[DRAFT - document for review]

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston

Sustainable Purchasing & Use Policy

Guidelines for Living Our Mission through Purchasing and Use Practices

In alignment with the church's explicit decision to implement practices and policies consistent with our Unitarian Universalist values and congregational mission (Living Our Mission), we must begin to adhere to more sustainable purchasing and use practices.

Not only will these guidelines help to defend and support the *interdependent web of existence of which we are a part*[1], but by implementing more thoughtful and socially responsible policies, we can help promote *justice, equity and compassion in human relations*[2]; a *world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all*[3]; and incrementally work towards *dismantle[ing] racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions*[4].

Therefore, when planning for a new expense that is supported by the church and its members, one should consider the following principles whenever possible:

1. Purchase from local, minority- and women-owned, union-backed businesses.
2. Ensure that purchased electricity is sourced from renewable generation.
3. Ensure that financial investments are backing companies with ethical operating practices, when possible.
4. Eliminate styrofoam and single-use plastics in favor of items with reduced environmental impact.
    a. Minimize purchases of take-out food and catering for events.
    b. Eliminate disposable food service items in favor of durable plates and cutlery.
    c. Reduce volume of individually wrapped items to eliminate packaging waste.
5. Limit printing and general paper use in favor of electronic communications.
6. Opt for recycled and low-carbon alternatives when financial cost is relatively comparable.
7. Maximize plant-based meal options to reduce carbon intensity and minimize animal suffering.
8. Opt for natural cleaning products to reduce chemical and fragrance exposure.
9. Install low-flow adaptors on the building's water faucets to reduce excess water consumption.
10. Turn off lights and fans in rooms that are not in use; opt for natural sunlight over electric lighting.
11. Set the A/C no lower than 74° / heat no higher than 68° to reduce HVAC energy consumption.
12. Eliminate unnecessary use of artificial intelligence in materials / content creation.

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[1] 7th Principle
[2] 2nd Principle
[3] 6th Principle
[4] 8th Principle

Item / Category	Increase	Avoid
Office and other Supplies	• Post-consumer waste (PCW) paper, paper products, and packaging • Reconditioned toner cartridges • Rechargeable batteries • Sustainable sourced / Recycled products	• Printing extra copies of things like agendas, agenda packets, OOS, etc. • Resist the urge to print extras "just in case." We can always print extras if we actually need them. • Plastic or unsustainable promotional/branding products such as bracelets, beads, cups, bottled water, key chains, etc. SWAG in general, is not environmentally friendly, and is not consistent with our UU values. • Promotional materials sourced from China. Taiwan, etc.
Edible / Consumables	• Locally sourced produce • Organic ingredients • Plant-based • Fair trade coffee, tea, rice • Potluck	• Bottled water • K Cups • Individually packaged snacks • Highly processed foods • Catering • Baked goods with artificial coloring • Candy
Service Items	• Use of reusable plates, cups, utensils • Use of fabric table cloths, napkins, towels	• Plastic utensils • Disposable plates • Plastic table cloths • Styrofoam • Paper towels
Cleaning Agents	• Environmentally friendly cleaning products (green-certified is best) • Minimally scented or fragrance-free products • Use of dish soap rather than detergents	• Heavily and/or artificially scented products • Anti-bacterial hand soap
Technology	• Use sustainable web hosting service • Encourage electronics/tech recycling	• Unnecessary use of artificial intelligence (AI) in content and materials creation.
General Purchasing Guidelines	• Locally sourced purchases • Union-made products	• Single use/ single event purchases, even if they are not disposable • Redundant purchases, such as dishes, glasses, utensils, serving ware

Specific examples of the aforementioned guidelines are outlined below:

[*The above list is not exhaustive, and should be viewed as examples of sustainable decision-making.*]