

**“It’s Not Easy Being Green”**  
**Quimper Unitarian Universalist Fellowship**  
**May 20, 2007**  
**Green Sanctuary Committee Members & Bruce Bode**

**Call of Worship**

This is a new day that has been given unto us.  
Let us then rejoice in it and be glad.  
And let us count our many, many blessings:  
Let us be grateful for the incredible gift of life,  
And for the capacity to see, to feel, to hear, and to understand.  
Let us be grateful for this time of fellowship, for work to do, and service to render.  
And let us then be especially grateful for the ties of love which bind us together,  
giving dignity, meaning, worth, and joy to all our days.

**Lighting the Chalice** (spoken in unison)

We come together, compounded of the ancient elements,  
mud and fire within it we call life, vast waters, and something –  
the intangible substance of hope –  
out of which the human dream is made.

(Loren Eiseley)

**Responsive Reading**

MINISTER: If we have the wisdom to survive, to stand like slow-growing trees on a ruined place,

CONGREGATION: Renewing it, enriching it,

MINISTER: If we will make our seasons welcome here, asking not too much of earth or heaven,

CONGREGATION: Then a long time after we are dead the lives our lives prepare will live here,

MINISTER: Their houses strongly placed upon the valley sides,

CONGREGATION: Fields and gardens rich in the windows. The river will run clear, as we will never know it,

MINISTER: And over it, birdsong like a canopy.

CONGREGATION: On the levels of the hills will be green meadows, stock bells in noon shade.

MINISTER: On the steeps where greed and ignorance cut down the old forest,

CONGREGATION: An old forest will stand, its rich leaf-fall drifting on its roots.

MINISTER: The veins of forgotten springs will have opened. Families will be singing in the fields.

CONGREGATION: In their voices they will hear a music risen out of the ground.

MINISTER: They will take nothing from the ground they will not return, whatever the grief at parting.

CONGREGATION: Memory, native to this valley, will spread over it like a grove, and memory will grow into legend, legend into song, song into sacrament.

MINISTER: The abundance of this place, the songs of its people and its birds, will be health and wisdom and indwelling light.

CONGREGATION: This is no paradisaal dream. Its hardship is its possibility.

(Wendell Berry)

**Introduction to Joys & Sorrows – “Thinking outside the Bowl” (Jeanette Richoux)**

My name is Jeanette Richoux. I am here today as part of the Green Sanctuary Committee to introduce a slight change to our Joys and Sorrows tradition, I call it “Thinking outside the Bowl.”

First, some personal background. Like many of you, I am a newcomer to this area. I joined this fellowship at the same time as Bruce and Flossie. Before that, I was a member of a UU congregation in Lincoln, Nebraska for 20 years. Even earlier, I was part of a very liberal UU church in Camp Springs, Maryland where my husband and I first lived after marrying in 1972. While in the Washington, D.C. area I did internships at the Smithsonian to become a museum curator. I’ve also been a teacher, mother of two, gardener, writer, and environmental steward.

After Cassie and Alan left our nest in Nebraska, I wanted to rekindle earlier goals and my husband, Howard, being a very agreeable person, was thrilled to give up snow shoveling. Port Townsend became our home because it had three essential elements to provide my mind and heart with purpose – the Marine Science Center for teaching children to respect the earth, the Food Coop for sustainable nourishment, and this UU fellowship to stimulate my mind and find friendship.

Friends and this environment in Port Townsend have satisfied my need for purpose in those and many other ways. Most recently, with my UU Voices contacts, I have become

an advocate for clean air and Priorities for a Healthy Washington, testifying in a state legislative hearing.

This community inspires action, creative spirit, and thinking outside the box is a way of life. Last summer when the joys and sorrows candles were flaming up, emitting smoke from the bowl, with the summer breeze, I wondered what else would work for us. I explored ideas with other members and found that many preferred to light candles. Others wished to add a stone to the bowl. The candle represents tradition, the fire of life, birthdays, memorials – here for this moment and gone into the salt of the bowl. The stone or pebble represents permanence and reusability – an element of the earth that lasts. Our UU children place stones in water in their service program. There is a Jewish tradition to place stones on graves since the rock and grief last forever.

