE). Subscriptions are  
available through  
membership in the  
organization. The printed  
version of this newsletter  
uses 100 percent  
postconsumer content  
recycled paper.

**ABOUT UUMFE**

Unitarian Universalist  
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  
a 501(c)3 organization,  
contributions are tax  
deductible to the full  
extent of the law.

**UUMFE BOARD**

Irene Keim, *Chair*  
Ellen McClaran, *Treas.*  
*Directors:*  
Cynthia Davidson  
Rev. Dr. Mel Hoover  
Rev. Earl Koteen  
Kat Liu

## Message From the Board

**W**hat exciting times in which we live! On a rainy day – I live in Florida; we have water standing everywhere today – we can delve into the gloomy side. Other days, we can see many ways to contribute to constructive change. We have moved through some very arresting months. The papal encyclical *Laudato Si'* from Pope Francis reminded us all to consider our moral grounding for our choices and actions; COP21 filed as a strong commitment for those of us who are seeking effective change with justice when addressing climate change; our own federal representatives still cannot pass a bill declaring human impacts on climate change. First, we move up the scale of possibilities and then we seem to slide down. SIGH.

I needed a good, emotional 'call to arms' – in general, not just about ecological justice. I found it in re-reading the 1966 UUA Ware Lecture delivered by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King (UUA.org/ga/past/1966/ware). His title alone was an admonition – 'Don't Sleep Through the Revolution.' Are we in the midst of a revolution? Are we working in the interconnected world that Dr. King praised of more interfaith partnerships and understanding of the linkages between our challenges? Yes, on a bright day, that is our guiding mantra and we try to stay awake.



*Photo credit, Getty Images*

To that view, the volunteers and staff of UUMFE are excited to provide our annual Earth Day offerings. We are very grateful for the sermon donated by the Rev. Dr. Marilyn Sewell, Minister Emerita of First Unitarian in Portland, Oregon. Check out all of the other ideas presented for your worship services, as well as the range of activities suggested for Climate Justice Month from the Commit2Respond campaign.

Of special note is the leadership being offered by the UU Young Adults for Climate Justice (UUYACJ), a network of Young Adult activists sponsored by UUMFE. These people are showing us how to foster change through connection and public witness, grounded in our UU faith. Read about the book reading group, the 100 Worship Services campaign, and their frontline activities in the newsletter articles by Aly Tharp, the network coordinator.

Let us rise and sing as admonished by Dr. King in his Ware Lecture, "We can all sing *We Shall Overcome*, because somehow we know the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice."

*In gratitude, Irene Keim, UUMFE Board Chair* ♦

**The Climate Justice Gospel** – cont'd from page 1 by the end of next year, so things are now kicking into high gear to deliver at least 75 more worship services.

Stay tuned for updates, because the UUYACJ is convening this month for an in-person planning



*Aly Tharp, UUYACJ Coordinator, preaching at Westside UU Church, Ft. Worth, TX, Oct. 18, 2015*

gathering; and additionally many seasoned activist members of the network are traveling extensively this summer and might be able to make a pit-stop visit to your congregation! News will be published at <http://www.uuminyforearth.org/campaign-news> and <http://www.uuyacj.org/news--updates>. ♦

[uuminyforearth.org/campaign-news](http://www.uuminyforearth.org/campaign-news) and <http://www.uuyacj.org/news--updates>. ♦

**Earth Day 2016** – cont'd from page 1 by Rev. Marilyn Sewell, “The Moral Demands of Climate Change,” and links to other UUA worship resources. You’ll also find other materials to help pull together your service, including our themed order of service covers, an insert about UUMFE and our programs, and our certificate you can use to honor an Eco-Hero or Team in your congregation.

Services devoted to Earth Day or an environmental focus at any time of the year are also a good opportunity for your congregation to participate in the UU Young Adults for Climate Justice 100 Sermons campaign (see “The Climate Justice Gospel” article beginning on page 1).

Please do share information with UUMFE and others about your Earth Day celebration plans and events by registering online. We’ll keep an updated list of Earth Day events on our website;

your descriptions help inspire and energize others! Thanks to the generosity of inSpirit, the UUA bookstore, one registered congregation will win a book for their library.

We extend our thanks in advance to those congregations who use their Earth Day services as an opportunity to publicize and support the work of UUMFE through a special shared or designated plate collection. Your donations help support our programming. ♦

## Honor Congregations – Thanks!

*By Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board member, First Unitarian Portland, OR*

**U**U Ministry for Earth gratefully acknowledges our Honor Congregations. These congregations have given generously to support the work of UUs caring for Earth through Budgeted gifts, split-the-plate offerings, and donations beyond the requested congregational level of \$100. The following congregations gave these special donations between January and December 2015. Thank you!



