

MULTIFAITH

GREENFAITH

Interfaith Partners in Action for the Earth

Founded in 1992, GreenFaith is a US-based, interfaith environmental coalition. Organised by Jewish and Christian leaders, GreenFaith's mission is to educate, inspire, equip and mobilize people and institutions from diverse religious traditions as environmental leaders. GreenFaith works with more than 200 houses of worship and hundreds of religious leaders annually.

GREENFAITH AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

A 10-YEAR VISION

Over the past decade, GreenFaith has developed a range of programs at the nexus of faith and the environment. As we look to the coming decade, and understanding the interconnectedness of issues of poverty, sustainable development, health, gender equality, climate, and human rights and well-being, we would like to share several initiatives through which we believe our work will make a meaningful contribution to realizing the SDGs.

Our plans address many of the SDGs, with all of them addressing at least three or four. Because of that, we are not assigning our specific initiatives to specific SDGs, but rather trust that the multiple points of connection between our goals and the SDGs will be abundantly clear.

GreenFaith functions as a leader in the religious-environmental movement. With this in mind, we have sought to identify commitments we can take which will create the infrastructure to help this movement grow to scale by promoting leadership development and investing in highly leveraged interventions.

1. GREEN JOBS, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY, AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES - RESTORATION NATION

In the US, communities of color and low-income communities suffer disproportionately from climate change and pollution while contributing little to its cause – a pattern replicated globally. Yet too often, environmental concerns are not framed in a manner that speaks to the needs of these vulnerable communities – needs which always include a need for good jobs and a healthier environment.

We have begun to plan our Restoration Nation campaign as a new initiative to educate faith leaders in these communities about the kinds of policies that can create these green jobs and healthier, more resilient communities. Beginning with a series of clergy breakfasts in the greater NYC area, we plan to hold Restoration Nation gatherings around the US, building, over time, a strong network of African American and Latino faith communities whose understanding of climate and environmental issues encompasses these inter-related issues of human and ecological health, sustainable economy, and community resilience. We plan to provide this network with the tools they need to advocate effectively for policies that will make these initiatives the norm across the country. As we develop our international presence (see below), we will explore integrating this same sensibility into multi-country efforts as appropriate.

In the US, persons of color are projected to represent a larger percentage of the population than Caucasians by the mid-2040's. This initiative is designed to create a strong foundation of leadership on environmental and sustainability issues within these communities.

We would welcome the opportunity to partner with various UN agencies as we develop the educational content for this initiative, in the interest of providing education and policy recommendations that represent best understandings and practices internationally, and that seek to create synergies between religious efforts in these areas with UN initiatives.

2. TRAINING RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP FOR THE ECOLOGICAL AGE – THE GREEN SEMINARY INITIATIVE

Around the world, faith leaders are educated and trained, and their sense of religious mission and moral responsibility formed, at a diverse range of seminaries, schools of theology, and centers of religious education. These institutions, which have a unique ability to leverage long-term change within faith communities globally, have only

recently begin to understand the importance of integrating environmental concerns into their educational and training mission. We hope to accelerate that trend dramatically.

The Green Seminary Initiative, a program of GreenFaith and Drew Theological School, is currently developing a Seminary Environmental Certification Program as a means of transforming seminaries into centers of environmental sustainability. Through this three-year process, participating schools will integrate environmental care and concerns into their worship and spiritual practice, all aspects of their facility management and resource use, their coursework and curricula, their community life, and their governance and leadership.

Initially, this process will focus on seminaries across the US and Canada, with a pilot cohort of seminaries there beginning the certification process in late 2016. We plan to expand this effort to serve seminaries in Canada and Latin America in the coming three years, and internationally through the international, multi-faith network described below in following years.

We would welcome the opportunity to identify UN-sponsored research on best practices in education for sustainability so that we might integrate these findings into the resources and processes which we develop for the Seminary Environmental Certification Program.

3. BUILDING AN INTERNATIONAL, MULTI-FAITH NETWORK – GREENFAITH HUBS AND CIRCLES

For most of the past decade, GreenFaith has functioned as a US-focused organization. Over the past year, in partnership with the UK-based Conservation Foundation, we launched OurVoices – an international, multi-faith campaign for a strong agreement at the Paris COP meetings in December 2015. OurVoices has married the global omnipresence of faith communities with a smart social media team and has created and catalyzed peaceful demonstrations of concern about climate change in over 25 countries.

