



## Introduction

# UULM Low Carbon Challenge

### **What's the challenge?**

For Unitarian Universalists in California to lose 1,000,000 pounds of carbon emissions by Earth Day 2009.

### **How do we meet that goal?**

Through forming "Carbon Rings" in 50 of our California congregations – circles of 5 to 8 UU households (non-UU friends welcome) who can meet together for eight sessions to build community, and help each other identify and make changes in our lifestyles so as to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 5000 pounds per household.

### **What will Carbon Ring participants do at their meetings?**

They will gather for eight sessions, utilizing two excellent study guides:

- "Global Warming: Changing CO<sub>2</sub>urse" – a four session discussion created by the Northwest Earth Institute – the momentum is best when you meet weekly
- Low Carbon Diet: A 30 Day Program to Lose 5000 Pounds by David Gershon of the Empowerment Institute – another four sessions, but this time best done every other week to give opportunity to make the needed changes at home (i.e. a 60 day program).

Making lifestyle changes is difficult to do alone. A supportive group from one's faith community, can help you reach your goals to make your carbon footprint more congruent with your values.

**Why does the UULM-CA Low Carbon Challenge take eight sessions and use both study guides? Can't we just jump right into the Low Carbon Diet and start shedding pounds of carbon?** Starting with a deeper exploration of the issues - our lives, our values, our struggles and our joys - gives us a stronger network of support from which to make the needed lifestyle changes. Groups that leap directly to action, often lose motivation and participation.

## **What about the kids?**

Our children and youth need to be included in family education and discussions around lifestyle changes. Their generation will bear the brunt of this crisis more forcefully than the older folks.

Enclosed in this packet is a synopsis of a play that the kids can use to inspire their congregations and families to action. Also included are some ideas for books that parents can use at home, or that Religious Educators can use in class.

## **How do I get my congregation engaged?**

Start by **finding at least one other person** who is excited by the idea, ideally someone who can help inspire others in the congregation. **Then approach your minister, and/or congregational leaders** to get their support for promoting the UULM Low Carbon Challenge in your congregation.

- It is fun and involves all ages
- It helps us walk our talk
- It develops leaders and builds community
- Congregations can use this to meet their “Green Sanctuary” goals and live out our UUA Statement of Conscience on Global Climate Change
- It may bring the congregation positive publicity in the community
- It gives your congregation a great program to launch this coming Earth Day

## **You can start small or go for the gusto!**

You only need one “Ring Leader” plus four other households to get started (two co-leaders and up to eight households is also good). Ring Leaders should be people who are good listeners, respectful, kind, firm, are able to get to the meetings a bit early to welcome the others, and are committed to losing 5000 pounds of carbon themselves.

## **Ripple Effect**

If you invite people with the qualities to be Ring Leaders to join in one of the early groups, they may be inspired to become a Ring Leader and form another group when they finish.

## **Where do we get the books and how many do we need?**

Every household needs a copy of each of the two books. Your congregation could buy a set and pass them forward to succeeding Carbon Rings. However, many people like to keep the Low Carbon Diet book around for a handy reference guide.

- Global Warming: Changing CO<sub>2</sub>urse – order from the Northwest Earth Institute at [www.nwei.org](http://www.nwei.org) or call (503) 227-2807 - \$18.00 plus shipping
- Low Carbon Diet: A 30 Day Program to Lose 5000 Pounds - order from Empowerment Institute at [www.empowermentinstitute.net](http://www.empowermentinstitute.net), Amazon, or the UU Ministry for Earth <http://www.uuministryforearth.org/cgi/news.cgi> which gets a donation of \$3 for every copy sold. Prices vary from \$8 to \$12.95.

## **Data, Incentives, and Support**

Whenever you start a new Carbon Ring, please sign up on-line at the UU Legislative Ministry, CA [www.uulmca.org](http://www.uulmca.org) so that we may track the progress of the Low Carbon Challenge, and may stay in touch with the Carbon Ring leaders. Each congregation, with at least 5 households committed to participate in the eight session Low Carbon Challenge, will receive a UULM-CA Low Carbon “starter kit” which includes a free copy of each book.

New Ring Leaders are asked to contact the UULM office at (916) 441-0018 x202 or [admin@uulmca.org](mailto:admin@uulmca.org) They may join the ring leaders’ email list serve to share progress and questions, or may talk in person to someone who has already completed the Challenge.

## **A prize in every package**

While the grand prize is to be part of a mass movement to stop global climate change, UULM-CA will offer a prize to the congregation that loses the most pounds of carbon by Earth Day 2009, as well as a prize to the congregation that has the highest % of members participating in the Low Carbon Challenge by Earth Day 2009. We are currently soliciting ideas for meaningful prizes, particularly ones that would be encourage youth participation.

## **Resources and Links**

### **The UU Legislative Ministry, CA and the UULM Action Network**

[www.uulmca.org](http://www.uulmca.org)

The UULM Statewide Climate and Water Justice Steering Committee welcomes UU congregational representatives to be a link with their congregation. Join us as we create collaborative UU action and education in the state. Much information is passed through a monthly conference call for congregational representatives and an annual training. Contact [Iramsden@uulmca.org](mailto:Iramsden@uulmca.org)

### **UU Ministry for Earth**

<http://uuministryforearth.org>

The creators of the Green Sanctuary Program

### **California Interfaith Power and Light**

[www.interfaithpower.org](http://www.interfaithpower.org)

A great interfaith network for climate change work and resources.

### **Environmental Justice Coalition for Water**

[www.ejcw.org](http://www.ejcw.org)

UULM is a member of this coalition.