### Honor Congregations:

Bull Run UUs, Manassas, VA  
Cedar Lane UU Church, MD  
Emerson Unitarian Church, Houston, TX  
First Parish, Brookline, MA  
First Unitarian, Portland, OR  
First Unitarian Church of Cleveland, OH  
Mt. Diablo UU Church, Walnut Creek, CA  
Spirit of Life UU, Odessa, FL  
UU Church in Reston, VA  
UU Church of Davis, CA  
UU Church of Norfolk, VA  
UU Church of Riverside, CA  
UU Church of Rockville, MD  
UU Church of Tarpon Springs, FL  
UU Church of the Brazos Valley, College Station, TX  
UU Congregation of Milford, NH  
Wy’east UU Congregation, Portland, OR ♦



## A group of people, including a man in a red shirt pointing towards the water, are gathered on a beach near a wooden structure. The background shows a body of water and distant hills.

## My War Against Hope

When I decided to make climate change my ministry, I was told that my vision of the future was too negative, that as a minister I was obligated to bring hope. My ministry gradually morphed into climate/environmental justice because the focus moved from the future to the present. I spent less time arguing about what was happening and what would happen because the people with whom I was working were already suffering the effects of pollution and environmental degradation.

Recently I was having a discussion with some of my activist friends and the word “bureaucracy” arose. Now I worked for the government for thirty


So I was prepared when my activist friend used the word bureaucracy to refer to red tape and petty



[illegible]

Our path may lead to a dramatic die off or even human extinction. If you are willing to accept that likelihood, then I will be glad to talk with you about hope. If you are not, I am not willing to join you in your fantasy when so much needs to be done.

- the courage to face with open eyes the dangers that are before us.
- the humility to acknowledge our uncertainty.
- the strength to face the despair that sometimes comes with this work.
- the courage to overcome despair once we have learned what it is trying to teach us.
- a climate justice movement that continues to grow.
- more and more people waking up to the fact that this is not a scientific challenge, but more of a moral, spiritual, political, and

We are building a climate activist network among those UUs who recognize that nothing less than systems change will be necessary to avoid condemning the young and future generations to a literal hell. Please support UUMFE in this effort. 

*By Rev. Peggy Clarke, Minister, First Unitarian  
Society, Hastings on Hudson, NY*

**The Good:** This is the first time every nation on the planet has come to an agreement.

UU Ministry for Earth • 5



*Doris Marlin, Caitlin Waddick, David Tucker and William McPherson ran into Bill McKibben (center)*

likely after the first week, it came together. As I understand UN process, finding common ground is rare. At COP21, the common ground was a shared sense of desperation, and desire to hope for a future generation. (After the document was finished, the Prime Minister of the Marshall Islands called home and his grandson said, “Do we have to move?” He replied, “Maybe, but not today.”)

The energy on site was high and hopeful and, frankly, more ambitious than I had expected. Creating a just Agreement was a key part of the conversation. True, the final text does not address the issues fully or adequately, which reinforces what I already know: governments cannot fix this problem alone. Given the multidimensional nature of these negotiations, they did the best they could do given far more moving parts than I can count. Really – this was extremely complicated. The US did a good job particularly on some key elements like accountability and transparency moving forward.

**The Bad:** The United States pulled away from any accountability for our role in creating the crisis.

There is a section on Damage and Loss. That section was in danger of not existing at all. The US ensured it was there (with the help of the faith community), but liability and compensation were eliminated, which, in my opinion, falls too far short of the moral ideal.

I’m also upset, sorry, and angry that justice for indigenous people did not make it out of the preamble.

**The Undecided:** The Paris Agreement relies on each nation to step up on their own. (This is the first time developing countries are called to participate, which is a good thing.) The goals have been set, but the ability to reach those good goals relies on national initiatives. How well nations – including ours – really own their part in this is still to be seen.

**A Larger Truth:** Even had the US government played its part exactly as I would have wanted, even if the Agreement read exactly as I would have hoped – even if, unimaginably, the final document had been perfect in the eyes of all the world – that wouldn’t have solved the problem. Society has many parts. We need to do ours. Corporations need to do theirs. The faith community has a key role to play. In fact, the essential role of the faith community has never been more clear to me than over the course of the last few weeks.

