

UUA Green Sanctuary 2030: Mobilizing for Climate Justice

A Roadmap for Congregations to Rise to the Crisis

OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia (UUCC)

Introduction

The Opportunity Assessment is a tool to help GS teams identify (a) the **congregation's current status** with respect to climate action and (b) the **opportunities and challenges to moving climate action forward**. GS teams use the assessment to prepare action plans that include **four campaigns**:

I. Congregational transformation

II. Mitigation

III. Adaptation & Resiliency

IV. Justice

In conducting and reporting the assessment, GS teams are encouraged to:

1. Focus on the assessment as the foundation for the action plan.
2. Use both (a) the Opportunity Assessment Guidelines (which will be used by the review team to provide feedback on the plan) and (b) the description of the Action Plan as guidance as to expectations for the assessment.
3. Be selective and spend time and resources where those will be most impactful in the transformation and climate-action work of the congregation.

Suggestions (not prescriptions!) for information gathering and discussion for each campaign are provided. Some suggestions are likely irrelevant to some congregations, while issues not suggested may be very relevant.

I. Congregational Transformation

In this section, the Green Sanctuary team explores the broad context of the congregation's current focus on climate change and climate action to (a) **identify potential options for the action plan** and (b) to

establish baselines for measuring impacts. Questions are suggested (not prescribed!) in several areas, as follows.

1. Awareness, commitment, and spiritual and emotional grounding for the work

a) To what extent is climate change addressed in your congregation's:

- Vision, mission, goals, and/or policies and procedures?
 1. The Green Sanctuary work has been formally Chartered by our Board of Trustees.
 2. We use the policy governance model for our congregation and have proposed a new Ends statement for consideration by the Board, with hopes of eventual adoption by the congregation.
 3. Climate change is not currently explicit in our vision, mission or congregational covenant. These documents are in the process of being updated. **This is an opportunity.**
 4. The UCC Green Sanctuary Team requested that the Board of Trustees include the following as an Open Question: "How shall we become a congregation inspired to work within our community for environmental justice? This question is now part of a small group listening program.
- Website, newsletter, announcements, and/or bulletin boards, etc?

Our website has links to all the ongoing Action & Advocacy work related to climate change:



About Us

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia, adhering to the Seventh Principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association—respect the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part—has established the UUCC Climate Crisis (2U4C) Team to explore all possible ways and means to mitigate the effects of climate change and preserve our planet. Contact Mary Rodgers or climateaction@uucolumbia.net.

Participate



Events

- January 12, 7-8:30pm (through May 25), *All We Can Save—Truth, Courage & Solutions for the Climate Crisis* class first meeting (2nd and 4th Wednesdays section)
- February 26, 11am-1pm, Volunteer Farm and Garden Activity for all Ages at CEI Columbia

Current Activities

HR1/S1

Please help support **HR1/S1!** The fight for HR1/S1 (and HR4) has outsized implications for every social justice issue, including climate change, racial justice, health care, immigration, police reform, tax reform and economic justice. If we cannot pass the popular pro-democracy HR1/S1 and HR4 bills, there is near zero chance that we can pass any other social justice bills! Even if we did, if we don't stop voter suppression and gerrymandering via HR1/S1 and HR4, any progress could be reversed in the next Congress.

Social Justice Impacts of the Climate Crisis

The climate crisis disproportionately adversely affects the poor and the less powerful, while it is disproportionately caused by the rich and powerful. In 2022, the UUCC Climate Crisis Team will focus the first half of 2022 on Climate Justice* and those affected, and the second half on the causes.

[Read More](#)

Questions? New to this group? If you have interest, ideas, or questions, or want to join the Planning Team, please email climateaction@uucolumbia.net.

Annual Climate Meeting

UUCC's [Climate Annual Meeting and Call to Action](#) took place on November 7, 2021, and empowered members and friends to get involved and help set our direction for 2022. [See Presentation](#)

- b) What is the knowledge of climate change and commitment to climate action for; [information below is based on our Q3-2021 Survey results:](#)

- Members and friends - (self-described) 46% are aware of the issues and Strongly Committed, 41% are aware and Moderately Committed, 10% describe themselves as being Aware of the Issues, 2% Still Learning and no one described themselves as Not Committed
 - Justice teams - (in the opinion of members/friends) 54% of respondents feel that congregational social justice leaders do not make clear connections between their work and climate activism. **This is an opportunity.**
 - Pastoral care team - not specifically surveyed
 - Small group ministry team - not specifically surveyed (lay led)
 - Ministerial team - (in the opinion of members/friends) 45% see them as Aware of the Issues and Moderately Committed, 29% as Strongly Committed, 21% as Aware of the Issues, 2% Still Learning, 1% Not Committed and 2% did not answer the question
 - Board members and congregational leaders - (in the opinion of members/friends) 41% see them as Aware of the Issues and Moderately Committed, 26% as Strongly Committed, 26% as Aware of the Issues, and 4% as Still Learning, 2% did not answer the question
- c) What are the likely opportunities and challenges to increasing the congregation's awareness and engagement in transformative climate action?

