



**Celebrating the Planet  
First Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
of Ann Arbor's Plan B  
October, 2006 – May, 2009**

**Mini-History Presented by Colleen Crawley and Terry Madden  
April 19, 2015**

**(Terry)** The three year “Celebrating the Planet” initiative was an effort to get members of our congregation engaged in conversation and action around a global issue – environmentalism, at a time of transition at the UUAA.

With the retirement of our Senior Minister, Ken Phifer, in June, 2005, after twenty-five years of service, our Congregation needed a focus. The Sankofa assessment forced us to question who we were.

In October, 2006, Colleen Crawley and myself began the “Celebrating the Planet” by conducting reading and discussion opportunities centered around Lester Brown’s Plan B 2.0 (Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble).

In April, 2007 we launched the initiative and created an umbrella of Action Circles which identified doable environmental actions, along with an Advisory Council to help coordinate the project.

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**Launching the Initiative**

**(Colleen)**

When it came time to get the congregation involved and launch our initiative, Terry and I consulted with Bruce Gibb, and decided to host a World Café, a tool for “engaging people in conversations that matter”. On October 20, 2007, almost 60 people participated in café conversations, discussing key questions in small, intimate groups. Between questions, people changed tables, thereby connecting more deeply with the wider circle, bringing ideas from earlier conversations to their current one, but also arriving prepared to listen to new voices. Questions dealt with

“What brought you here?” “What does a sustainable community look like?” and about what projects and activities we envisioned.

Seven Action Circles emerged based on feedback from café conversations, and each group selected a facilitator. The Action Circles & facilitators were:

- Climate Issues - Holly Calderwood
- Sustainable Communities - Billy Gourlay
- Environmental Justice - Lucia Heinold
- Religious Education - Charlie Pekarek
- Spiritual Practices - Ricardo Wyatt
- Renewable Energy - Dave Friedrichs
- The Food Group (Locavores) - Guala Lauzzana

The Advisory Council of Celebrating the Planet consisted of Terry and myself and the 7 facilitators, meeting monthly for the next two years, serving as a steering committee for the work being done by the Action Circles. Early on we recognized the value of adding evaluator Ruth Mohr to our Advisory Council.

### **Accomplishments**

Celebrating the Planet distinguished itself within our UUAA community in several ways. One of the most noticeable actions was the addition of our church’s wind turbine and the installation of solar panels on our church roof. Long after our 2-year initiative was complete, the Renewable Energy group continued to meet, raise funds, obtain permits and oversee the design and construction of these elements that offset our building’s energy usage.

Many other of our accomplishments are noteworthy. We educated ourselves and took action on bottled water; had a regular Green Corner feature in the monthly UUAA Newsletter; measured our carbon footprints; held book discussions on Bill McKibben’s *Deep Economy* and Michael Pollen’s *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*; hosted all-congregation Earth Day celebrations; began the tradition of serving healthy or local treats at coffee hour; generated recognition of the champion Hawthorne tree on our property; hosted “Water: A Sacred Trust,” which was an all-ages concert featuring GAIA Women of the Great Lakes Region; sold compact fluorescent lights during coffee hour and church events; explored car-pooling to church; and offered a workshop on square foot gardening. This is not even a complete list. Our work and our programs touched many members of the community.

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## **FINAL EVALUATION RESULTS**

**(Terry)** For some Celebrating the Planet offered the push they needed to do something worthwhile beyond their own everyday concerns.

One participant said,

- *Thanks and keep it up, especially for some of us slug bugs.*

For others, Celebrating the Planet offered just the right opportunity to come together with like minded individuals to act together *to help reduce the stress on our Planet.*

A UUAA member said,

• *I was a moderately active social justice activist for many years, but had become burned out and despondent because of the enormity of it all - poverty, war, the degradation of the earth - you name it. The Celebrating the Planet initiative gave me a structure and a group of people to work with - this motivated and re-energized me.*

The Celebrating the Planet initiative hit a responsive chord at the First UU Congregation of Ann Arbor.

Thanks to all of us UUs here today who participated in the “Celebrating the Planet” Initiative back then and most importantly to those who continue to celebrate the planet.

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**(Terry & Colleen)** Happy Earth Day!!!