**One more thing:** Weeks before COP21, I was invited to talk about messaging with other representatives of environmental groups. The conversation was all about declaring Paris a failure. They were poised and ready, and most have stuck to that message. I am troubled both by the assumption of failure before the work started, and negative messaging that has persisted even in the face of some very good work. It makes me want to say one more thing – well, actually three more things:

1. Although criticism is easy, progress is difficult: The work now being criticized was unbearably complicated, and people worked literally day



*William McPherson, David Tucker, and Doris Marlin making the new “C” sign for global peace.*





*Standing on the Side of Love with Doris Marlin from All Souls Church Unitarian, Washington, DC and Christiana Figueres, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, at COP21*

and night – in good faith – to create the best Agreement they could, together. I grant that going forward, such work needs refinement and correction. Perhaps just as importantly, those who give themselves over to this work need our ongoing encouragement.

2. Acting as if governments can do it all makes it easy to abdicate our own responsibilities.
3. This Agreement isn't the end; it's the beginning. It opened doors; now we have to step through. Moving this forward is *our* job. I am confident we can and will do what needs to be done to create the necessary transformation.

Once you begin to notice, you find that opportunities to work for climate justice abound. That will be more true in the coming year than any previous year in history.

Whether you are new or seasoned, I hope you mark dates this spring, particularly around Earth Day, for climate justice action – on your own calendar, and your congregational calendar, too.

In April 2015, Commit2Respond provided resources for congregational climate justice action. In 2016, we'll also provide resources for collective climate justice action. It is time. I hope you'll join me, and the thousands of others who have committed to respond. ♦

**Editor's notes:** The UUA sponsored six "credentialed observers" (delegates) to attend COP21. In addition to Peggy Clarke, they were: Dr. Jan Dash and Lynn Dash, UU Congregation

of Monmouth County, Lincroft, NJ; Doris Marlin, All Souls Church, Washington, DC; William McPherson, University Unitarian Church, Seattle, WA; and David Tucker, Eno River UU Fellowship, Durham, NC.

Also in Paris: Aly Tharp, our UUYACJ Network Coordinator, Horizon UU Church, Carrollton, TX; Ethan Bodnaruk, First UU Church, Syracuse, NY; Caitlin Waddick, UU Society of Burlington, VT; and Vince Pawlowski, former UUMFE board member, Mountain Vista UU Congregation, Tucson, AZ (and others that I may have missed).

Throughout the conference, the group faithfully posted on Facebook – lots of great info, commentary, links, and photos: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/uusinparis/>. All article photos are from UUs in Paris Facebook page.

Unitarian Universalist Young Adults for Climate Justice

## CLIMATE JUSTICE READING CLUB

The first book we are reading is *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz.

**PEOPLE OF ALL AGES & ALL FAITHS WELCOME!**

Discussions online every other Monday evening (via Zoom Conference), 5:00PM PST :

**Feb. 29th**  
**March 14th**  
**March 28th**

RSVP as soon as possible:  
[bit.ly/1Ti74E5](https://bit.ly/1Ti74E5)  
Questions? [uuyacj@gmail.com](mailto:uuyacj@gmail.com)

## Northwest Earth Institute Updates Its Energy Curriculum

*By Ellen McClaran, UUMFE Board, First Unitarian, Portland, OR*

In November 2015, Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI) released an update of 2012's *Powering a Bright Future* that includes all new content, updated discussion activities, and videos. The focus of this three-session discussion course is the latest thinking on issues related to energy

use and what actions you can take in your own life, church, and community to promote energy sustainability and resilience.

Like *Change Is Our Choice: Creating Climate Solutions*, which was released in May 2015, this is an interactive e-book rather than a printed book. Advantages of this format include immediate



access to videos and links to resources, infographics, etc.

*Powering a Bright Future* will be of interest to many UUs, including those who are already on the front lines of confronting fossil fuel issues such as fracking,

coal export, and oil trains. Topics in the course include energy production and extraction, peak oil, fossil fuel subsidies, energy efficiency, equity, energy policy, and environmental impacts.

To learn more about these and other outstanding courses, go to <http://nwei.org>. When you place an order, 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. ♦

## **Book Review: The Whale and the Supercomputer**

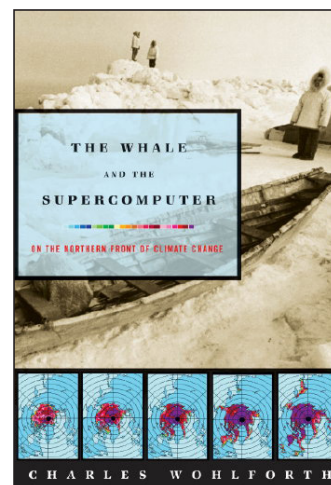
*By Bob Keim, former UUMFE Board member, UU Church in the Pines, Weeki Wachee, FL*

In *The Whale and the Supercomputer*, Charles Wohlforth finds himself going out on the sea ice with Inupiaq tribesmen, watching the men standing like statues, staring at the horizon. Just when he’s about to give up, and begins to wonder if they’re posing for “noble Eskimo” photographs, one points out a large polar bear approaching. *“To my eye, the bear’s appearance was like magic, as if this hunter knew how to summon ghosts from their hiding places. Silent, motionless watching had made the bear visible and prevented us from*

*becoming potential prey.”* The whiteness was all around him, in a setting without scale or reference – but, as he learned, it was full of information for those who knew how to read it.