1. Opportunities:

- a. Address Climate Change specifically with revised Vision, mission, goals, and/or policies and procedures.
- b. Provide/create continuing educational opportunities for all groups mentioned above.
 - i. 67% of respondents indicated they would be interested in participating in a religious education program focused on environmental justice.
 - ii. 89% of respondents had not tried to calculate their carbon footprint.
- c. Build awareness of specific groups in the congregation that are already working on issues. (40% of those surveyed could not name any committees or specific activities.)
- d. Social justice leaders need to make clearer connections between their work and climate activism.

2. Challenges:

- a. COVID19 has made communications and hosting events more challenging.
- b. Educational opportunities compete with many other initiatives that grab our members' attention.

2. Current and recent work

a) What climate and/or environmental work is ongoing or recently completed? What issues are/were addressed?

i. Advocacy

- UUCC co-sponsors the Earth Forum in Howard County
- The UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) is a member of several environmental, climate and justice seeking coalitions that work to influence the MD Legislature on climate related issues. UUCC member Phil Webster is the UULM-MD task lead on climate.
- We host a yearly forum for UUCC members, prior to the Maryland General Assembly's session. There is a presentation of climate and environmental justice (EJ) bills that UULM-MD will support.
- UUCC was very involved in the UU the Vote program. Climate change was a driving force in our actions.

ii. Consumerism & Overconsumption

- Summer 2021 - monthly small-group discussions on "Living Intentionally"
- Film - "Having More by Having Less", April 11, 2021

iii. Covid19 Pandemic and Climate Crisis

- Educational materials shared on UUCC website

iv. Environmental Justice

- Educational materials shared on UUCC website
- Four recent worship services (include dates and topics):
 - UUCC Service "Environmental Human Rights" February 20, 2022, Rev. Paige Getty, Staci Hartwell (NAACP MD Environmental & Climate Justice Committee Chair), Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin (Co-founder and Director, MD Campaign for Environmental Human Rights)
 - UUCC Service "Environmental Justice: Living Our UU Principles" Apr 18 2021, Brook Ambercrombie, Tim Lattimer, Staci Hartwell (MD NAACP), Janssen Evelyn (HoCo NAACP), Chiara D'Amore (FreeTown Farm), Chris Crandell, and Mary Rodgers
 - Service "Clean Water is Just", March 14, 2021, Rev Paige Getty and UUCC Climate Action Team
 - UUCC Service "Climate Change as a Social Justice Issue", March 8, 2020, Clif Wright (NAACP), Phyllis Yigdall, Samuel Jordan (Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition) and Phil Webster

- Full list of Forums and other activities - Climate Crisis Archive
<https://uucolumbia.net/climate-change/climate-change-archive/>

v. Food Insecurity

- We have Little Pantries for dry goods and fresh produce that serve the local community.
- Our congregation also supports (20) local families and (4) local elementary schools with food bags and backpacks.

vi. Food Waste

- Efforts to bring composting to our building
- Climate Forum - "Taming Residential Food Waste", Aug 18, 2021
- Food Waste Workshop, March 7, 2021
- Film - "Wasted! The Story of Food Waste" hosted by Anthony Bourdain, May 19, 2020
- Educational materials shared on UUCC website

vii. Plant-rich Diet

- Meatless Mondays Cookbook developed with contributions by congregants and available online
- The Vegetarian (virtual) Cooking Show (completed Seasons 1 and 2; season 3 to start in March 2022)
- Webinar - "Moderation in All Things: Moving Toward a Plant-Based Diet", Sept 1, 2021
- Climate Forum - "Does What We Eat Matter?", Feb 2, 2020

viii. Plastics

- Climate Forum "Plastic Chemical Recycling: Solution or Industry Hoax?", May 2, 2021
- Film - "The Story of Plastic", Feb 10, 2020
- Film - "Plastic Pollution and the Solutions", Dec 6, 2020
- Educational materials shared on UUCC website

ix. Renewable Energy

- Offering partnerships with Neighborhood Sun solar farms in our area to congregants. Over 60 UUCC members have joined Neighborhood Sun.
- Neighborhood Sun contract for our building electricity, saving us 5% on the cost of electricity.
- Climate F

x. Women & Girls Advocacy

- This subcommittee is planned to focus on advocating for issues by supporting legislation and funding for education, family planning, health and well-being of women and girls.

