

DRAFT v6, 8-4-10 Church Environmental Action – Proposed by ECO

Submitted for Church Council Consideration and Feedback in August 2010

The following draft incorporates feedback from the June 2010 discussion at Church Council of the previous draft, which recommended no helium balloons on church property and implementation in 2 phases. **While not everyone was comfortable with a ban on the use of helium-filled balloons, there was consensus about no releases from church property. The other consensus that emerged was that no helium-filled balloons should leave church property.**

ECO's mission is: *To support and encourage the Church and its members/friends to take actions toward sustainability and better stewardship of Earth.* Its ministry is grounded in the UU principle, *"Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."*

<<<<< **DRAFT v6** >>>>>

RECOMMENDATION:

Balloon/s filled with helium shall not be released and all shall be deflated (or burst) before removal from church property. Education about the rationale shall be a component of this practice.

BACKGROUND:

Our seventh Unitarian Universalist principle, *"Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."*, *guides this intentional action to protect aquatic wildlife.*

Balloons are festive and magical; they are an immediate way to lighten hearts and brighten smiles. However, helium-filled balloons, whether released into the air intentionally or accidentally, account for untold suffering and death of aquatic life in our waterways and oceans.

- Helium-filled balloons and pieces of them become litter that eventually ends up in our waterways and oceans. Biodegradable helium balloons last about 6 months on land and about 12 months floating on water. Non-biodegradable balloons last much longer.
- Helium-filled balloons and pieces appear similar to many food sources so unsuspecting aquatic wildlife swallow them, only to suffocate or starve. Others starve or drown because they become entangled in the strings. Victims include fish, water fowl, sea turtles, porpoises and whales.
- Helium-filled balloons can travel hundreds of miles from release (one documented over 1300 miles).
- As of mid-2010, many states and sites ban mass releases (FL, VA, NY, TX, parts of Australia and UK; National Park Service, White House, Walt Disney World); some rental facilities ban any use of helium-filled balloons.

===== ACTION for Church Council Members: *Please . . .*

- If possible, discuss this proposal with your committee members via a meeting or email **prior to** August 15.
- Discuss who should recommend this procedure (CC, ECO or ...?) **and** to whom?
- Provide feedback to warshawc@msn.com by Sunday, **August 15** (in time to compile and provide to Tifani by the deadline for Church Council agenda materials).

Feedback from Church Council to Draft v6 Balloon Proposal

Draft v6 of the Balloon Proposal will be discussed at the Aug. 24th meeting. ECO hopes that some action of this proposal will be determined at that time.

This draft was sent August 4 to Church Council representatives via the Church Council's email, C3HCC@yahoo.com, requesting either the representative's or the committee's feedback by August 15. Responses are provided below for your information.

Thanks to all who responded. Having advance input helps forward the discussion at the Church Council meeting itself.

"...As a representative of the group I support the proposal and think ECO is the right body to bring it forward to the church as a whole." **SEA**/Jean Genova:

Individual Responses (3 in favor, 1 not) from **W&A**/Marni Goldschlag

- "I think the helium balloon proposal is a good one. Think we should implement it."
- "I'm okay with this proposal, have no opinion as to who should sponsor it, but I think it needs to go to the Board, as it will be a policy."
- "I wanted to let you know that I am fine with the balloon policy as written, except that I think parents should be warned before balloons are popped since I know from experience that very young children can often be very frightened by the noise."
- "I am glad to see they scaled back from their original all-encompassing recommendation of no balloons! I am concerned about the impact on children, if any balloons are popped in their presence, but as Marion has gone on vacation, I cannot check with her about this. Also, they say that balloons filled with helium shall not be released but what if accidents happen?!? Are we prosecuting folks? I'd rather say that Church will not allow mass-balloon releases." *[NOTE: As a compromise to the original proposal to ban all helium-filled balloons, Marion suggested bursting the balloons and using that as a teaching moment.]*

Our committee was already in favor of the draft for a total ban so there is no issue with this.
P&J/paraphrased from conversation w/Peggy Misch

"Building and Grounds supports the proposed V6 draft policy on Gas filled balloons." **B&G**/
Gary Giles