Immersed in “a vast wreck, a static chaos without scale or reference,” Wohlforth, in his 2005 book, writes about the ongoing cultural tension between Alaskan communities of white scientific researchers doing environmental, climatological, and social research, and the Inupiaq people, with their deep and rich historical understanding of their environment – and of the evolving weather and animal adaptation patterns.

In the midst of this cultural interplay, one of the lessons of the scientific world is that climate change – and its effects – is accelerating more quickly in the northern reaches of our planet than in the lower 48. The author cites the fact that “*In the twentieth century, Alaskan sea levels rose six to eight inches, a rate ten times faster than the average for the previous three thousand years.*” The problem is that the scientists understand the climate, “...but they don’t seem to understand people.” It’s as if they want to write an “operator’s manual” for planet



Earth, and then step back to watch those with the necessary technical expertise control things while the rest of us are simply along for the ride.

It is Wohlforth’s argument that such an approach rests on a logical fallacy: “...events in an infinitely complex world, full of constantly adapting people and natural systems, cannot be predicted reliably by a mathematical code.” As he notes, understanding what we are facing, as well as trying to chart responses, requires the commitment of our very selves, both minds and bodies. Yes, we need modern science, but we also



need knowledge of Planet Earth that is as deep as the one lived by the Inupiaq.

Given the world seen in this work, our problem is both personal and cultural. We begin with one another, with those who care and want to do something. Then we work on building, if we do not already inhabit, communities compelled to act. And we continue to move outward, working to build pressure from the ground up, one town or city at a time. We spread one idea at a time, one sense of caring at a time, from one place to another, reaching across the nation until the world is ready for action. As Wohlforth writes, *“Cultures with their different way of being in nature bump up against each other, mix, and are newly created. But nature is one and therein lies the responsibility that comes with our new freedom. If that frees us to see nature and our predicament more clearly, we might find a way to avert some of the damage fossil fuels have caused. The problem is cultural, and so is the solution.”*

Moving with ease from whaling boats to seminar rooms, [The Whale and the Supercomputer](#) brings excitement and compassion to the climate change quest. Part adventure story, part science writing accessible to the general reader, this very engaging volume provides rich ways of dealing with climate change. I highly recommend it. ♦

## Tim DeChristopher Inspires UU Audience With Call for Non-Violent Climate Action

*By Debbie Mytels, convenor of a local interfaith group, Peninsula Interfaith Climate Action (PICA), UU Fellowship of Redwood City, CA*

**K**nown for his non-violent disruption of an oil drilling lease auction that was depicted in the documentary film “Bidder 70,” UU climate activist Tim DeChristopher spoke to four UU audiences (San Mateo, Starr King School for the Ministry, Palo Alto and UU San Francisco) during a week’s visit to the Bay Area in January.

Many members of UU Fellowship of Redwood City (UUFRC) attended his Palo Alto talk on Friday night, Jan. 22, where he shared his philosophy of social change to an audience of about 130 people. Citing the success of movements that have utilized civil disobedience, he explained why such strategies are more powerful and effective than writing letters or petitions. “Civil disobedience uses the power of one’s own vulnerability to arouse the conscience of others and break through the apathy” that blocks change.

Being vulnerable to a prison sentence – or being beaten with billy clubs and the fire hoses that hit Civil Rights protestors in the ‘60’s – arouses empathy when people see what’s happening. This is how we can manifest our power and break the hold of oil companies over our country, he said.



*Tim DeChristopher*

When asked about the value of other tactics to curtail climate change, DeChristopher said we still need to try them all. “Cesar Chavez said when we’re well organized, it doesn’t mean we’re all doing the same things. It means that we’re all pushing in different places against the wall of power. When we find a weak spot, we all come together and push there.”

“The challenge of the climate movement now, however, is to shift from talking about reducing emissions to facing the question of how to retain our humanity in light of the tremendous changes we are facing,” he said. “Anger is an appropriate response. Anger is a sign that something is wrong in one of our relationships – a sign that we care about something – and that we care enough to make the relationship right. We need to strengthen our connections and make the relationship right with Earth – and with each other.”