Today we offer a choice for the ephemeral or permanence -- a choice so that all can be content with their joy or sorrow response. The new bowl and plate represent the earth, and the stones remind us of the beauty of our seashores.

This is my remembrance stone that I collected at North Beach after my orange tabby, Taco, died this winter so that others may use it for their own remembrances. [This stone represents] my heart-felt concern for all creatures and wish that their lives will be long and healthy.

**Meditation:** As we enter our Time of Silence on this Sunday where we reflect on our responsibility to the Earth, let us take with us into the silence this poem of Vaclav Havel titled, “It Is I Who Must Begin”:

### **It Is I Who Must Begin**

It is I who must begin.  
Once I begin, once I try --  
here and now,  
right where I am,  
not excusing myself  
by saying things  
would be easier elsewhere,  
without grand speeches and  
ostentatious gestures,  
but all the more persistently  
-- to live in harmony  
with the "voice of Being," as I  
understand it within myself  
-- as soon as I begin that,  
I suddenly discover,  
to my surprise, that  
I am neither the only one,  
nor the first,

nor the most important one  
to have set out  
upon that road.

Whether all is really lost  
or not depends entirely on  
whether or not I am lost.

(Vaclav Havel, from Teaching With Fire, ed. by S.M. Intrator and M. Scribner)

**Three Stories from Green Sanctuary Committee Members** (Helen Kolff, Holly Mayshark, Donna Logan)

For me, the natural world has always been the primary pathway into the sacred and a source of inspiration. I would like to share one of my first "spiritual experiences."

As a young high school student, I got to go to a girls' camp in northern Minnesota for three summers. As part of our experience, we spent a whole week canoeing and camping in a wilderness area called the Boundary Waters. We canoed from lake to lake and never saw a single motorboat. One evening after the dinner chores were done, I went exploring on the island where we were camping. On the shore, I found a place in the woods where the moss was literally 6 inches deep. I knelt down and became very still. I was awed by the silence surrounding me. I could hear no sound whatsoever--no birds, no human voices, no motors, not even any insects. I had never registered such intense silence. I felt enveloped and embraced by the spirit of that great silence.

Since that experience, I have sought to spend as much of my free time as possible in the wilderness. Over the years, I have been lucky enough to spend time hiking in the Cascades and Olympic Mountains, Denali National Park, the canyon country of southern Utah, and the Peruvian Andes. These, and other experiences in the natural world, have always been the core of my spiritual life. They have inspired me to become an environmental activist and to always be on the lookout for ways to lighten my personal impact on the planet.

(Helen Kolff)

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My spiritual connection to the earth started at an early age. Our family always spent a lot of time outdoors together: camping, swimming, sailing in the summer. Skiing in the winter. Respect and wonder at Nature was always nurtured.

At a very young age, maybe 7 or 8, I began making "fairy Houses" in the woods. I would find a mossy area, put 4 sticks with forked tops upright in the moss for the 4 house corners, lay sticks across the top for a roof and make furniture for the interior. Then I would leave it with my blessings as a gift for the Forest Fairies.

But as I grew older, the thing that always took my breath away, filled me with joy was what our family calls, "diamonds on the water". On a sunny day, looking out over any

body of water at the sun's reflections as they move and dance with the water is so powerful that it often brings me to tears.

Perhaps this presence of beauty and the spiritual connection I feel is what creates this sense of wanting to be a good steward to this earth that I call home.

(Holly Mayshark)

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I've done some reflection recently on a question you may have wondered about yourself:

What could make a woman call herself a witch – a kitchen witch – one who actually takes some pleasure counting the Fellowship's cloth napkins? It's 297 now. It would be fun to play amateur psychologist with this, but instead it brought up some family history for me. You see, until I was about 5, I lived on my grandparents' farm in Western Pennsylvania where the earth became my companion. I helped my father pull the garlic grass from the dairy cows' pasture, held on tightly to ride the plow guided by my father and pulled by 2 horses, and frequently took field trips through grandma Hanna's garden. She gave me the names and samples to smell and taste, but did not encourage the bouquets I dreamed about. My mother worried about my riding in the same wheelbarrow that was also used for the gardening manure. When I had been born in the upstairs bedroom, I got even more than the life-giving slap on my bottom from my grandmother. I got a gift – nothing I had asked for or earned. It was the earth itself. And that is what has led me into my witch hood.