- March 2020-Sponsored Second Sunday Offering recipient, Unchained at Last (end child marriage) and speaker, Director Fraidy Riese
- May 2021-Participated in selection of Second Sunday Offering recipient, National Asian Pacific Women’s Rights Forum (2021)
- March 2021 Presented a Watch Party and discussion featuring short videos showing the strong connection between women’s rights and climate change for International Women’s Day
- Educational material and volunteer and donation resources shared on UUCC website
- Note : The Second Sunday offering and presentations involved the whole congregation. 17 people attended the Watch Party.

xi. Regenerative Landscaping

- Co-sponsored two Environmental Webinar Series by Dr. Sara Via, one with six webinars in 2020 and the second with seven webinars in 2021. Hundreds of people attend the live sessions and recordings are available for viewing on the Internet.
- Installed native plant pollinator garden on OBIC grounds (Ann Wing and Sara Via, with assistance from several UUCC volunteers)
- Cleaned up OBIC rain garden and installed more native plants (Ann Wing)
- Climate Forum - “Regenerative Landscaping - Lawn Alternatives to Help Save the Planet”, June 7, 2020

xii. Living Intentionally

- Class - “Living Intentionally”, completed Nov 14, 2021
- “Living Intentionally” presentation by Jill Kanto, Aug 11, 2021

Is/was this work the focus of a small group of members/friends or is/was there broad engagement? Our Climate Forum kick-off was held in 2018 and was attended by 56 people. In 2019, 60 people attended the session on Drawdown. In 2020 and 2021, we had 50 and 40 attendees at our virtual programs.

b. To what extent is/was the work done in collaboration with:

- Other congregational teams or committees? We have one steering committee for Climate action (2U4C) which brings all these projects together and helps to coordinate efforts for maximum results.
- Faith groups? The UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) joins together the 25 UU congregations in Maryland. UUCC is also in coalitions with InterFaith Power and Light, the Interfaith Partners of the Chesapeake.

- Secular organizations? UULM-MD works in coalition with many secular organizations. Examples include Maryland Legislative Coalition - Climate Justice Wing, the Sierra Club, Maryland Campaign for Environmental Human Rights, Chesapeake Climate Action Network. UUCC is in coalition with People Acting Together Howard (PATH), the Ecology Institute, the Earth Forum of Howard County and Indivisible of Howard County. UUCC youth are active in the Sunrise Movement.
 - Frontline and/or fence-line communities? UULM-MD is in coalition with the Maryland Transportation Coalition which includes several frontline and fence-line community organizations from the Baltimore region.
- c. What are the opportunities and challenges to increased engagement and collaboration of the congregation in transformative climate work?
- 1. Opportunities:**
 - a. Increase exposure of activities outside the congregation so others can join
 - b. Increase engagement with other interfaith groups – i.e. Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake
 - c. Identify frontline/fenceline communities where we can be an ally
 - 2. Challenges:**
 - a. COVID19 has limited our ability to gather.
 - b. Connecting in a meaningful way with frontline/fenceline communities
3. Worship and celebration
- a) How and to what extent is climate change, including spiritual grounding for ongoing climate work, incorporated into regular services, such as sermons, readings, meditations, music, rituals, etc. In recent years, our Climate Action team has organized annual worship services focusing on Climate Change / Climate Chaos / Climate Justice. The minister has increasingly supported Climate related topics, with 2-4 sermons per year now specifically devoted to Climate Change and/or Climate Justice. The Climate Crisis Team provides a Green Minute 3-4 times a year during the service to bring attention to climate and justice issues.
 - b) What worship or spiritual practices are or have been used to deepen connections with the interdependent web of all existence of which we are part? Examples include eco-spirituality vespers, a covenant group with an environmental theme, etc. The minister and worship leaders deliberately look to our UU covenant – principles and sources – when planning worship, and we strive to incorporate them all regularly in our services. It is accepted that the 7th principle and 6th source are no less (and no more) important than any of the others. It's impossible to quantify the number of times Earth wisdom is specifically integrated into any one service, but it's

always among the guiding elements as we consider what's important. The minister typically focuses on the Earth in at least one of her services in the spring, sometime around Mother's Day, or at the end of April near Earth Day.

Most years, UUCC's earth-based spirituality group, Turning Circle, also leads two worship services – one celebrating Winter Solstice, and one celebrating Summer Solstice. Additionally, Turning Circle invites all community members to their other rituals (May Day, equinox services, etc.) throughout the year.

- c) What are the likely opportunities and challenges to an increased focus on transformative climate change in worship & celebration?

1. Opportunities:

- a. Increase incorporation of spiritual grounding for climate justice work into our regular services.
- b. Consider more spiritual practices which help to deepen our connections to the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

2. Challenges:

- a. Competing demands for time and attention.

4. Religious education/exploration/faith formation

- a) To what extent does RE/faith formation focus on the interconnected web of all existence? What lessons/activities are used?

- Children and youth - Children's Chapel and individual lessons in each of our elementary curricula refer to our 7th principle. Also, when we have lessons or chapels about nature or caring for the earth, we make sure to talk about how that is part of our principles. This happens from kindergarten (with Spirit Play) up through middle school. Other activities include: walks around our Owen Brown community to pick up trash, guests coming to class to teach us about animals, (e.g. butterflies, service animals), building solar ovens and using those ovens to sell items with the proceeds going to environmental causes. Prior to the pandemic and cessation of in-person services, the youth group (YRUU) was very involved in developing plans for composting and reducing the use of plastics in UUCC events.
- Young adults - Our young adult group has a monthly workday at the Community Ecology Institute (Freetown Farm) and they are exploring opportunities for partnerships with other local groups like Upcycled <https://www.goupcycled.com/> .

