

# The Congregational Study/Action Issue Process: Text of "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice," 2008–2012

**"Issue** Religious organizations throughout the world have discussed the production, distribution, and use of food. Some people enjoy many food choices while others remain hungry. The food industry produces wealth, but small farmers and farm workers are often poor. Food production and transportation contribute to many environmental problems.

**Background and Reasons for Study** Congregations can develop effective strategies to address two of the world's biggest problems: social inequality and environmental destruction. This Congregational Study/Action Issue is inspired by the work of the several Unitarian Universalist (UU) affiliate and associate organizations that work with congregations in support of environmental justice.

Hunger is both a community problem and an international problem that can be approached in a variety of ways. There is a need for political advocacy in support of government programs that try to feed the hungry. There is a need also for involvement with service programs that deliver food to individuals and families - for example, Meals on Wheels programs.



## Significance to Unitarian Universalism

Unitarian Universalists have a vision of environmental justice. One of our principles acknowledges "the interdependent web." Others affirm the importance of human rights. Together our principles form one holistic statement that helps to define liberal religion.

## Possible Study Topics

There are different religious teachings concerning the production, distribution, and use of food.

Why is food so important in religion?

There are environmental concerns and concerns about animal rights and human rights. What moral guidelines, if any, should govern food production?

Some people have too much food and some have too little. How should congregations address issues like poverty and hunger, nutrition education, and health promotion?

What guidelines, if any, govern the purchase and use of food and beverages in your congregation? Do you pause for a blessing when you serve food?

**Possible Actions** Support sustainable agriculture and farmers' markets. Encourage organic community gardening.

Volunteer in support of community food pantries, Meals on Wheels programs, and similar projects that address the problem of hunger.

Become an advocate for social and economic justice. Support labor unions, farmers' cooperatives, "fair trade" associations, and other organizations that help the farmers and other workers who produce and distribute food in the global market.

**Related Prior Social Witness Statements** Ending Hunger (1987 General Resolution)

Redirecting Economic Resources to Eliminate Poverty (1991 General Resolution)

Environmental Justice (1994 General Resolution)

Nutrition for a Healthy Start in Life (1994 General Resolution)

Earth, Air, Water, and Fire (1997 General Resolution)

Toxic Threats to Children (1997 General Resolution)

Working for a Just Eco-

nomic Community (1997 General Resolution)

Economic Injustice, Poverty, and Racism: We Can Make a Difference! (2000 Statement of Conscience)

Responsible Consumption as a Moral Imperative (2001 Statement of Conscience)

Endorse the Earth Charter (2002 Action of Immediate Witness)

Economic Globalization (2003 Statement of Conscience)

Support of United Farm Workers (2005 Action of Immediate Witness)

Threat of Global Warming/Climate Change (2006 Statement of Conscience)

**Clarifying Statement:** *The first paragraph of Background and Reasons for Study has been amended from the original proposal in agreement with the proposing congregation, the previously cited UU Service Committee, and the Commission on Social Witness to identify accurately the source of the work inspiring this proposal.*

## BACKGROUND

When the UUA 2008 General Assembly selected "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice" as the new CSAI, the UUA Washington Office for Advocacy held a workshop for delegate input on this Resource Guide. The Director of the Washington Office then hired Rev. John Gibb Millspaugh, Co-Minister of Winchester Unitarian Society in Winchester, Massachusetts, as consultant to produce this Resource Guide. Rev. Millspaugh put out a call to relevant organizations in the UUA to send **volunteer** representatives to help write the Guide. Rev. Millspaugh did the initial design, coordination, final edit, and layout work, so send your cheers to the Team and direct your criticisms to him. Together they form the group that produced this guide:

### THE ETHICAL EATING: FOOD AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CORE TEAM

Rev. John Gibb Millspaugh, Chair & Consultant to the **UUA Office of Advocacy & Witness**;

John Dale, representing the **UU United Nations Office**;

Rev. Lee Devoe, representing **UUs for the Ethical Treatment of Animals**;

Robette Dias, representing **Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries**;

Rev. Dr. Lucy Hitchcock Seck, representing **UUs for a Just Economic Community**;

Rev. Dr. Paul Johnson, representing the **Commission on Social Witness**;

Rev. Bob Murphy, representing the initiating congregation: **UU Fellowship of Falmouth, MA**;

Rev. Dr. Michael Tino, representing **Allies for Racial Equity**;

Vicki Talbert, representing **UU Ministry for Earth**;

Maisie Taibbi and Corie White, **Youth Representatives**.

Contact the groups represented for more information. Through the Core Team's gifts of energy and time (with extraordinary gifts from Vicki Talbert), and through input from many UU commentators and contributors (like Michelle Hlubinka, who provided design tips for this Guide), we have completed the first phase of Study: assembling the resources that follow. But this collective work is only meaningful if you take up the Resource Guide and give it life. May it be so.

## THIS RESOURCE GUIDE IS PART OF THE CSAI PROCESS.

