



UU Church of Davis Green Sanctuary Committee

Winter- Spring 2008

When the planet herself sings to us in our dreams, will we be able to wake ourselves, and act?

- Gary Lawless

Dear Congregation,

Perhaps you are wondering why go on a low carbon diet? What's the urgency?

Remember the lovable stars of such family films as *Happy Feet*, *March of the Penguins* and *Surf's Up*? Scientists estimate that penguin populations have plummeted by as much as 80% in some areas due to global warming. In Antarctica, home to the emperor penguin, the annual sea ice-melting season has extended by as much as three weeks in recent decades. Less ice means reduced habitat and the loss of critical food, including krill, which depend on polar ice to reproduce.

Or consider the American pika, a 6-ounce creature that fits in the palm of your hand and lives above tree line in the Sierras. Because of dense fur, pikas cannot regulate their body temperature. They overheat and die at temperatures above 77 degrees. Scientists say pika colonies are shrinking due primarily to global warming, making the pika California's polar bear.

Sadly, these stories reflect the precarious times in which we live. Both locally and globally, the headlines are disturbing and inescapable. "Arctic is Screaming – Scientists alarmed as ice melts faster." "Warming causing big changes in CA." "UCD Report: Tahoe air, water warming up." "Many states, facing water shortages." "Poorest nations to bear climate burden."

For California, the forecast this century is sobering, even if the temperature rise is only 3-5.5 degrees: diminished snow-packs that melt too early, causing floods and water shortages; submerged coastal homes and eroded beaches as sea levels rise; crops unable to survive in longer, hotter summers; and charred forests that fall victim to more intense wildfires. Already the Sierra snow-pack melts up to a month earlier than it did in the early 1900s. Our network of aqueducts and reservoirs must deliver water to 2/3 of CA residents and prime farming land in the Central Valley, but they can't handle the earlier snowmelt. (Samantha Young, AP)

As Al Gore puts it, "This is a planetary emergency. There has never been anything remotely like it in the entire history of human civilization. We are putting at risk all of human civilization." His view is supported by the following observations from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (December 2007 report).

- **Warming of the climate system is unequivocal**, as is evident from observations of increases in global average air & ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow & ice, and rising global sea level.
- Eleven of last twelve years rank among the **12 warmest years** since 1850. (Global surface temperatures)
- Mountain **glacier and snow cover declining** in both hemispheres. Widespread **decreases in glaciers and ice caps** have contributed to **sea level rise**.
- More **intense and longer droughts**, particularly in the tropics and subtropics – and California!
- More intense **typhoons and hurricanes** with larger peak wind speeds & heavier precipitation
- By 2050 up to 2 billion people worldwide could be facing major **water shortages**.
- 20-30% of world's species at high risk of **irreversible extinction**.

Al Gore identifies the core problem. "In the last 150 years, in an accelerating frenzy, we have been removing increasing quantities of carbon from the ground – mainly in the form of coal and oil – and burning it in ways that dump 70 million tons of CO₂ every 24 hours into the earth's atmosphere." While concentrations of CO₂ have been below 280 parts per million for at least a million years, now they have been driven up to 383 ppm, well past the "tipping point" of 350ppm. (From "Moving Beyond Kyoto" by Al Gore)

CO₂ is accumulative. The sooner we act the better the outcome. In order to minimize consequences, we need to act now to reduce our carbon emissions 90% by 2050. All of us have room for improvement. Please join us and participate in the Low Carbon Diet challenge. Earnestly, The Green Sanctuary Committee



A Great Green Idea: Take the Low Carbon Diet: Lose 5000# and Feel Good, too!

The Green Sanctuary Committee invites you to participate in the Low Carb(on) Diet Challenge. The challenge involves working through a curriculum using a workbook entitled: Low Carbon Diet: A 30 Day Program to Lose 5000 Pounds. The object of the diet is to look at your eco-footprint and with the help of the book figure out ways to reduce the specific amounts of the carbon emissions normally produced by your household. Suggested actions include ways to reduce our carbon use in our personal lifestyle (showers, laundry, driving, etc.), in our household systems (efficiency, appliances, cars, etc.), and finally in our larger communities (empowering others to act). Many changes are easier than you think.

SIGN UP TODAY TO PARTICIPATE AND GET A WORKBOOK: The workbook written by David Gershon is available at the Avid Reader for \$12.95, the UU Ministry for Earth and from Amazon.com. The GS Committee will make them available for \$10/copy to those who sign up and pay for them before March 1, 2008. You can sign up at the GS kiosk in the great hall on Sunday mornings or stop by the office weekdays.

CHILDREN INVITED TO HELP, TOO. Every household that wishes to participate will need the workbook, and everyone in the family can help. There is a second workbook for children, also by David Gershon, called Journey for the Planet: A Kid's Five Week Adventure to Create an Earth-friendly Life. This book costs \$12.95, too, and may be ordered as above.

SUPPORT MEETINGS: We will be holding Low Carbon Diet Meetings in the Church Library, 12:30 - 2:00pm on March 16 and 30 and April 13 and 27, 2008. U.N.I.Q.U.E. will have a soup lunch available for purchase on those Sundays. The GS Committee will provide free childcare if it is requested at least a week before the first meeting. Note: While we strongly urge you to attend the class sessions, you may order a workbook and join the challenge even if you are not able to attend.

UULM CHALLENGE: The UU Legislative Ministry is the sponsor of the Low Carb(on) Diet Challenge. Our church's challenge is to collectively lose at least 25 tons, i.e., 50,000 pounds. We can meet the challenge if 10 or more households from our congregation are able to lose 5000#.

LIVE OUR UU* VALUES: This project is a way that we can begin to personally meet the Kyoto Protocol Standards and truly live our respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part. How can we in good conscience ask others to reduce their production of carbon emissions when our country has less than 5% of the world's population and produces close to 25% of carbon emissions worldwide and consumes a similar percentage of the world's resources? As Americans and as UUs, reducing our eco-footprint is important for the goal of a world community with justice and equity for all.

Together we can begin to change the world!

** 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. As Unitarian Universalists, how can our faith inform our actions to remedy and mitigate global warming/climate change? We declare by this Statement of Conscience that we will not acquiesce to the ongoing degradation and destruction of life that human actions are leaving to our children and grandchildren. We as Unitarian Universalists are called to join with others to halt practices that fuel global warming/climate change, to instigate sustainable alternatives, and to mitigate the impending effects of global warming/climate change with just and ethical responses. As a people of faith, we commit to renewed reverence for life and respect for the interdependent web of all existence. – UU Statement of Conscience (GA 2006)*