- Adults - We are currently running “All We Can Save Circle” discussion group and last year we provided a class on “Living Intentionally” which was very well-attended.
- Intergenerational - We frequently take what we’ve learned with RE classes “upstairs” to coffee hour to share our learning. Our most successful intergenerational programs have happened over the summer when we have more interaction with adults who aren’t normally in religious education classes.
 - 2017 - We used a curriculum from Tapestry of Faith called Circle of Trees. This is a program that explicitly nurtures a deep connection with trees, nature, and all of earth’s living creatures.
 - 2018 - We ran a Summer of Kindness and several of the lessons included caring for the earth and her creatures.
 - 2019 - We used a Harry Potter curriculum with explicit lessons on caring for the earth, including the investigation and successful application for a Wildlife Habitat certification from the National Wildlife Federation for the land around our building.
 - 2022 - UULM-MD is implementing a project for kids to make works of art about the impacts of climate change. UUCC’s DRE was a leader in this activity and UUCC was the first Congregation to provide works of art which have been presented during hearings by the Environment and Transportation Committee in the Maryland General Assembly.

b) What are the likely opportunities and challenges to an increased focus on climate change in RE/faith formation?

1. Opportunities:

- a. Create more targeted and inclusionary Young Adult and Adult RE opportunities for RE/faith formation focuses on the interdependent web of all existence.

2. Challenges:

- a. Making these opportunities attractive for individuals who are often time challenged.

5. Congregational life

a) In what other areas of congregational life, and to what extent, is climate change awareness and activism present? Examples might include social gatherings, outreach, justice work, etc.

- From a congregational operations perspective, we have significantly reduced our use of paper for programs, mailings, etc., which conserves paper and ink and energy.
- We have eliminated the use of candles on a weekly basis and have incorporated pebbles and water for our Joys & Sorrows ritual instead.

- Prior to the cessation of in-person worship, UUCC was developing plans to reduce (and hopefully) eliminate plastic from UUCC events.
 - We are investigating the feasibility of composting, either on our site or through Howard County.
 - The Climate Action Team, through a generous donation, conducted an energy audit of our building. The results have been presented to the building management (OBIC) for consideration and implementation.
- b) How would you describe efforts to support the spiritual, emotional and values-based lives of the congregants and congregation as a whole? As noted above, we recently offered a “Living Intentionally” class and currently we are offering an “All We Can Save Circle” discussion group.
- c) What are the likely opportunities and challenges to an increased focus on climate change in congregational life?
1. **Opportunities:**
 - a. Propose a congregational vote to focus specifically on Climate issues for one year. (Mt Vernon UU did this and then they extended for a 2nd year.)
 2. **Challenges:**
 - a. Competing topics of interest
- d) What might “**congregational transformation**” be like for your congregation?

GOALS for Transformation:

- Shift from a small group (2U4C) working on climate “on behalf of the congregation” to each aspect of congregational life taking their part over the long-term.
- Deepen the spiritual and emotional capacity necessary to remain aware of very difficult information, strategize and act in complex situations with no guarantee of success, and continue to choose learning and acting to positively impact the trajectory of climate change.
- Change resources (and necessary infrastructures) of the congregation, member and friend households and our local community with the goal to restore balance in ecosystems and our human community.
- Assess congregational choices through the lens of the connection between climate change, racism and classism, and build accountable relationships across these.
- Gain skills and practice climate change work in accountable, collaborative relationships, or in solidarity, with systematically oppressed communities.