(Donna Logan)

**Sermon: “It's Not Easy Being Green” (Bruce Bode)**

We're looking this morning at some things that we can do *as a congregation* to keep faith with our Earth: to honor and reverence it by trying to stop our destruction of it, to make it more habitable and pleasing for ourselves while we are alive and conscious in human form upon it, and to pass it on in a habitable and pleasing form to future members of our own species as well as to other species. I can't think of any labor or aspiration more important or meaningful than this.

There is, of course, a great question as to whether we are already too late to make a difference in keeping our global civilization from collapsing. Are we as a group like individuals, who through inattentive living, have so damaged the organs of their bodies that the disease is now too far advanced to return to health?

Historically, there have been many individual societies that have collapsed from environmental degradation, seeing too late, or perhaps not seeing at all, that collapse was at hand, a collapse that in some cases came very, very suddenly. And the concern now, of course, given our world's interconnectedness, is that the risk of collapse through environmental degradation is not merely local but global. As author Jared Diamond has said, “Many people fear that ecocide [the destruction of the environment through human

causes] has now come to overshadow nuclear war ... as a threat to global civilization.” (Collapse, p. 7)

The book from which this quotation is taken is titled Collapse, a recent, wide-ranging study by Professor Diamond of a number of past societies that have collapsed, as well as a study of a few that have sustained themselves. He says that “The processes through which past societies have undermined themselves by damaging their environments fall into eight categories, whose relative importance differs from case to case.” (p. 6)

Those eight categories are:

...deforestation and habitat destruction, soil problems (erosion, salinization, and soil fertility losses), water management problems, overhunting, overfishing, effects of introduced species on native species, human population growth, and increased per-capita impact of people. (p. 6)

He adds that:

The environmental problems facing us today include the same eight that undermined past societies, plus four new ones: human-caused climate change, buildup of toxic chemicals in the environment, energy shortages, and full human utilization of the Earth’s photosynthetic capacity.” (p. 7)

The concern, says Diamond, is that most of these twelve threats will reach a critical point in the next few decades so that either we will solve these problems or our civilization, as we know, it will collapse. For him, this doesn’t not necessarily imply the *extinction* of the human species but, as he says:

...a future of significantly lower living standards, chronically higher risks, and the undermining of what we now consider some of our key values.” (p. 7)

Jared Diamond says he is often asked the question:

“Jared, are you optimistic or pessimistic about the world’s future?” I answer, “I’m a cautious optimist.” By that, I mean that, on the one hand, I acknowledge the seriousness of the problems facing us. If we don’t make a determined effort to solve them, and if we don’t succeed at that effort, the world as a whole within the next few decades will face a declining standard of living, or perhaps something worse.... On the other hand, we shall be able to solve our problems – if we choose to do so. (p. 521)

Well, what will that determined effort involve? What would choosing to solve our environmental problems entail? It would mean, in Jared Diamond’s studied opinion, dealing with all twelve of the environmental issues that he has identified – the ones I just listed. He writes:

Our world society is presently on a non-sustainable course, and any of our 12 problems of non-sustainability ... would suffice to limit our lifestyle within the next several decades. They are like time bombs with fuses of less than fifty years.... People often ask, "What is the single most important environmental/population problem facing the world today?" A flip answer would be, "The single most important problem is our misguided focus on identifying the single most important problem!" That flip answer is essentially correct, because any of the dozen problems if unsolved would do us grave harm, and because they all interact with each other. If we solved 11 of the problems, but not the 12<sup>th</sup>, we would be still be in trouble, whichever was the problem that remained unsolved. We have to solve them all. (p. 498)

He continues:

Thus, because we are rapidly advancing along this non-sustainable course, the world's environmental problems *will* get resolved, in one way or another, within the lifetimes of the children and young adults alive today. The only question is whether they will become resolved in pleasant ways of our own choice, or in unpleasant ways not of our choice, such as warfare, genocide, starvation, disease epidemics, and collapses of societies. (p. 498)

So this is the kind of "cautious optimism" that Jared Diamond is talking about.

