

November 04, 2019



To: All Souls Unitarian Church Board of Trustees

From: All Souls Net Zero Carbon Team

Subject: A proposal for climate action

All Souls has long been committed to bringing its activities and policies into alignment with the UU Seventh Principle: respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Through the efforts of All Souls Green Task Force (2008-11), All Souls EarthCare Team (2014-17), and facilities and maintenance volunteers, our sexton, ministers and staff, and with the support of Boards of Trustees, we have built awareness of environmental issues. This has strengthened many people's spiritual links to the Earth and has led to changes in church operations, in members' lifestyles, and to our involvement in community action related to sustainability, environmental justice and climate change. We have increased recycling, reduced energy use, invested in solar panels, and made our grounds more attractive and sustainable.

Scientific evidence is clear: Climate Change is happening rapidly because greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere are at historically and dangerously high levels and continue to increase due to human burning of fossil fuels. Scientists agree that high levels of greenhouses gases in the atmosphere are already increasing temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and enhancing the severity of extreme weather.¹

Immediate response is required: Every sector of society must immediately reduce greenhouse gas emissions significantly to mitigate the most severe impacts on public health, the environment and economies the world over. Government, business, the nonprofit and faith sectors, and the public: all must employ existing approaches such as solar and wind energy and bravely step up to new technologies, to reduce emissions, to make our infrastructure and societal support systems more resilient, and to strengthen our spirits for the looming crises we are likely to face.

Climate change is an environmental justice issue: Those who will suffer the most, locally and more broadly, are those least able to be resilient—the poor, the elderly, the very young, and those who have traditionally been affected most by pollution and other environmental burdens such as Native and African Americans. Nothing less than the transformation of our society to make it more equitable while it becomes more resilient will do. We cannot just take care of our own building; we must also be involved in our wider community and work with people on the margins.

In 2015, all nations of the world gathered in Paris and agreed to ambitious goals to reduce carbon emissions by signing the "Paris Agreement." Nongovernmental organizations were asked to support those goals by signing the "Paris Pledge for Action." Many mayors, businesses, and other organizations around the country are responding to the moral imperative of the climate crisis by pledging to do their part to achieve the original US carbon reductions. More than 200 congregations from the US, Canada, and the United Kingdom have signed Interfaith Power & Light's "Paris Pledge"² specifically committing to reduce their carbon emissions by 50% by 2030 and to be carbon

¹[Indiana Climate Change Impacts Assessment https://ag.purdue.edu/indianaclimate/](https://ag.purdue.edu/indianaclimate/) and the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change https://www.ipcc.ch/](https://www.ipcc.ch/)

²<https://www.parispledge.org/pledge-takers-congregations/>

neutral by 2050.

In the fall of 2019, the All Souls Board appointed a new “Net Zero Carbon” project team to develop a plan that will reach the Paris Pledge carbon neutrality and took under consideration the draft resolution on the Paris Pledge that follows this letter. The Net Zero Carbon team will work with the Board, Committees, Minister, Staff, and Congregation to identify opportunities, costs and benefits, and establish ambitious but realistic steps to achieve the goals. It will also reach out to Interfaith Power & Light for plans from other churches who have taken the Paris Pledge and to the UU Ministry For Earth and others for consulting and guidance.

What is Carbon Neutrality and How Do We Get There?

There are many opportunities for ASUC to reduce or offset its contributions to emissions of greenhouse gases, and over the last several years we have already taken some of these; for example: recycling, high efficiency furnace, solar panels, LED light retrofits, and capital campaign window and door replacements. But we can and must do more. Here are some ways All Souls and its members can reduce the carbon footprint of our facility and homes:

- 1) **Conserve energy.** Energy efficiency will reduce our carbon footprint, and save money on our utility bills (There likely will be capital costs associated with some conservation projects). Primary means are: stopping air leakage, insulating, heating and cooling people not rooms, continuing to install LED lighting, and replacing inefficient appliances.
- 2) **Increase use of renewable energy.** For example, the solar panels on our roof provide a percentage of our energy needs without carbon emissions. We may look at more solar panels, solar water heating, and heating with something other than gas.
- 3) **Promote Green Transportation.** E.g. drive electric and hybrid vehicles, ride the bus, travel less.
- 4) **Influence Indianapolis Power and Light (and members’ local utilities) to supply us with electricity generated from renewable sources.**
- 5) **Offset those carbon emissions we cannot eliminate.** For example, planting trees on our property creates a carbon “sink,” as the trees consume and store carbon dioxide as they grow. Recycling also helps in this area.

All Souls takes the UUA Seventh Principle to heart and expresses it through a strong environmental ethic. As the climate crisis unfolds more quickly than we imagined just a few years ago, it is urgent that we put that ethic into practice by committing to reach carbon neutrality as soon as possible. The Paris Pledge is a way to join in solidarity with others all around the world. Taking the Paris Pledge would enhance our connection to the Earth and to the UU Principles and further All Souls’ links with the many other faith-based environmental efforts currently happening in Indianapolis and in the wider UU community. It would also establish All Souls as an example for others to follow.

Yours in community,

All Souls Net Zero Carbon Team

Resolution of the Board of Trustees

All Souls Unitarian Church, Indianapolis, Indiana

To be adopted on (?/?/2020?)

All Souls Unitarian Church of Indianapolis, Indiana, in recognition of the climate crisis and the threat it imposes on human society and the global ecosystem, as an aspirational goal hereby takes the Paris Pledge to reduce our facility's carbon emissions by at least 50% by 2030 and to achieve carbon neutrality by no later than 2050.

While All Souls aspires to the goals of the Paris Pledge in order to join in solidarity with organizations across the globe, we feel the urgency of the climate crisis and so we will attempt to reach those goals as soon as possible.

The Board of Trustees will adopt a plan to reach carbon neutrality in our facility. In October 2019 it created a new "Net Zero Carbon" project team and delegated the task of drafting the plan. The plan will define the baseline from which we measure our 50% reduction, define what carbon neutrality will mean for our facility, and create a roadmap for quickly achieving reductions and eventually Net Zero Carbon.

The Board will assign a Board member to the Net Zero Carbon team. The Board will direct All Souls staff and committees to implement the Net Zero Carbon plan. The Board will encourage carbon reductions through its policies and all church-related activities.

The Board also encourages All Souls members to personally take the Paris Pledge to accomplish similar carbon emission reduction goals in their homes and lives outside the church.

Furthermore, as we work to mitigate the effects of Climate Change, the Board encourages All Souls members and staff look beyond our walls to stay abreast of Environmental and Climate Justice issues in our community. Networking with community environmental and justice activists All Souls will learn how to support affected people, and we will work with other organizations to rectify the harms of past and to help prevent new injustices from being visited on people on the margins of our community.