II. Mitigation

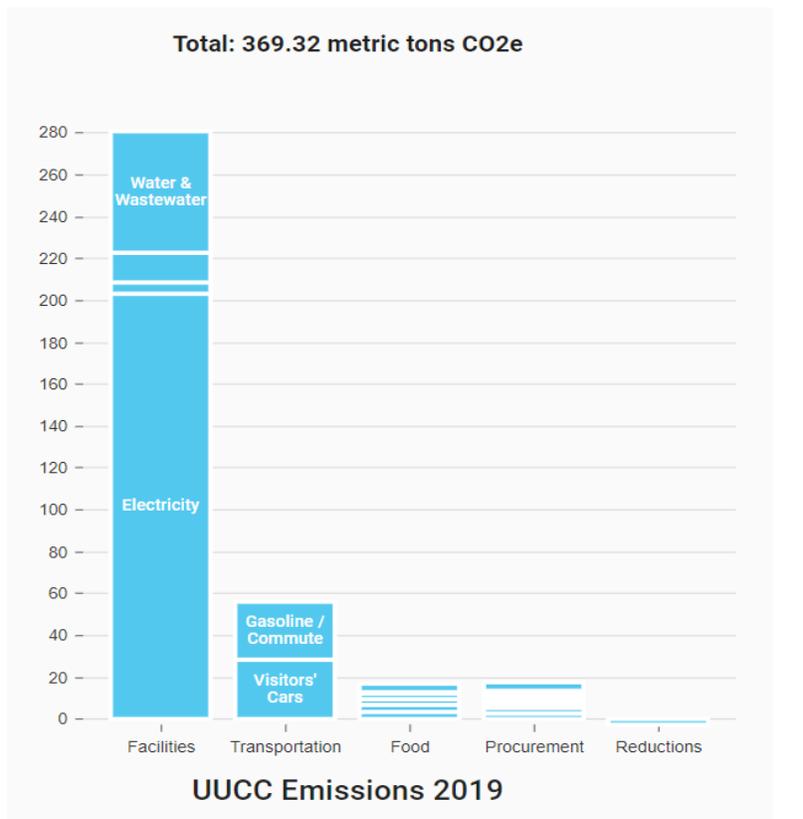
Mitigation is action to reduce carbon emissions, which are the primary cause of climate change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to limit temperature increase to 1.5 °C and avoid the worst impacts of climate change, human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide must fall by about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030 and reach [net zero](#) around 2050.

In this section, the GS team focuses on opportunities to reduce carbon emissions to (a) identify potential options for inclusion in the action plan and (b) to establish baselines for measuring impacts. Resources are provided [here](#), and the following domains and questions are [offered](#) as suggestions.

1. Facility emissions

- a. What is the carbon footprint of your facility, and how was it measured?

UUCC used Interfaith Power and Light’s Cool Congregations Calculator to determine OBIC’s baseline, using 2019 as our baseline year, as it was our last year of full occupancy and normal operations before COVID19. Other than for Kilowatt hours for electricity, average miles driven, and percent electric vehicles, we used the default values in the calculator. An estimate of our carbon footprint is shown below.



- b. What are the most impactful and cost-effective ways to lower that footprint? An energy audit, either professional or [self-conducted](#), is encouraged to help identify those options, which may include weatherization, insulation, lighting, new appliances/equipment, heat pumps, solar, [carbon offsets](#), etc.

A professional energy audit was conducted for our building in August 2020 to help identify opportunities. The audit results included:

- c. Replace faucet aerators
- d. Humidity equipment installation
- e. Upgrade exterior and interior lighting
- f. Building weatherization
- g. Appliance upgrades
- h. HVAC retro-commissioning
- i. Capital upgrades - heat pump replacement; possible solar project

OBIC has entered into a Contract with Neighborhood Sun, a program with our energy provider to purchase solar energy directly from a solar project in our community.

We have planned a green roof to be installed over the entrance to our facility.

- c. What is your carbon-reduction goal for the facility? [UUCC/OBIC currently does not have a goal, however, we would like to set a goal of 45% reduction from 2010 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2050, or sooner. This will need congregational/Board and building management \(OBIC\) approval.](#)
- d. What are the likely opportunities and challenges to achieving that goal?

1. Opportunities:

- a. Formalize our reduction commitments so they can be a basis for decision-making going forward.
- b. Continue to use, and expand, if possible, Community Solar (a program started in late 2021, where we are part of a solar energy project (solar farm) in our county.
- c. Replace our heat pumps with the most efficient heat pumps available when they must be replaced and develop a maintenance/replacement roadmap.
- d. Implement other energy audit recommendations that are low or no cost.

2. Challenges:

- a. Achieving Congregational/Board and OBIC buy-in for this goal.
- b. The availability of funds. Both UUCC and CUMC (building co-owner) and the Owen Brown Interfaith Center (OBIC) have had major budget challenges due to COVID19. OBIC had to stop all rentals for a time. OBIC is still recovering financially.

2. Members' and friends' emissions

a) What are the most impactful and feasible opportunities for members and friends to reduce their personal/family carbon footprints? Opportunities may include [home energy use](#), [diet](#), [transportation](#), [carbon offsets](#), and others.

- Measuring Carbon Footprint - UUCC conducted a congregational survey and asked who had calculated their personal carbon footprint or if they were interested in doing so in the future. This is an opportunity we will put in our Action Plan.
- Participate in Community Solar - Informational sessions about how to lower carbon footprint by signing up with our local Community Solar Program, which reduces carbon emissions for households, were held during the last 2 years. This is an opportunity we will put in our Action Plan.
- Plant Based Diet - We currently have two ongoing initiatives in this area: a community sourced vegetarian cookbook on our website, and a series of plant-based (virtual) cooking shows to demonstrate recipes, with participants cooking along. This is an opportunity we will continue and expand in our Action Plan.

b) How can members and friends be encouraged and supported to reduce personal/family emissions?

- We will continue maintaining our website with resources and continue regular informational sessions in reducing and tracking our individual carbon footprints.
- We could create some “challenge” and incentive opportunities.

c) What is your carbon-reduction goal for members and friends?

