

Tips for Greening Your Event at UUCSS (and Beyond)

UUCSS Members Edition

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring is a green sanctuary, committed to being a responsible steward of the environment. Therefore, we strongly encourage anyone using church facilities for events to follow these helpful guidelines.

PLANNING

1. Think About the End in the Beginning

When you are *planning* your event, think about what will be left after the attendees have gone home – trash, plastic bottles, flowers, candles, etc. Your goal is to minimize your overall waste, including recycling. So minimize waste by not creating a lot of waste in the first place.

a. Reusables

Whenever possible, use or encourage the use of reusables such as silverware, dishware, glassware, travel mugs, etc. and ensure you have a plan in advance for washing them. Instead of bottled drinks, offer water in pitchers and mix up a large batch of other drinks and place them in large thermoses/coolers for dispensing (it will save money and reduce waste!).

b. Disposables

If you must use disposables, please use the Earth-friendly options for plates, cups, and cutlery that are located in two cabinets in the kitchen marked “compostables”. These may be used for all official UUCSS events. If you are hosting events in your home or elsewhere, here is where to find Earth-friendly products that are made of bamboo, corn, corn starch, straw, sugar cane, potatoes, wheat, etc.:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| --- MOMs Organic Market | --- Takoma Park Silver Spring Food Coop |
| --- Whole Foods | --- Dawson's (Rockville) |
| --- Roots Market | --- Costco |
| --- YES Markets | --- Party City |

Thin, white paper plates, Chinet plates and uncoated paper cups are also an acceptable option. For large quantities, contact Earth Friendly Hospitality (formerly Earth Friendly Maryland) in Riverdale. <http://earthfriendlyhospitality.com>

UUCSS strongly discourages the use of plastic, which is made from petroleum. Plastic plates, plastic cutlery, and many plastic cups cannot be recycled.

All businesses in Montgomery County are prohibited from using Polystyrene (Styrofoam) when serving food for any type of event/activity. This law applies to all events, including groups that rent church facilities.

c. Food Waste

To minimize food waste, aim to obtain an accurate head count so that you may order or prepare only what you need. Create a plan ahead of time for any leftover food:

- Bring containers to store leftover food.
- Plan to donate leftover food to event staff or to a local food bank that accepts leftovers.

2. Offer a Menu Everyone Can Enjoy

If any of your guests are vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free or have food allergies (or if you don't know), then try to offer food and drink choices to satisfy everyone. Label everything to make it easier for those with specific preferences/limitations. Include the name of the food dish or drink, any ingredients that could affect those with allergies (e.g., contains nuts), and if it is vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, etc.

Not all beer/wine/liquor is vegan! Check your options at Barnivore – <http://www.barnivore.com>

Affordable, veg-friendly caterers include:

Green Plate Catering - <http://www.greenplatecatering.com>

Zenful Bites - <http://www.zenfulbites.biz>

3. Ensure Your Décor Is Earth-Friendly

a. Table Linens and Liners - Use cloth table linens instead of plastic table liners, which won't biodegrade. Another option is to use a large roll of Kraft paper to place over tables—which you can write on, including names of food dishes and if they are vegan, etc. You can purchase this online by searching for “Kraft paper rolls”. The size should be at least 30” wide.

b. Flowers – To reduce your carbon footprint and support the local economy, obtain flowers from florists who source locally (less than 200 miles away). Slow Flowers will help you find a nearby florist that sources within the U.S.: <http://slowflowers.com>. Farmers markets are another great source and Whole Foods often sells flowers that are sourced locally. Check their signs.

c. Candles – Use candles made from beeswax or soy, instead of traditional candles that are made with paraffin, a petroleum byproduct. A local resource for soy candles is Handmade Habitat. <http://handmadehabitat.co>

d. Paper – Minimize paper usage by printing double-sided or only using half-sheets, where feasible, and reuse or recycle what is left over.

e. Guest Gifts/Schwag Bags – If you'd like to provide guests with a small gift, ask yourself “Do we really need to do this? Will all guests enjoy this? Is it usable, reusable, recyclable?” If you still want to provide a gift, source it from a company that cares about the planet and engages in sustainable business practices. Their web site should be a good indicator.

SETTING UP THE DAY OF YOUR EVENT

UUCSS will provide a trash container and a blue recycling bin in each room.

a. Please encourage your guests to place all recyclables in our blue recycling bins. We will accept plastic and glass bottles, aluminum cans, and paper. Please no plastic bags or wrap.

b. To truly minimize your carbon footprint, you can separate food waste and compostable plates, cups and cutlery from trash. Make this your largest container and use a compostable liner. If working with a caterer, ask if they can drop the compost at a facility. If you have curbside compost at home, take the full compost bags home, place them in a container marked COMPOST, and set them out on your normal day. Otherwise, place the compostable waste in a compostable bag and place that in the trash.

c. We recycle natural corks at UUCSS, so if you are serving wine, beer or other beverages that come with natural corks, please collect them and place them in the cork recycling container located outside the kitchen in the Sanctuary building.

CLEANING UP AFTER YOUR EVENT

Event organizers should walk through each room used for the event to collect any remaining waste and dispose of it properly.

Thank you for following these guidelines so that we may leave a smaller footprint on Earth!