Noting that America's consumer culture is a comfortable place for many, he compared it to people who deny the fact of death. "It's easy to pretend we're not going to die, but any system that acts differently is false." Our dependence on fossil fuels is killing Earth's ecosystems, and our civilization – even the survival of the human species – is at stake. This is why he advocates that protesters use non-violent disobedience and use the "necessity defense" to argue they are not guilty. Such a legal defense is like saying it's not a crime for someone to break into a burning house to rescue a child, because the "breaking and entering" is necessary for a higher good. Stopping a pipeline or blockading an oil train is necessary for the higher good of protecting Earth's climate.

When an audience member said, "You've been a martyr, without having to die," DeChristopher demurred. "I didn't 'lose' those two years in I spent in jail," he said. "I spent them differently. I met different people there that I might not otherwise have learned from. And I wouldn't be here tonight, talking with you, if I hadn't done that time in jail."

Asked how he envisions a future without fossil fuels, DeChristopher said, "I envision a more connected age. The fossil fuel era has given us the illusion that we don't need one another." Without having false optimism or believing in a "techno-fix," he said, "we can still stand together in the face of this crisis and support each other in finding ways to get through it." ♦

For more information about Tim, visit his website: <http://www.timdechristopher.org/>

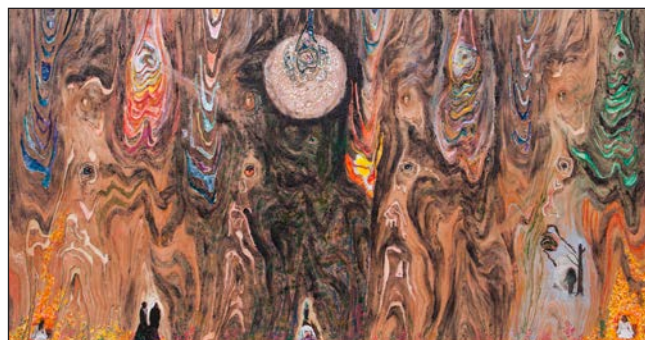
## Connecting To Earth Through Art

*By Ellen Paul, former UUMFE Board, UU Church in the Pines, Weeki Wachee, FL*

**B**onita Tabakin, a long-time friend and member of the UU Church of Rockville, Maryland, is an artist extraordinaire. Through her innovative oil and watercolor canvasses as well as intricate woodcarvings, she honors Earth, trees, and women through her work. She notes, "For eons,

Earth, trees, and women have provided breath for life, health, shelter, solace, and escape. Women foraged, raised children, and grew crops. They banded together forming tribes, and these tribes transformed into civilizations." Hence she celebrates women and nature at the core of our very existence.

The media she uses reinforce her message. For instance, she deliberately repurposes wood to create artwork that demonstrates the interconnectivity of our world. Similarly, she colors handmade fibers, one strand at a time, and adheres the strands to wood or canvas, creating one-of-a-kind mixed media originals. The result is art that challenges viewers to explore their relationship with the Earth.



*"Out of the Wood" by Bonita Tabakin, 2016*

"Out of the Wood" (above), one of her newest creations, has deep carvings and inlays. It will appear on the cover of International/National Optometrist Annual Research Catalog, "Syntonics." Bonita rescued the beautiful slab of wood from a facility that processes wood chips!

Of her carved wood pieces, Bonita comments, "Wood . . . (is) the oxygen of our life and planet; our shelters; our heat. Like women, trees provide nurturing, are leaders, deed doers. What better way to honor the Trees of Life than through the kinetic vigorous work of wood relief mainly from recycled woods? The fibers and oils are selectively represented in specific colors, which cause healing waves to permeate your body via the eyes."

Bonita has exhibited her Earth-honoring art

around the world. During 2015 she participated in juried shows in Scotland, Rome, Florence, Berlin, and Morocco. She will participate in a show in Venice, Italy later in 2016. She also exhibits frequently in the Washington, DC Metro area. ♦



This year's Lifespan Religious Education (LRE) summer conference for all ages will be at Star Island from July 16-23, 2016, with Tim DeChristopher as the theme speaker. Come learn what sustainability looks like for our faith, the environment, and our friendships. Registration is now open. Learn more about the conference on its website: <http://starreweek.com/>.

## Commit2Respond Announces Climate Justice Month 2016

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

Unitarian Universalists show up to call for climate justice – all of the way from the People's Climate March in New York City in 2014 to our Sacred Public Witness in support of the Lummi Nation in Portland, Oregon last June to witnessing for justice at the United Nations COP21 conference in Paris in December and many points in between. The Commit2Respond campaign is looking to link and amplify our work in the coming months through the second annual Climate Justice month and through outreach from newly formed working groups.