- UUCC currently does not have a goal. We would like to ask members/friends to set goals of 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030 and net zero around 2050.

d) What are the likely opportunities and challenges to achieving that goal?

1. Opportunities:

- a. Talking about personal and congregational goals can lead to more interest and engagement.
- b. Goals could help to expand congregants' use of Community Solar.
- c. Goals could make individuals more receptive to plant-based eating education and programming.
- d. We can model desired behaviors in all UUCC functions. For example; adjusting thermostats to save energy, eliminating single-use plastics from social activities, banning meats as food from shared meals, asking people to gather for activities on foot, by bicycle or through carpooling.

2. Challenges:

- a. Lack of understanding regarding the value of each small action.
- b. Resistance based on desire for convenience, comfort and/or just natural resistance to change.
- c. We are not yet meeting in-person on a regular basis to help members and friends learn about and complete Carbon Footprint calculators, and to enroll in Community Solar campaigns.
- d. We are not sure how to estimate 2010 levels for 2030 goal benchmarking.
- e. These initiatives compete with many others that seek the attention of our members and friends.

3. Activism

- a) What engagement does your congregation have with local, state, or national climate organizations?
 1. UUCC is active at local and state levels. Our leadership team is part of UULM-MD (the UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland) with other Maryland congregations. We also have an internal legislative group within our Climate Crisis Team that tracks legislation at all levels and informs UUCC members and friends about how they can individually support legislation and requests the congregation (as an organization) support certain actions.
 2. UUCC's Climate Crisis Team also works with our Howard County Climate Action Team, and is currently working at the state level in the environmental justice/human rights area supporting the MD Environmental Human Rights Amendment.
- b) What collaboration does your congregation have with [frontline](#) and/or [fence-line](#) communities?
 1. People Acting Together in Howard County (PATH) is a long-term collaboration, and our minister has been a member of the PATH board. PATH is an interfaith network of organizations in Howard County and is an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) whose mission has been to train people to take responsibility for solving the problems in their own communities and to renew the interest of citizens in public life. To date, prioritized issues have only indirectly involved environmental or climate justice, and this is an opportunity to explore for future action. PATH has been successful in improving public transportation service and affordable housing in mixed income areas.
 2. Howard County NAACP / Environmental and Climate Justice Committee – this is a developing relationship, as the committee is new for our county.

3. Community Ecology Institute and Freeland Farm – this is also a new relationship and we kicked off our volunteer orientation at the end of 2021. This organization works in our community to strengthen and engage connections to nature, civic ecology, community health, and climate action. They also partner with our local NAACP and are looking for ways to partner with indigenous people that were the historic stewards of the land in our area.
- c) What are the likely opportunities and challenges to developing greater engagement with climate organizations and collaboration with frontline and fence-line communities?
1. **Opportunities:**
 - a. PATH, Howard County NAACP, and Community Ecology Institute are all opportunities to engage in fenceline/frontline work in our County.
 2. **Challenges:**
 - a. Howard County’s environmental or climate justice issues are related to being a consumer of energy and producing waste that directly negatively impacts other parts of Maryland. Within Howard County, we have related issues of food security, transportation, and affordable housing.
 - b. It has been challenging for our members and friends to make the connection between racial justice and climate change.
4. Congregational and community engagement
- a) What efforts have been made to encourage and support congregants and the border community in climate action? Our GS/Climate Crisis teams have ongoing education and outreach. For those actions in #3 above, we have a well-established PATH team, and will be working on building such teams for the other two initiatives.
 - b) What are the likely opportunities and challenges to increased congregational and community engagement?
 1. **Opportunities:**
 - a. Based on our survey results, there is a gap between the number of people who are strongly and moderately committed and the number of people who are actually involved. We should be able to tap into this gap to increase participation.
 2. **Challenges:**
 - a. Limited number of volunteers engaging in this and other existing congregational work currently. How can we connect with them?
 - b. Continued limits on in-person activities (due to COVID19) to bring the community into our building for educational and action events.

III. Adaptation and Resilience

Adaptation is the process of (a) reducing vulnerabilities to the harmful effects of climate change (b) making the most of potentially beneficial opportunities associated with positive responses to the crisis.

Resilience is the capacity to maintain function in the face of external stresses created by the climate-change crisis.

In this section, the GS team focuses on opportunities to build adaptations and resiliency to (a) identify potential options for inclusion in the action plan and (b) to establish baselines for measuring impacts.

Questions are suggested within two suggested systems.