I would find it interesting to privately corner him sometime and ask, "Really, Jared? Given what you have said, given that you think we need to solve all twelve of these environmental problems, are you really a 'cautious optimist'; or, are you just saying that because you fear we could not live without such an optimistic belief?"

For myself, being of Calvinist heritage, I would describe my own position as, at best, that of a "cautious pessimist." Being bred, born, and raised a Calvinist, you see, I don't ask, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" I ask, "Why do good things happen to bad people."

So I don't think we have it in us to turn things around.

But, following the philosophy of such people as Albert Schweitzer or Mohandas Gandhi or Vaclav Havel, I believe that one's optimistic or pessimistic evaluation of human nature or of future historical outcomes does not determine whether or not one should act or how one should live.

Gandhi, for example, teaches the principle of "the renunciation of the fruit of one's action." In other words, in order to keep going forward, one must be free from expectation, spiritually detached from the results of your action. Here's how Gandhi expresses that philosophy:

The one who gives up action falls. The one who gives up only the reward rises. Our

renunciation of fruit [the fruit of our action] in no way means indifference to the result. In regard to every action one must know the result that is expected to follow, the means thereto, and the capacity for it. The one, who, being thus equipped, is without desire for the result, and is yet wholly engrossed in the due fulfillment of the task before him or her, is said to have renounced the fruit of his or her action. [quote adjusted for gender]

And Vaclav Havel, former president of the Czech Republic, speaks of the difference between hope and optimism. Hope, he says, is:

...an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed. The more unpropitious the situation in which we demonstrate hope, the deeper that hope is. Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.

(“An Orientation of the Heart,” The Impossible Will Take A Little While)

I remember in the mid-1980’s hearing Wendell Berry – a beautiful man with a beautiful message – give a reading. At the end of his formal presentation, he invited questions from the audience and was asked something of the same question that Jared Diamond is often asked relating to his optimism or pessimism with regard to the world’s future. The question addressed to Wendell Berry was this: “Do you think we are gaining in our environmental efforts?”

Wendell Berry, naturally slow of speech, thought for a bit, and then said, “Yes, we are gaining in our environmental efforts ... slowly.” Then he paused some more and added, “but we’re losing fast.” Gaining slowly, losing fast.

But again, for Wendell Berry, it is not such optimism or pessimism about the future that determines his attitude or action. In one of his very fine statements he writes:

I cannot think of any American whom I know or have heard of, who is not contributing in some way to destruction. The reason is simple: to live undestructively in an economy that is overwhelmingly destructive would require of any one of us, or of any small group of us, a great deal more work than we have yet been able to do. How could we divorce ourselves completely and yet responsibly from the technologies and powers that are destroying our planet? The answer is not yet thinkable, and it will not be thinkable for some time – even though there are now groups and families and persons everywhere in the country who have begun the labor of thinking of it.

(The Unsettling of America, p. 18)

That statement is from a book published in the 1970’s, and we haven’t advanced far beyond it – if anything, we’ve gone the other way.

But now the situation is more dire, and now the effects of the way we are living are becoming more obvious. Al Gore's recent film, An Inconvenient Truth, for example, has hit a chord with many people. In that film, Al Gore said that he has given the slide show upon which that film was based at least a thousand times. I was privileged 27 years ago in 1980 at a conference in Washington D.C to hear and see him give that essential presentation. And I thought, then: here is a politician whose political life is driven by an inspiration and an aspiration. So he has been working on and honing this message on global warming for many years.

There were a couple of things I particularly liked in his film: One was his acknowledgement of how difficult it is to see a problem or to make a change in your life when your livelihood depends upon it. He quoted Upton Sinclair:

It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it.

In this regard, Al Gore related how his family, led by his father, Albert Gore Senior, was not willing to give up tobacco farming until *after* his own daughter had died from lung cancer caused by smoking.

