

Environmental Policies for Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta [UUCA]

These policies are intended to guide UUCA as we expand our awareness and implement practices that lessen our negative impact on the environment. We aim to:

- Reduce the use of nonrenewable energy resources;
- Increase the use of recycled products, supporting recycling markets;
- Strengthen our commitment to reduce, reuse and recycle, and so reduce our contribution to landfills;
- Make environmental considerations an integral part of purchasing decisions in all aspects of congregational life;
- Conserve water;
- Reduce the use of toxic substances and increase the use of biodegradable products;
- Practice safe disposal, particularly of items that are toxic, carcinogenic, flammable, or will not break down in the environment (paint, cleaning chemicals, batteries, electronic equipment, etc.); and
- Continually educate our members about best practices.
- Support our members' efforts to reduce the negative environmental impact of their lifestyles
- When aforesaid policies are equal, source purchases locally.
- Develop a comprehensive building maintenance and repair plan that emphasizes a preventive approach and includes all building components, equipment, furnishings, and finishes

These policies do not assume that we require the purchase or use of services or products that do not perform adequately or are not available at a reasonable price and in a reasonable time frame. These policies will be reviewed periodically by the Sustainability Committee, or another committee so charged by the Board to specifically look at compliance, and to suggest revisions.

Building

In order to be responsible stewards of our environment, we will reduce the use of non-renewable energy sources. We will:

- Use only the mechanical climate control that we need. Dress in heavier clothing in winter and with lighter clothing in the summer. For full time staff in the office consider leaving a jacket or sweater in the office to provide added comfort when the temperature is not "just right."
- Our room temperatures in the main building are controlled by a single thermostat on each face of the main building during the heating season. The furnace comes on and circulates water through the radiators when the exterior temperature goes below a set point. As a result, don't adjust your side's thermostat without first consulting other occupants on that side. If needed, please open the windows to cool your individual room during the winter heating season and close them when not needed.

- When the central unit is not operating, use windows rather than air conditioning when exterior temperatures are below 75 degrees, keeping windows and room doors closed when the HVAC system is running.
- Thermostats in the administrative wing provide both heating and cooling through rooftop units using programmable thermostats. Set the thermostats with the largest tolerable difference between the “occupied” heating and cooling temperatures. Minimize the “Occupied” run time. Use “override” for the exceptions. Set “Unoccupied” heating to 60 degrees, and set “Unoccupied” cooling to 85 degrees. Consider setting the “On” time to one hour before arrival, and the “off” time to one hour before departure. Do not put fan control in “on” (continuous position).
- Ensure all staff are trained in thermostat operation. Provide instructions to all room tenants (regular and one-time).
- Turn on power-save modes on equipment and appliances;
- Choose Energy Star equipment and appliances when replacements are needed;
- Turn off all non-essential equipment (e.g. CPUs, monitors, printers, copiers) during nights and weekends, attaching equipment to power strips for ease in turning them off at the end of the day;
- Use energy-efficient compact fluorescent light or LED bulbs throughout the building;
- Most lighting is controlled by Daylight sensitive Motion Detectors which are mounted on the wall switches. Allow daylight into the rooms to replace electric lighting where possible. Do not place items like furniture or paper in front of the infrared motion sensor which might block the sensor’s view.
- Turn out the lights which are not in use. The Daylight sensitive Motion Detectors which control the lights are mechanical. Sooner or later they will fail.
- Use only the lighting that you need. A desk lamp is generally more efficient than lighting the entire room.
- Use rechargeable batteries and/or recycle batteries;
- Encourage use of the bicycle rack for the convenience of those who choose to bike to the congregation.

Cleaning and Maintenance

Cleaning products are often petroleum-based and contain surfactants, detergents, antibacterial chemicals and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that are toxic or hazardous, allergenic, carcinogenic, flammable and/or not biodegradable. These substances can be hazardous to the workers using them as well as to people with chemical sensitivities who use the building. In addition to affecting the quality of our indoor air, many of these are poured down drains every year, polluting water supplies and soil. Our goal is to:

- Look for Certified Green Seal products or those recommended by the U.S. EPA, testing their appropriateness and effectiveness (See <http://www.greenseal.org/findaproduct/cleaners.cfm>,
- <http://epa.gov/dfepubs/projects/20doemulR/NODOEPer.hrm#xlwN>)

- When cleaning or disinfecting products containing toxic substances must be used, use the minimum effective amount and dispose of containers and remainders properly;
- Purchase janitorial paper products that are recycled and contain a high Post-consumer Waste (PCW) content;
- Choose low-VOC or zero-VOC content paints; and
- Purchase trash bags made from recycled plastic content.