Climate Justice Month 2016 is scheduled from World Water Day, March 22, through Earth Day, April 22. Building on Climate Justice Month 2015, which focused on spiritual grounding and making commitments, Climate Justice Month 2016 will focus on living into our commitments

through collective action. Congregations, faith groups, teams, and families will be invited to take action together. The Commit2Respond.org website will provide links to the UUSC World Water Day action, the UUMFE Earth Day materials, and actions for the weeks between. Visit [www.commit2respond.org/climatejusticemonth](http://www.commit2respond.org/climatejusticemonth) for more information and to sign up.

Commit2Respond is also organizing national calls to action for all UUs focused on climate justice. Focus areas will include follow-up for implementation of the UN COP21 agreements and advocating for including justice in our response to the impacts of climate change.

***“Commit2Respond is a campaign for manifesting the vision of Unitarian Universalism as a leading liberal religious force for climate justice. Our mission is to foster collaboration, coordination, and collective action among UU groups, congregations, and individuals in partnership with frontlines communities and other people of faith, grounded in our awareness of climate change as a moral issue.”***

The Commit2Respond campaign is an unprecedented collaboration of nine UU organizations that have come together and committed to aligning our climate justice. The nine organizations are:

DRUUMM – Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries

LREDA – Liberal Religious Educators Association

UUA – Unitarian Universalist Association

UUCSJ – Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice

UUEJC – Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Collaboratory

UUMA – Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association

UUMFE – Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth

UUSC – Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

UUYACJ – UU Young Adults for Climate Justice ♦



## Save the Date for General Assembly in Columbus, OH

The theme of the 2016 GA, is “Heart Land: Where Faiths Connect.” From June 22-26,



thousands of UUs will assemble with leaders and communities of many faiths to worship together,

learn from one another, and create a new vision of faith that no longer divides us, but connects us to an interdependent future that works for all. UU Ministry for Earth will be there – join us!

## Why I’m Not That Enthusiastic About the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement (Part One\*)

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

*(Editor’s note: all photos are from Aly’s camera, taken by her or a friend; most are interesting activist creations she found around Paris)*

I went to COP21 and corresponding protests in LeBourget and Paris, France, Dec. 7 through Dec.12. Though I am a faith-based climate activist, I went solely as an uncredentialed individual, only representing Unitarian Universalism through my words and my actions while wearing a yellow, UU “Standing on the Side of Love” shirt on my back.

While in France, I posted three updates online at <http://www.uuyacj.org/news--updates>, but there’s a lot that I witnessed and haven’t shared in writing before now. My second day in Paris, I was hopping between two panels. One was a panel of frontline anti-frackers in the USA introduced by Bill McKibben, which happened at the same time as a serious disruption of a panel of US and Canadian public officials (from Vermont, California, Washington and Quebec) to dissent

and protest fracked gas pipelines, new coastal export terminal projects, and the cap-and-trade “market-based-solution” to reducing greenhouse gas emissions occurring in these states and province.

I have a tendency to tuck safely behind my camera to silently document such moments, but I joined in the raucous back talk this time, encouraged by the strength and chemistry of the audience. I’d already stayed quiet behind my camera once that day, to my own serious frustration and disappointment. See, my number one goal in traveling to Paris was to push myself to new levels of courage and voice.

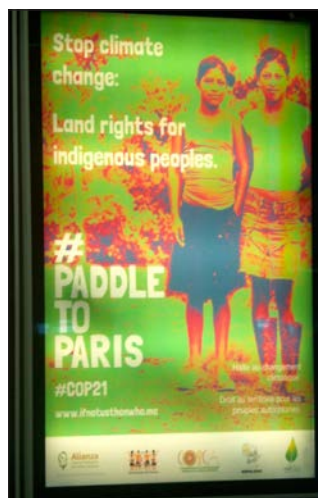
Just before the fracking front-lines panel had been a panel in the same room titled “Is Nuclear Energy part of the solution in the fight against Climate Change” that I caught the last six minutes of. Everyone was holding a free booklet called “Climate Gamble: Is Anti-Nuclear Activism Endangering Our Future,” and a member of the audience asked the panel to name specific



*Aly in Exhibit Hall*

unethical practices related to nuclear energy and what the industry was doing about them. Two panelists answered: Ben Heard, consultant of

ThinkClimate Consulting, and Rauli Partanen, co-author of the anti-anti-nuclear booklet in my hand.



a complex, multifaceted issue. So it comes up...” Heard went on to say that major human and environmental damages are seen across the board in industrial scale energy production, saying, “it’s very important to take a moment to question whether what we are arguing about is social justice imperatives – which are universal – versus something which is actually a specific issue related to nuclear energy.” He went on to say that because unethical and harmful practices from uranium mining are “not particularly better or worse” than those of other extractive industries, we need to be evaluating and judging extractive industries based on “impact per unit of energy” – therefore making nuclear the best option. Partanen did the same thing, with a little less verbosity.