A second related thing I appreciated in this film were Al Gore's statements about continually looking for ways to remove obstacles that block people's understanding of the situation. Here's what he said in the film:

I've probably given this slide show a 1000 times. I would say at least a 1000 times.... I guess the thing I've spent more time on than anything else in this slide show is trying to identify all those things in people's minds that serve as obstacles to their understanding this [problem of global warming]. And whenever I feel like I've identified an obstacle, I try to take it apart, roll it away. Move it. Demolish it. Blow it up. I set myself a goal. Communicate this real clearly. The only way I know to do it is city by city, person by person, family by family. And I have faith that pretty soon enough minds are changed that we cross a threshold.

(An Inconvenient Truth, transcribed)

So to move forward we must move past blame and shame and the pointing of fingers. We must keep our eyes on the goal and not be distracted. And we must move together. As Wendell Berry says, we can't do this alone. But he adds:

The care of the earth is our most ancient and most worthy and, after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal, is our only legitimate hope.

(The Unsettling of America, p. 14)

That's what we are about today: To try to do some things as a congregation. You have heard earlier from some members of our Green Sanctuary Committee, who are doing

things in their individual ways to cherish our earth and foster its renewal. Now, Kees Kolff, chair of the Green Sanctuary Committee, will speak about some things that we as a congregation can undertake.

### **QUUF Presentation on the 12 Green Sanctuary Projects (Kees Kolff)**

In response to the environmental crisis described by Bruce, the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth, formerly the Seventh Principle Project, was founded in 1990 as an affiliate of the UUA, to affirm and promote “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

One of the ways that UU Ministry for Earth does this is through their Green Sanctuary Program and there are currently over 50 UU congregations accredited as Green Sanctuaries and 50 more across the country working as candidates towards accreditation.

A number of us read about the Green Sanctuary Program last fall and asked the Board to approve the creation of a Green Sanctuary Committee to help QUUF become accredited. The most active people on this joyful and well-nourished committee have been Diane Haas, Marla Streeter, Holly Mayshark, Jeanette Richoux, Donna Logan, Barb and Mack Boeling, Fred and Ann Weinman, Helen Kolff and me.

My own personal motivation to work with the committee grew out of my concern about the increasing global climate crisis, and I was very inspired by the 2006 Statement of Conscience adopted unanimously at the annual UUA meeting last June. It is entitled “The Threat of Global Warming and Climate Change.” It opens with the following words:

“Earth is our home. We are part of this world and its destiny is our own. Life on this planet will be gravely affected unless we embrace new practices, ethics, and values to guide our lives on a warming planet.”

It then goes on to list dozens of things congregations can do to respond to this global challenge, one of which is to become certified as a Green Sanctuary.

The 6 steps to becoming a Green Sanctuary are as follows:

1. Establish an official Green Sanctuary Committee
2. Conduct an Environmental Audit to see how well we are doing as a baseline.
3. Design a comprehensive program with 12 projects for improvement, with teams and action plans to carry them out,
4. Get approval as a candidate by the UU Ministry for Earth,
5. Complete the 12 projects during the next 18 months, and
6. Apply for accreditation as a Green Sanctuary.

In February we completed an Environmental Audit to provide a snapshot of where we as a congregation stand with respect to green behaviors. Details are posted on the QUUF

website, but in summary some positive results include:

- Our energy use per square foot is comparable to other churches,
- We do fairly well in recycling,
- We don't use pesticides or herbicides,
- We use cloth napkins and washable dishes, and
- The RE programs and our church services often include reference to Earth stewardship.

On the other hand:

- We have no social action projects specifically relating to the environment,
- 83% of us regularly come to church by fossil fuel powered cars and average only 1.87 people per car, although almost half of us live less than 2 miles from QUUF, and
- We actually have very few written policies to guide and motivate greener behaviors.

Just in doing the audit we identified many more things that we could do to make a difference, and it was often hard to resist just doing them during the audit. We sent ideas out in a survey last month and 131 members of the congregation helped select the dozen projects we hope to undertake.

This is the moment for which I am sure you have all been waiting - the great unveiling of our 12 projects. They are appropriately draped under the most used photograph on earth, a photograph of Earth herself taken from space.

