

Toward A Faithful COVENANT

To Sustain The Earth Community:

a Sustainability Initiative at Mount Auburn Presbyterian Church

-- Draft (Version 1/22/2013) by John Hancock, John Tallmadge, and Bill Shuster; and affirmed by The Session

In our time, human activity has subjected the social and ecological systems of planet Earth to unprecedented stress. Global climate change, habitat loss, extinctions, overpopulation, and pollution degrade the biosphere while epidemics, poverty, resource depletion, radical inequality, war, and violence degrade the human world. Present habits and trends cannot be sustained without serious and perhaps fatal damage to the Earth and its communities of life.

In a sustainable world humanity and nature would flourish in mutually enhancing ways. Human communities would care for one another, using resources modestly and equitably, without impairing the ability of future generations or other life communities to meet their needs.

As a church we aspire to contribute in thought, word, and deed to the quest for a sustainable world, grounding our individual and collective efforts in core values of our Christian faith, including stewardship, mindfulness, generosity, social justice, repentance, compassion, and sacrifice, and organizing our studies and actions along such vectors as:

1. A SHARED DEFINITION of “sustainability” such as, “patterns of living and resource use that allow us to live well, without decreasing the ability of future generations and other communities of life to do the same.”
2. AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM to “unpack” the many aspects and dimensions of our life-patterns, consumption, resources, environment, ecology, ethical choices, etc.; that are part of “the problem.” (water, energy, driving, trash, food-choices, etc.)
3. A CONCRETE LONG-TERM GOAL, such as: “get to zero carbon and zero waste within (approx. 10) years,” along with the stories, background, and ethics that motivate it; pledge to individual households as well as the “church household.”
4. ACTION-BASED LEARNING to find out in practice which new and different behaviors and choices are possible (and to do them), and which are not because of entrenched systems (and to work for change).
5. DROPS-IN-THE-OCEAN LEADERSHIP TO BUILD A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT to demonstrate changes that can begin at home, to show by example and educate others about how increments lead to solutions, to discover what is possible, to ask questions and hear the experience of other seekers and to open up new possibilities, and to engage in cooperative outreach and dialogue with other organizations and initiatives such as Presbyterian Earth Care congregations, Green Umbrella, and Imago
6. ETHICAL REFLECTION to expand the horizon of ethical judgments beyond the merely-human sphere, to encompass all of the earth, environment, ecology, creation; with historical perspectives on other such significant expansions (abolition of slavery for example), and other world-views we can learn from (e.g., pre-Socratic or Native American).
7. SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS that connect these issues and imperatives to our own (as well as other) faith traditions, cultivating attitudes of respect, reverence, unity, and wonder, in the presence of our earth/world.