



# Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth

*formerly The Seventh Principle Project*  
**Sponsors of the Green Sanctuary Program**

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Box 11, Lyme, NH 03768 / 301-588-0944 / [office@uuministryforearth.org](mailto:office@uuministryforearth.org) / [www.uuministryforearth.org](http://www.uuministryforearth.org)

September 26, 2006

Towson UU Church  
Green Sanctuary Committee  
Uta Hussong and Michelle Collins, Co-chairs  
1710 Dulaney Valley Road  
Lutherville, MD 21093

Dear Committee:

With this letter, the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth is very pleased to formally welcome Towson Unitarian Universalist Church into the community of Green Sanctuary candidate congregations. The Green Sanctuary Review Committee has examined your application and we are looking forward to your proposed accomplishments.

You have done a good job of tracking energy use for your congregation, but as I'm sure you recognize, usage is only one aspect of an energy audit. Many congregations find that a professional audit is well worth the costs. It will identify energy "leaks" in your building, adequacy of your HVAC system, hidden uses that you may not be aware of, and cost-effectiveness of alternative mitigation strategies to lower your overall usage. We don't track sources for this expertise since every community has different options, but the place to start is your energy provider. I believe the Washington Area Interfaith Power & Light can also direct you to sources for audit expertise. I can also connect you with the person who coordinated the audit for All Souls Church in Washington DC. Let me know if that would be helpful.

The rest of your environmental audit covered a variety of management practices for your facility, but the summary table you provided doesn't evaluate the findings in a way that leads you to decide how to respond in your action plan. It's usually helpful to identify your priorities to help decide what to change right away, and what can be postponed or ignored. Criteria such as cost, complexity of changes, significance of the issue, and the congregation's interest can be used to make decisions on how to respond.

Your audit also did not address Church programs. We found ourselves wondering if two environmentally focused worship services are enough without knowing what your current practices already include. We liked the ideas for RE that you listed in the Action Plan, but we didn't have a context for evaluating whether they are new or ongoing, and what changes you hope will result from these education programs. Similar questions came to mind for the two environmental justice projects you have proposed.

We would like to suggest that, before you move ahead on most of these projects, you should review your current situation for all Church programs and consider your objectives for the proposed activities. Clarifying this will help you design the specific activities and promote them to the congregation in ways that will encourage broader participation by your members and lead to greater program effectiveness.

We are intrigued with both of your proposed environmental justice projects. If we can assume these are programs the congregation is already supporting and participating in, it should be fairly easy to expand them to include the environmental focus as you propose. It may be a challenge to get support from the program managers for your "Green Education Unit" for Sarah's Hope. The reality is that people moving from homeless shelters to more permanent housing may be feeling enough pressures that they aren't as receptive to energy conservation as we might hope. If you don't get the support you need for this particular program, there may be other ways to promote conservation among those who most need the cost-effectiveness benefits. I know that the UU Affordable Housing Corporation has expressed interest in green building and energy conservation, but so far no one has stepped forward to design a program they could include in their portfolio. That may be a place to find a receptive audience for a project of this importance.

As you develop specific project plans, please keep me posted on your progress, and do let me know if you have questions or concerns as you move forward. We look forward to your continuing progress as you work towards becoming a Green Sanctuary. Congratulations and welcome to the Green Sanctuary movement!

With Hope for the Earth,  
*Katherine*

Rev. Katherine Jesch  
Director of Environmental Ministry  
503-236-3634  
Katherine.Jesch@uuministryforearth.org