1. Human Systems

- a) What planning and preparation has your congregation done with respect to increasingly severe impacts of climate change and other natural disasters, for the facility, members and friends, and the broader community, especially those least able to deal with climate change and/or natural disaster? UUCC has done limited work in this area and establishing a baseline will need to be done with consideration for each of these concerns (facility, congregants, community). The Howard County Climate Action team is looking at the community and we will follow their work closely. OBIC (our facility entity) has not yet looked at resiliency and UUCC, as major owner, will bring this to our Board and the OBIC Board for study.
- b) To what extent has adaptation/resiliency work with the broader community included collaboration with faith-based, secular, or marginalized groups? Part of our Action Plan will be to baseline this work and determine what we can do. Some members have joined Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake and Interfaith Power and Light. UUCC also participates in the local community Warm Welcome Shelter in partnership with Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center, Inc. offering shelter in inclement (cold) weather for one week each winter.
- c) What are the likely opportunities and challenges to better prepare the facility, congregants, and the broader community for climate change and natural disaster?

1. Opportunities:

- a. Baseline OBIC facility physical systems for resilience.
- b. Use Howard County data to identify risks in our local community to our building, congregants' homes, neighborhood resident homes, critical community organizations and businesses.

- c. Learn more about possibilities to expand the use of our building for shelter beyond cold weather.

2. Challenges:

- a. UUCC is not the sole owner of OBIC and a separate board must be motivated/convinced to undertake resiliency work.
 - b. Because we do not have bathing facilities, expanding use of our building for shelter beyond single night cold weather events would require planning and significant investment.
- c) What work has your congregation done to inspire and sustain congregants and the broader community to engage in the long haul of climate action?
- UUCC has an active Climate Crisis Team that works year-round providing educational events.
 - This year we offered an “All We Can Save Circle” (based on the book, All We Can Save edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katharine K. Wilkinson) which is providing support for members who are seeking inspiration and sustenance for their climate work.
 - UUCC members are engaged in climate related organizations and activities beyond UUCC, including the Sierra Club, Howard Conservancy, Howard County Earth Forum, Interfaith Power and Light, and Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake.
- d) What are the likely opportunities and challenges to increase efforts for adaptation and resilience by congregants and the broader community?

1. Opportunities:

- a. Education of congregants and the broader community to enhance understanding of adaptation and resilience.
- b. Use Howard County data to identify risks in the community related to adaptation and resilience and analyze for opportunities.

2. Challenges:

- a. Understanding how best to reach people and where the knowledge gaps are.

2. Natural Systems

- a) What work has your congregation done to protect or enhance local or regional ecosystems threatened by climate change?
 - Our Climate Crisis Team has been active in supporting state and local legislation. Most recently we supported the MD Climate Solutions Now Act of 2021 which includes a goal

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in MD to a level that is 50% lower than it was in 2006 by 2030.

- The Climate Crisis Team co-sponsored a series of webinars about alternative landscaping strategies to reduce the amount of mow-able grass, fertilizers and water runoff. Over 200 people attended the webinars.
- The OBIC facility landscaping committee, headed by UUCC, has been working on our landscaping to make it more climate resilient using native and drought resistant plantings. When we expanded our building, storm drainage was put in and bioretention facilities were created to reduce runoff and protect the outflows during heavy rains.

b) In that work, to what extent has the congregation collaborated with faith-based, secular, or marginalized groups?

- UUCC has collaborated with a professional advisor regarding regenerative landscape to reduce maintenance and water use.
- UUCC collaborates with Christ United Methodist Church (CUMC, OBIC co-owner congregation) in the landscaping of our building.
- We provide food and vegetable pantries outside the OBIC building that assist our neighbors in the food insecurity arena.

c) What are the likely opportunities and challenges to better protect or enhance a local or regional ecosystem?

1. Opportunities:

- a. Continue collaboration with OBIC and CUMC to reduce water use and runoff from our land, as well as the possibility of adding gardens to grow food.
- b. Explore ways to collaborate with our neighbors in the Owen Brown community in this work.
- c. Engage with other Howard County organizations either individually or as a congregation.

2. Challenges:

- a. Since we do not yet fully occupy our building due to COVID, engagement of the community is difficult. However, we do provide food and vegetable pantries outside the building that assist our neighbors in the food insecurity arena.
- b. Environmental initiatives compete with many other initiatives that take our members' attention.

IV. Justice

Climate justice calls for collaboration with communities who experience the reality that the greatest impacts of climate change are disproportionately experienced by on those (a) historically oppressed and least responsible for the crisis (b) with the fewest resources with which to face the crisis while already under environmental stresses, *and* (c) future generations. The intersections of systemic racism, economic & political inequality, and environmental degradation are at the core of climate justice.

In this section, the GS team focuses on climate justice to (a) identify potential options for inclusion in the action plan and (b) to establish baselines for measuring impacts.

1. Understanding and awareness

- a) What work has your congregation done to understand the intersectionality of climate and social justice issues? (Examples include completing [Our Place in the Web of Life](#) or work with [UU Side with Love](#), the [UU College of Social Justice](#), and/or the [UU Coalition of State Action Networks](#).)
 - [Our Place in the Web of Life \(April - June 2020\)](#)
 - [Black Lives Matter](#)
 - [MD Environmental Human Rights Amendment Leadership training and advocacy by some members](#)
- b) To what extent is the intersection of climate and social justice issues understood by the congregation's (a) justice leaders and (b) congregants? [In our survey we asked participants: "Do social justice leaders make clear connections between their work and climate activism?" 54% of respondents said, "No" so this is certainly an opportunity for us to do better.](#)
- c) What are the likely opportunities and challenges to justice leaders and congregants better understanding the intersectionality of climate & social justice?

