

Vote to Move from Hope to Action on Environmental Justice

Proposed: That the congregation of the First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh vote to commit to a year-long, church-wide focus on Environmental Justice, in order to take appropriate actions to address the issue.

Background: In March of 2019 the Board of Trustees authorized the Vision Identity and Mission (VIM) Committee to conduct cottage meetings to help discern social justice goals for the coming years. Those meetings revealed strong passions for racial justice and for actions to address climate change and environmental degradation, as well as a number of other social justice causes. The meetings also highlighted a shared desire to work in a more unified way as a church on a focused justice mission. Accordingly, Rev. Dr. Kate Walker and the Board agreed in October 2021 to explore Environmental Justice -- the intersection of racial justice and environmental action -- as a potential unifying theme. Cottage meetings earlier this year have reaffirmed a strong interest in Environmental Justice among the members of the church.

Environmental Justice demands this church-wide commitment because:

1. It is our moral duty; environmental degradation disproportionately affects disadvantaged communities where people of color often live.
2. Our UU principles (First, Second, Fifth, and Seventh) require it.
3. Coordinated intersectional action is the most effective response to the interrelated threats of racial and environmental injustice.

Structure: Upon approval of this proposal, the Board of Trustees will create an Environmental Justice Action Team (EJAT) to build a structure and a plan for involving the whole congregation in taking action on Environmental Justice. EJAT will be a collection of teams focused on different ways to achieve Environmental Justice. Each team will create its own goals and projects, and also meet as part of the larger group to share ideas and resources. Currently, three congregants have agreed to take leadership roles.

How you can be involved through the year: Every month EJAT will organize a combination of events that may include: a church-wide, intergenerational activity; an action in partnership with churches and justice organizations in our region; or an educational film, speaker or workshop. EJAT will give every member of the congregation an avenue to participate in achieving Environmental Justice in three ways: direct action working with oppressed communities; public advocacy at the local, state and national levels; and changing our own social and environmental behaviors. EJAT will provide educational programming to help members choose activities best suited to their interests. There are still leadership opportunities on the EJAT teams, and there will be plenty of opportunities to help with events as they come up during the year.

Call to adopt the proposal: Your vote today enables Rev. Kate to represent our congregation as a united community taking action to achieve Environmental Justice. We hope you are ready to declare our commitment to move from hope to action.