This is where I wish I had broken my silence . . . and where people in the audience were wishing that someone would. As the panel ended and the audience began moving in different directions, I overheard two men standing next to me:

“Wow, that was scary! Where are the activists?”

“I don’t know . . .”

Oof. I so badly wanted to challenge Mr. Ben Heard’s assertions, and I didn’t.

YES, this is about social justice imperatives (and YES there are impacts unique to uranium

mining). I’m no expert but I know the vast majority of uranium deposits globally are on Indigenous lands, and that Indigenous peoples have historically been hardest hit by improper radioactive waste disposal, failure to protect workers, nuclear weapons testing, abandoned contaminated sites, and the list goes on.

Even so, the fact that every industrial energy source has negative impacts – even arguably negative impacts that disrespect the rights of Indigenous people – does not mean we get to write off these damages and ignore social justice imperatives, justifying and determining sacrifice zones on a basis of impact per unit of energy. Not in the world I stand for.

Such a framework is a form of neo-colonialism, though Ben Heard prefers to think of it as eco-modernism. His colonial imperative and disregard for Aboriginal land rights is easily observed in his use of language: “Indigenous Australians,” “countries with a history of Indigenous occupation,” the double-standard that Aboriginal people have a unified voice in order to

be legitimate (yet look at the politically fractured nature of just about every respected developed nation) . . .

Upon greater research I have learned that about 80 percent of Australia’s uranium deposits are on Aboriginal lands and that the 1978 “Ranger Uranium Agreement” gave Aboriginal communities only 4.5 percent of revenue from uranium mine royalties. Here is the social justice imperative nuclear power advocates have historically violated and opted not to utter at COP21: “Indigenous peoples have the right to the



lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.” (UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007).

Nuclear energy is only a major “climate solution” in a world where it’s okay to rip-off and poison Indigenous communities and other politically disenfranchised people because sustaining and expanding commodities markets and a certain way of life is deemed more important. This fits the bill of some predominant societal worldviews – but doesn’t add up in the world we stand for as Unitarian Universalists: one with justice, equity and compassion in all human relations.

***“... lands occupied and/or controlled by Indigenous Peoples represent 22 percent of the world’s land surface and coincide with places holding 80 percent of the world’s biodiversity.”***

This is incredibly relevant to finding just and sustainable responses to climate change



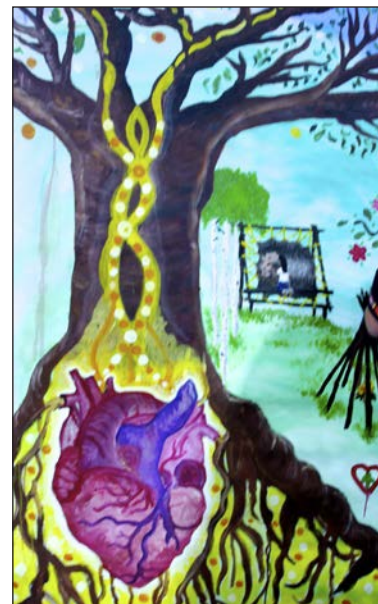
and global biome devastation, because lands occupied and/or controlled by Indigenous Peoples represent 22 percent of the world’s land surface and coincide with places holding 80% of the world’s biodiversity (Source: “Cap and Clear Cut” by Will Parrish,

Counterpunch.org, 2/12/16; Original source: World Bank, 2008).

Colonization continues. That these lands and people are represented at the official negotiating table of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change by Nation States who regularly coerce and sell them out for profit, and are only recognized to

speak as “special interests” . . . well, it’s not right. It’s a result and continuation of systemic advantage for colonial, imperialist interests.

Undoubtedly this lack of direct representation has something to do with why, although there is recognition of the need for climate action to respect the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (as defined in the



2007 UN declaration), there is no establishment of mechanisms to ensure this actually happens.

And wouldn’t you know: just after the vote to adopt the Paris Agreement, Ecuador is moving to auction three million hectares of Amazon Rainforest to Chinese fossil fuel interests without the free, prior, informed consent of these parcels’ Indigenous inhabitants. Recognizing and upholding Indigenous land rights should be part of global climate action, and it is not.

The bulk of the Paris Agreement is about facilitating technological and financial resource transfers between Nation States for climate change adaptation and reducing atmospheric greenhouse gases, and everything is considered along categorical lines of market and nonmarket solutions.

One such “market-based solution” is a joint program of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, UN Development Programme, UN Environment Programme, World Bank, and State and private partners: REDD+. “REDD” stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation.