Landscaping and Grounds

- As we make plans for use of our grounds, we can be sensitive to the environment if we:
- Avoid the use of chemicals and pesticides on lawn and garden areas;
- Compost yard and kitchen waste to make natural fertilizer for the garden, and use only organic fertilizers;
- Plant native or adapted plants, which require less water and encourage native pollinators;
- Implement Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies that emphasize control of pests and their damage through preventive practices, mechanical and biological controls, and pest-resistant planting. Use herbicides and pesticides only as a last resort and with the least amount necessary.
- Implement plans to modify/improve the landscape which reduce turf area and other plantings that require irrigation

Office

We will reduce the amount of paper that we use. By buying paper with recycled content, processed chlorine free, we can make a real environmental difference. Production of recycled paper uses less water, less energy and produces less air and water pollution than paper made from raw materials. Our goal is to:

- Choose energy efficient office machines. EPEAT, <http://www.epeat.net/>, is a tool to help purchasers evaluate, compare and select desktop computers, notebooks and monitors based on their environmental attributes.
- Print and copy double-sided unless there is a significant reason not to;
- When single-sided print paper is generated, reuse it for non-confidential office uses; repurpose it to children's RE for drawing; use for note-writing and other office purposes; or offer it to congregation members for home use before recycling;
- Use 100% recycled paper with a high Post-consumer Waste (PCW) content; and
- Rely primarily on email for congregation communications, reduce the use of paper mailings, and use post cards when feasible.
- Edit documents on screen as much as possible to avoid printing multiple drafts.
- Choose refillable, recycled toner cartridges.
- Choose nontoxic water-based highlighters and markers.

Kitchen and Food Service

Much of our congregation's social life revolves around sharing food together, so we can minimize harm to the environment we will:

- Reduce the use of packaging that must be land-filled by buying in bulk, avoiding individual packets such as sugar and creamer, and storing food in reusable containers;
- Use reusable spoons for coffee and tea rather than plastic stirrers;
- Avoid Styrofoam products, and ask outside groups that use our building to avoid using Styrofoam; purchase plant-based biodegradable plastic utensils when plastic must be purchased.
- Increase the recycled content of paper products;
- Purchase Fair-Trade coffee, and encourage the purchase of locally-sourced healthier food (organic, preservative/chemical free);
- Increase the number of totally vegetarian meals served, offering vegetarian options at all meals;
- Use non-disposable items as much as possible, using the commercial dishwasher and our ceramic dishes, mugs and plastic glasses.
- Reduce the use of paper napkins, table cloths and decorations and, when paper is used, choosing paper goods made with recycled content. Make reusable service items and decorations the primary choice.

Transportation

- As a congregation we will reduce our use of fossil fuels and emissions by encouraging the use of carpools, bikes, walking or taking the bus to church. We will:
- Provide Zip Code information to help connect members who would like to carpool.
- Provide a link to the UUCA carpooling webpage on all correspondence, newsletters, and other forms of communication.
- Institute a non-idling policy for cars waiting for, picking up and dropping off passengers at our building.
- Organize Sundays that will encourage alternate forms of transportation to UUCA, such as biking and carpooling.

Waste Disposal

- Our goal is to reduce our contributions to the landfill. We will:
- Support a comprehensive recycling program for paper, cardboard, glass, metals, plastic, Styrofoam, and household batteries with bins in all appropriate areas of the building, including children's RE classrooms for recycling paper;
- Donate or recycle used electronic equipment;
- Recycle compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL's);
- Recycle packing peanuts at shipping stores;
- Safely dispose of batteries, cleaning products, paint, fuels and oils, drain cleaners, antifreeze, and other toxins – not placing them in the trash; and
- Recycle printer and toner cartridges and other office consumables, and investigate buying remanufactured or recycled ink and toner cartridges.

Education/Collaboration

- Encourage and support environmentally themed RE classes for adults and children;
- Collaborate with other organizations to further green awareness