One example of this work was our #LightForLIMA campaign – in which we facilitated vigils in 22 countries during last year’s Lima COP. The campaign received international media coverage, and in the week leading up to the vigils, its Twitter hashtag received almost as many uses as the official hashtag for the COP itself. More recently, we organized a multi-faith march in Rome to thank Pope Francis for his leadership and to call for climate action from world leaders. The march was followed by a 3-day

convergence of young faith leaders (ages 21-40) from over 20 countries. The march received widespread international media coverage, and at the convergence the young leaders forged friendships, shared experiences, developed new skills and gained a global and multi-faith perspective on religious-environmental efforts. The UN Secretary General generously shared a video which he made specifically to encourage participants in the march and convergence.

Based on these positive experiences and in response to a growing number of requests from a range of faith leaders in various countries, over the next decade we plan to create high-quality, well-run national hubs in at least fifteen countries spread across North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia/Oceania and over 1,000 well-established local GreenFaith Circles across the globe.

The hubs will function as centers of policy advocacy and campaign coordination, and as clearinghouses of information and resources for local faith-based environmental efforts. We will help support these increasingly widespread local efforts in the form of GreenFaith Circles – local, multi-faith (where possible) collaborations around environmental issues. Member of two or more faith communities can launch a GreenFaith Circle, with GreenFaith providing a range of programmatic and campaign resources and guidance on basic organizing and development processes. Each local Circle will determine its own area of focus and engagement. We are currently testing these Circles in several US locations, and plan to launch Circles in several countries within the coming twelve months.

In the coming years, widespread faith community participation in global campaigns around climate and sustainability issues will be vital to progress on these issues. Governments will only respond if they see strong support from civil society for climate and environmental action; entrenched interests are too strong for it to be otherwise. In addition to promoting local action,

These hubs and circles will create measurable environmental benefits while helping foster an environmentally sustainable and just culture in their host countries. They will represent a globally interconnected network of religious leadership on environmental and sustainability issues.

In order to learn more about best practices in this field, we would welcome the opportunity to partner with UN agencies that have fostered or supported the growth of effective grassroots networks of leaders on a range of issues in different regions of the world.

4. POWER TO THE PEOPLE

- 1.3 billion people worldwide have no access to energy.
- 2.7 billion people - 40% of the world's population - rely on traditional biomass, charcoal and coal for cooking, with serious health risks. Nearly 2 million die annually as a result of exposure.
- Universal Energy Access can be achieved by 2030 with less than 50 billion in investments

“Widespread energy poverty condemns billions to darkness, to ill health, to missed opportunities. Children cannot study in the dark, women and girls cannot be productive when they spend hours a day collecting firewood. Business and economies cannot grow without power. We must find a way to end energy poverty.”

Ban Ki Moon

Power to the People is the name of our global, multi-faith campaign, currently in planning, to address energy poverty through accelerated access to sustainable energy worldwide.

While leadership by governments is vital, universal clean energy access will require more than just the commitments of governments. Private and charitable investments can accelerate access to safe and clean energy to address both poverty and climate change. As the world transitions off fossil fuels, it is crucial that those who have limited or no energy access now, should benefit from the energy transition. New and cost effective technologies allow for distribution of solar and other renewable energies globally. Micro grids and decentralized solutions can transform the living conditions and well-being of the poor worldwide.

Power to the People will be a campaign for increased investment in energy access by faith-based and other institutional charitable and philanthropic investors. Working through the UN Sustainable Energy for All framework, we will invite a wide range of religious institutions to deploy a minimum of 1% of their investments into investment-grade clean energy access projects. The campaign will also include the launch of Em*Power Corp, a global volunteer-led project to install small scale renewable energy systems throughout the world where energy access is limited by poverty, geography or political barriers.

In addition to the faith sector, institutions from the philanthropic, development, educational, and environmental sectors will be invited to participate. We are currently

seeking funds for a global convening of faith and charitable leaders in advance of UN COP 21 and following ratification of the SDGs. At this meeting, participants would craft a Statement of Action, and commitment to pledging 1% campaign of their assets to investments identified in partnership with the UN Sustainable Energy for All initiative, and other leaders in this field.

A subsequent 2016 planning retreat would bring together another leadership cohort to launch the Em*Power Corp, and to create a system through which young adult volunteers globally could commit a certain amount of time to bringing clean energy directly within the reach of those who currently lack energy access. These efforts would be designed to ensure distributed, community-based models of ownership of energy systems in developing countries while creating an unparalleled commitment to impact investing on the part of the world's faith communities.

We would welcome the opportunity to partner with UN initiatives such as Sustainable Energy for All, and to be connected with UN or member state-sponsored volunteer corps programs that offer an exemplary combination of mobilizing the willingness of young adults to volunteer with strong systems of local and community empowerment and leadership development.