Rather than seeking to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation by stopping





*Doris Marlin, Aly Tharp, and David Tucker at multifaith COP21 sharing event at the American Cathedral in Paris.*

the clear-cutting and fossil fuel extraction for global markets on Indigenous forest lands without free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous nations . . . something that would be morally just and have a significant impact on reducing industrial greenhouse gas emissions and creating market pressure for a rapid shift to renewable energy . . . REDD+ is focused on trying to make it more profitable to leave a tree in the ground rather than log or burn it by marketing the carbon sequestration of trees in the Global South on a commodities market for States and private entities seeking to at least appear to be reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. From the UN's REDD website (<http://unredd.net>):

"Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) is a mechanism being developed by Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It creates a financial value for the carbon stored in forests by offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development. Developing countries would receive results-based payments for results-based actions. REDD+ goes beyond simply deforestation and forest degradation, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks."

Conservation efforts and Indigenous rights often come into conflict, and REDD+ could very well go down in history as a poster-child of this dynamic. It directly incentivizes State and private-entity management of previously wild places and indirectly increases incentives for these powerful actors to displace Indigenous forest peoples in order to garner more control over forests that are now worth something on a carbon commodities exchange market. Some Indigenous nations are establishing REDD+ projects in no small part to deter such forces, though many others still resist on the basis that it is fundamentally wrong and violates the rights of nature to commodify a natural life-cycle (carbon) in this way. Meanwhile, industrial polluters in the Global North are paying for REDD+ offsets instead of really reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. Perhaps you can see why climate justice activists are labeling this program "CO2lonialism".

Evictions of Indigenous peoples for REDD+ and similar programs have already occurred in many parts of the world – yet you are unlikely to hear about it, in part because of widespread prejudice and racism, but secondly because the program's managers are still trying to garner confidence in the project from potential investors. Therefore, it's in their best interest to cover up conflicts and failures. A good source of news on this complex topic is [www.redd-monitor.org](http://www.redd-monitor.org).

Though the World Bank and UN's REDD+ program is not explicitly referenced, the Paris



Agreement and proposal that was passed to adopt it mention “reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation” through “policy approaches and positive incentives” (i.e. REDD+) twice, and encourage this be funded through the Green Climate Fund and other sources.



Many Unitarian Universalists, including the six who attended as observers to the UNFCCC COP21 representing the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), applaud the passing of the Paris Agreement and are advocating for the USA to meet its commitments to finance the

UNFCCC Green Climate Fund. I hesitate, on the basis that the Green Climate Fund can be used to finance REDD+, and respectfully disagree that “We need to replace the ‘road to Paris’ with the ‘superhighway from Paris’ to implement the Paris Agreement.” ([http://www.commit2respond.org/a\\_monumental\\_achievement](http://www.commit2respond.org/a_monumental_achievement)).

I don’t dispute that the USA should take meaningful climate action and put resources towards helping communities who are already suffering the effects of climate change (the true premise of the Green Climate Fund). However I think we need to slow down (just about everything) and question the predominance, morality and effectiveness of market-based solutions within a market historically and presently built upon human rights violations and a

fundamentally unsustainable growth-paradigm . . . and perhaps stop thinking in terms of automobile metaphors.

Don’t put me in the “parking lot” when I say, “We need to do more to politically recognize and protect the Rights of Indigenous People.” Not saying so is easier – as demonstrated by myself and everyone involved in the anti-anti-nuclear panel at COP21 mentioned earlier – in fact it’s what most humans alive today have been conditioned to do. As a faith nearly four years deep into the work of repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery (theology of divine imperialism), we are in our learning curve. We have to question what we are doing, where we are heading, and who will be there with us. ♦

\*To be continued – watch for Part 2 in the UUMFE Spring newsletter.



Sunday Soul is an eight-week partnership between the Church of the Larger Fellowship and First Unitarian, Portland, OR that brings a creative worship experience to online viewers all over the world. Check it out at <http://www.sundaysoul.org/>. The last four services will be on climate justice; Tim DeChristopher will be there March 6.

### Your Support Is Needed and Appreciated – Please Consider a Donation

This issue of the UUMFE newsletter highlights exciting projects that depend on you, our supporters. Your donations make possible the work towards Earth ministry as an integral part of our Unitarian Universalist experience. Go to [www.uuministryforearth.org](http://www.uuministryforearth.org) for donation options, as well as many UUMFE resources, e.g., our revised environmental justice curriculum. Thank you for your generosity.



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST  
MINISTRY FOR EARTH

1034 SW 13th Ave. • Portland, OR 97205 • 503-595-9392  
[office@uuministryforearth.org](mailto:office@uuministryforearth.org) • [uuministryforearth.org](http://uuministryforearth.org)