Marla and Donna will now read the 12 Projects:

1. Hold at least 1 environmentally focused service each quarter.
2. Create a spiritual space in our landscape for quiet contemplation, with seating and inspirational words.
3. Hold a harvest celebration, featuring organic, local produce. Identify the source of all food and attempt to use only products from within a 100-mile radius.
4. Have at least 50 participants complete an environmentally related course, such as those of the Northwest Earth Institute on topics like Global Warming, Deep Ecology, Voluntary Simplicity, and Sustainability, and the EcoParty. Get at least 50 congregational members to measure their ecological and carbon footprints and strive for a 10% reduction in one year. (These are for adults)
5. Become a certified Backyard Wildlife Habitat Sanctuary with the National Wildlife Federation and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Develop a landscape plan for all of the QUUF property, including some edible landscaping and

a potential vegetable garden. Identify the native plants and remove invasive species like Scotch Broom. Enhance habitat for wildlife with food, water and cover. (Combined project for children, youth and adults).

6. Work with COAST (Community Outreach And Shelter Team) to provide a system for green purchasing, recycling, composting and provision of as much local/organic food as possible to the Homeless Shelter next winter.

7. Lobby Olympia on environmental issues with Priorities for a Healthy Washington and UU Voices for Justice, with topics to be identified in the fall of 2007.

8. Establish a program to reduce our use of fossil fuel vehicles to get to church, covenant groups, and other church functions by developing neighborhood groups and a carpooling system and by targeting several Sunday services during the year when we see how far we can go to reduce CO2 emissions.

9. Reduce our use of electricity by 10% in 2007 compared to 2006, with ideas from the Energy Consult (i.e., eliminate incandescent light bulbs, improve control of thermostat, consider an on-demand hot water heater, cut phantom loads, etc.) and develop a buying coop to reduce costs for members who want to do the same at home.

10. Achieve at least the basic level for the Built Green program of the Jefferson County Home Builders' Association, or some other established standard, in the design of our new sanctuary.

11. Start a composting project on site.

12. Establish written policies for: a. prioritizing local, green purchasing when possible, including that of organic food, b. establishing a socially responsible financial investment account, and c. at least one other area of importance from the environmental survey (like waste reduction, recycling, avoidance of toxins, etc.)

Many of you indicated on the survey forms that you wanted to be on one or more of the action teams. Your names are listed on this board and on clipboards in the back. If you haven't done so yet, we urge you to join a team. Anyone of our enthusiastic committee members will be happy to help you find a project that fits your interest.

The next step is for this congregation to choose to become a Green Sanctuary candidate at our annual meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup>. This is how the ballot will read:

"The Green Sanctuary Committee has completed an audit of environmental practices at QUUF, surveyed members regarding their top choices of projects to improve these practices, and gotten Board endorsement for these projects. Shall QUUF apply for accreditation as a "Green Sanctuary" as described by the UU Ministry for Earth through the completion of these 12 projects over the next 12 to 18 months?"

We urge you to vote yes.

In closing, I would like to share with you the final words in the 2006 UUA Statement of Conscience:

“Given our human capacity to reflect and act upon our own lives as well as the condition of the world, we accept with humility and determination our responsibility to remedy and mitigate global warming/climate change through innovation, cooperation, and self-discipline. We undertake this work for the preservation of life on Earth.”

### **Benediction**

We are of all time past and our aspiration is that of all time to come.  
Our hope is as ancient as eating and breathing and the rising of the sun.  
Our hope is as new as the first leaves, as young as the baby not yet born.  
Remember to be patient, holding to our faith and our hope.

(Ken Patton)

### **Extinguishing the Chalice**

We extinguish this chalice  
But not the light of truth,  
The warmth of community,  
Or the fire of commitment.  
These we carry in our hearts  
Until we are together again.

(NOTE: This is a manuscript version of the service given by members of the Green Sanctuary Committee and The Reverend Bruce A. Bode at the Quimper Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on May 20, 2007. The spoken service, available on audio cassette at the Fellowship, may differ slightly in phrasing and detail from this manuscript version.)