



Application for Green Sanctuary Re-Accreditation Candidacy

Congregation Information

Date	May, 2018
Congregation Name	First Parish Hingham (Old Ship)
Address	107 Main Street, Hingham MA 02043
Web site	oldshipchurch.org
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Minister	Ken Read-Brown

Congregation Profile

Our application of 2007 reflected 250 adult members and 100 registered children and youth. Our current profile is substantially unchanged.

Update Original Assessments

Our original assessments focused on the practices of the church and our members, with environmental work beyond the walls of our church focused largely on charitable opportunities for our members. We completed projects relating to our own church's policies and practices, including installing a handicapped-accessible composting toilet in our previously restroom-free antique Meeting House in 2014. Other programs raised awareness among the congregation of what they could do at home. Our community work consisted mainly of donations to organizations doing environmental work. We also divested our parish funds from fossil fuels, and

As the world faces a climate future full of dire consequences for all living things, a focus on the practices of individual families or even institutions, supplemented by charity donations, is no longer adequate.

Since the time of our accreditation, our Green Sanctuary work has consisted of activism for social and governmental policies to combat climate change. For re-accreditation, we propose to continue and deepen that work. Members of the Green Sanctuary Committee have both founded and joined organizations where we work with others to promote an end to the use of fossil fuels, and that work is ongoing. We have engaged in legislative lobbying, rallies, community education events, and civil disobedience.

The area we feel needs improvement, looking back at the last few years, is the “transmission belt” of information to the congregation, and active engagement from the congregation, on our work in the movement to combat climate change. We have been focused on work in the community, and not enough on connecting the rest of the congregation with that work. Two of our proposed projects address that need going forward.

Sustained, committed action is what we need now. While work will be taking place between now and the final submission of our re-accreditation application, re-accreditation is not any kind of end point. Work will continue indefinitely, as several of these projects are not time-limited, impact-limited projects. We aim to change the world.

Action Plan

All of our projects are focused on combating climate change, including our environmental justice work.

Project Title:

Participate in and lead the South Shore node of 350 Massachusetts

Project Description:

Three years ago, members of the Old Ship Green Sanctuary team founded the South Shore node of 350 Massachusetts for a Better Future, a climate-change activist organization loosely affiliated with 350.org. Members of the Green Sanctuary Team have been prominent in the leadership and membership of the node ever since, and have stepped forward to provide statewide leadership in 350 Massachusetts as well.

The move to create a local activist group sprang from the Green Sanctuary team members' feeling of urgency around climate change as a worldwide crisis and a direct threat to our UU values. Somehow, switching out light bulbs and aggressive recycling no longer seemed like adequate responses to the existential threat facing the earth.

The node is successful in drawing in community support beyond our congregation, and engages in ongoing activities such as community education, legislative lobbying, direct action and (for some

members) civil disobedience. The purpose is to challenge our governmental leaders to rise to the occasion created by climate change, and turn the tide.

Timeline for Completion:

The project is not likely to have an end-point. Members of the Green Sanctuary team are committed to doing what it takes, for however long it takes, to stop climate change. If 350 Massachusetts for some reason is no longer the best vehicle for these activities, we will seek another organization to work with, and there are many viable options. But we are committed to climate-change activism for the foreseeable future, and right now we find that 350 Mass is an effective organization through which to pursue our goals.

Lead: Turner Bledsoe

Project Title:

Support the work of Fore River Residents Against the Compressor Station (FRRACS)

Project Description:

FRRACS is a grassroots organization of residents of the South Shore of Massachusetts who have come together to oppose the construction of a fracked-gas compressor station in Weymouth, Mass. As members of the South Shore node of 350 Mass, the Green Sanctuary team has engaged with FRACCS in this very specific fight to stop the import of fossil fuels through our area.

The compressor station fight is a question of environmental justice. The proposal would place a very dangerous industrial facility in a densely-populated working class neighborhood which is already over-burdened with polluting industrial facilities in Weymouth. The fumes from the station would blow directly over the poorest section of neighboring Quincy.

But the compressor station is also at the crux of the global climate crisis. This station is a crucial piece of the utilities' plan to pump fracked gas from the Marcellus shale fields in Pennsylvania, through New England, and on to Nova Scotia for export to Europe. If we can prevent this facility from being built, we may be ensuring that a very significant amount of fossil fuel stays in the ground.

Our approach to this fight has been to follow the lead of the local residents most impacted, and to provide support in whatever way they request, by rallying, letter-writing, lobbying, and publicizing the issue. We expect that some of us may engage in civil disobedience at some point, if FRRACS thinks this is the right approach to take.

Timeline for Completion:

This project will continue until the proposal to build the compressor has been scuttled. If we are successful, this may take up to three years, based on current conditions.

Lead: Connie Gorfinkle

Project Title:

Building a new, net-zero parish house for Old Ship Church

Project Description:

The church is no longer well-served by our parish house which was originally a nineteenth-century single family home. Maintaining this historic structure is no longer feasible for our community, and the building no longer serves our needs as a parish.

We have put the parish house on the market and have begun planning a new facility on land next door to our beloved and precious seventeenth-century meeting house. As a Green Sanctuary, we take very seriously our commitment to green building best practices. Having a net-zero parish house is an aspirational goal which presents many difficult challenges to a congregation, starting with the problem of funding, which is very dependent on our success at selling our current building.

It's possible we will be unable to sell the parish house at the price that we need in order to build a new one. If so, we will undertake a renovation project, and we will bring to it the same commitment to green building practices as we would to a new building. The challenges of creating a net-zero building are large enough that we may not be able to reach the aspirational net-zero goal, and those challenges are even greater if we are instead renovating a nineteenth century structure.

Whether building new or renovating, the Green Sanctuary team will seek a commitment from the congregation to reach as far as we can towards building a model facility that will tread lightly on the earth, and inspire others to do the same.

Timeline for Completion:

The timeline is almost entirely dependent on our success in selling our current facility, which is proving to be no easy task. After that sale, the planning and building process is likely to take eighteen to twenty-four months.

Lead: Nina Wellford, president of the board of trustees

Project Title: Parish Education to Action

Project Description:

With this project we will strengthen the “transmission belt” between the congregation and the Green Sanctuary committee, and involve more members in climate change activism. A discussion with the congregation about how to do this revealed that the most effective way will be to identify discrete, manageable activities that people can engage in without long-term commitments. We'll use these tools to promote this kind of engagement:

- regular posting in Old Ship's weekly newsletter of actions (rallies, letter-writing, lobbying, etc.) that congregants can participate in
- posting Green Sanctuary Committee activities on the Social Justice Committee bulletin board
- special plate collections for the organizations Green Sanctuary works with
- use of the Social Justice Committee's email list of people who have volunteered to take action
- at least two Social Justice Committee soup lunches after church focused first on “why work on climate change?”, and then on concrete steps towards electrifying our homes, and why this is a doable and important contribution to fighting climate change.
- a sermon on moving from concern to action, followed by an actual action in coffee hour (letter-writing or the like) that people can do before leaving church

Timeline for Completion: review progress after twelve months

Lead: Turner Bledsoe, with the Social Justice Committee

Project Title: **Adult education class on biblical roots for climate change activism**

Project Description: Minister Ken Read-Brown will lead a class, described below:

The Bible and Earth Care, fall 2018

In four sessions we will explore selected passages and stories from both the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian New Testament that offer guidance for stewardship and care of the earth, including the call to care for populations who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and other environmental crises. Led by Ken Read-Brown, Minister

Timeline for Completion: Fall of 2018

Lead: Ken Read-Brown, Minister