

## Advocates for Environmental Justice

The Advocates for Environmental Justice initially formed in February 2023, as a result of Jim Reeder, a leader on our building and grounds committee, asking for a volunteer to represent UUCFW in a group of city faith organizations to share ideas on how we could each educate our congregations about proper recycling. Congregant Jan Boeglin volunteered to meet with the other faith groups, and when other members of our congregation expressed interest in learning more about proper recycling, we formed a Group of Five and took the name Advocates for Environmental Justice. Jan Boeglin and Jim Reeder have been acting as co-chairs since then, and the group has grown to 20 members. Our focus has expanded to include a variety of environmental and climate issues.

Committee Leadership for 2026: Jim Reeder and Jennifer Quinton as co-chairs.

**The AEJ team has strived to live their values through the sharing of environmental info with our congregation, and by participating in and promoting environmental activities within UUCFW and the Ft. Wayne community.**

- **Green Sanctuary 2030** ... we are fully participating in this meaningful UUA program, which helps us stay on track with our environmental work. Details are in a separate part of this Congregational Record.
- **The creation of natural areas within our grounds and a Native Plant Garden** has reduced the amount of grass needing to be mowed, resulting in a reduction of weekly CO2 emissions from our mowers. Native plants and grasses are maintained by our grounds committee and a team of volunteers, with new plants being added periodically. The garden is now registered and “On the Map” with [Home Grown National Park](#), a collective effort of individual homeowners, property owners, farmers and anyone with some soil to plant in.
- **Newsletter Column** ... we have a weekly column in our newsletter “Around the Meetinghouse” that shares info on our activities, links to articles on environmental and climate issues, as well as information on local nature, recycling and environmental activities/workshops, that may be of interest to our congregation. We also provide an Environmental Resources spread sheet through this column.
- **Environmentally Themed Worship Services** - ... in 2024 and 2025 the AEJ facilitated three environmentally themed services for which we hosted outside speakers from Acres Land Trust for Earth Day in 2024, Dirt Wain Composting for Earth Day in 2025 and then in October we hosted a speaker from the Hoosier Environmental Council. All these speakers were very informative.
- **Climate Justice Revival** – In September of 2024, we facilitated this UUA sponsored day long workshop. With 16 participants, we were able to map-out

some priorities for this year, which resulted in participation in the UUA Green Sanctuary 2030 program.

- **Share the Plate Nominations** – we submitted to the Stewardship Committee the names of environmental organizations for 2025, [Trees Indiana](#), and for 2026, [Save the Maumee](#). Both were accepted to receive our congregation's financial support over a two-month period, through the sharing of one-half the receipts of the Sunday service collection plate. An environmentally conscious congregant submitted the [Little Rivers Wetland Project](#), and that was also chosen as a Share the Plate Recipient, so next year two environmental/nature related organization will be receiving our financial support.

When we collected offerings during May and June in 2025 for Trees Indiana, we created a Leaves of Hope/Tree of Hope project that was widely participated in by our congregation. In the Leaves of Hope activity, leaves made of biodegradable paper were given to everyone on which to write a personal message of hope. They then hung their leaves upon a beautiful tree poster, created by artist Jennifer Quinton, and AEJ member. In June we held a ceremony in which we planted a white oak tree on our front lawn, along with all the leaves which were buried among the roots of the tree. Several of our youth got involved in the planting that day, and the director of Trees Indiana participated by sharing inspirational thoughts during the ceremony.

- **Recycling Education** ... during a past service, the AEJ facilitated educating the congregation on what items the city and county are able to recycle. Afterward we shared several handouts on that topic to help them implement better recycling habits at home. This was a catalyst for us to re-commit to recycling procedures within our facility, and to a reduction of paper and plastic waste, by using real dishes, silverware and glasses for our after-service social hours and dining events, etc. UUCFW continues to properly recycle waste items through the city's recycling service. Over a 2-year period our members recycled caps and lids by bringing them to the meetinghouse, so that in turn they can be donated for reprocessing into a Buddy Bench for St Francis University, here in Ft. Wayne. We believe these activities have encouraged all of us to be more mindful and committed to recycling in our daily lives.
- **Participation in local workshops and attending environmentally themed festivals** Since our inception we have participated in Conservation Conversations, an annual all-day symposium sponsored by the Environmental Resources Center at Purdue University Ft. Wayne; in Better Recycling for Bigger Impact workshop sponsored by Allen County Dept. of Environmental Services; attended Eco Fest, a local festival which provides a platform through which local individuals, businesses and not-for-profits are able to promote sustainability and

eco-friendly products; and lectures on Planet vs Plastics sponsored by the Green Team at Pilgrim Baptist Church. These types of events are always on our radar.

- **Participation in City Beautification Programs**
  - **Adopt-A-Greenway** – This fall we completed our first two-year commitment to Fort Wayne Trails' Adopt-A-Greenway program in which we will be keeping litter-free, a 2-mile stretch of one of our county's numerous greenway trails. We plan to renew our involvement with program for another two years.
  - **Clean Drains Ft. Wayne**, a city-wide project to clear debris away from city street drains in our meetinghouse in the neighborhood.
- **Water Resources Walk** ... in the past we held a water resources walk with Geomorphologist and AEJ member Nick Jokay, who led a walk through nearby Foster Park, discussing the local water cycle of how rainfall becomes our drinking water, storm water, and wastewater. Ten people were on this informational walk, including two children.

As a group, the UUCFW Advocates for Environmental Justice welcome new members by regularly holding planning meetings. We are always open to new ideas on what more we can do within our congregation, on our property and within our community to promote climate justice and environmental values.