1. Opportunities:

- a. [We have climate justice topics each month of 2022 to increase understanding of the intersectionality of climate and social justice.](#)
- b. [Make clearer connections about the intersection of climate and social justice issues - especially on the local level in Columbia and in Howard County.](#)

2. Challenges:

- a. [Engagement of UUCC members](#)
- b. [These issues are not obvious so we will need help to accomplish.](#)
- c. [The Howard County NAACP climate justice committee is very new.](#)

2. Collaboration

- a) What work has the congregation done to prepare to be an effective partner/ally of a marginalized community? (Examples include curricula such as [Journey Toward Wholeness](#), [Examining Whiteness](#), & [Dismantling White Privilege](#).)
- Climate Crisis team leaders attended “It Starts with Faith” Organizing School 2021 (Aug 25 - Nov 3, 2021)
 - Session 1: Orientation
 - Session 2: Faithful Social Justice: Telling your story
 - Session 3: Finding Your Role: Building power in faith organizing
 - Session 4: Building Organizing Infrastructure: Leadership Development and Identification
 - Session 5: Facing Conflict: Covenant & Transformation
 - Session 6: Building for a liberated future: Campaigns and program design
 - Session 7: Partnerships in a pandemic and recovery
 - Session 8: Growing your impact: Tools for evaluation and growth
 - Session 9: Meet the Moment: Tactics for Mobilizing Supporters and Contesting Power
 - Beloved Community Training
 - Revolutionary Love at Middle Collegiate Church, NYC
 - MD Environmental Human Rights Amendment Leadership training
- b) Is the congregation currently collaborating with a frontline or fence-line community in environmental/climate justice action? If yes, what is the extent and nature of that collaboration and what is the action? Please include the ways this community self-identifies and its self-identified priorities. Please include link(s) to the community’s websites or Facebook pages, if available and appropriate.
- PATH - Since 2006, PATH has led the fight toward broad-based equity, diversity, and inclusion in Howard County, Maryland. PATH is a multi-racial, multi-faith, non-partisan residents’ organization, rooted in our local congregations and organizations, and an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation. UUC is a member organization of PATH - <https://www.facebook.com/pathpeople/>
 - NAACP Howard County - The Mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination. We are working on more ways to engage - <https://www.howardcountynaacp.com/>

- Community Ecology Institute - The Community Ecology Institute (CEI) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a mission to enhance community health and well-being by fostering diverse connections between people and the natural world. CEI is unique in focusing concurrently on both climate change and the growing divide between people and nature, with a focus on community-level change. Some UUCG members have taken the volunteer training; more support and partnering hopefully will be in the future - <https://www.communityecologyinstitute.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/communityecologyinstitute/>
- Maryland Campaign for Environmental Human Rights - The proposed Maryland Constitutional Amendment for Environmental Human Rights will protect each person's right to a healthful and stable environment. The state, as trustee of Maryland's natural resources, shall preserve them for current and future generations. Embedding this right in the Bill of Rights section of the MD state constitution protects this right on par with other rights, like the freedom of speech. It is a legal tool for both the people and government to use. For the people, it is a way to hold the state government accountable. For the government and its agencies, it is a tool to prevent harm and guide decisions, policies and legislation to protect Maryland's natural resources and the health of the public who depend on them. - UUCG members have been trained and are working to support this legislation, which will benefit all communities in the state. <https://mdehr.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/mdehr4all>

c) What are the likely opportunities and challenges to enhancing existing or forging new collaboration with a frontline community engaged in environmental/climate justice action? (If the opportunity for local collaboration is very limited, consider collaboration with groups such as [NAACP Climate Justice Program](#), [Climate Justice Alliance](#), or [Indigenous Environmental Network](#).)

1. Opportunities:

- a. We have opportunities to get more involved with the NAACP Howard County, the Community Ecology Institute, and the MD Campaign for Environmental Human Rights.

2. Challenges:

- a. We continue to be challenged to find organizations that would welcome our support.

Please submit your completed [Opportunity Assessment](#) and [Opportunity Assessment Guidelines](#) to Michael Hughes at [<GSdocuments.Hughes@gmail.com>](mailto:GSdocuments.Hughes@gmail.com). You may copy Rev. Karen Brammer [<KBrammer@uua.org>](mailto:KBrammer@uua.org).

Please also complete the short [Opportunity Assessment Feedback](#) form, which will provide valuable information to help (a) improve GS 2030 and (b) document the impacts of GS2030.

Thank you.

Rev. Karen Brammer

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