



Earth Ministry Greening Congregations Toolkit

Earth Ministry
www.earthministry.org

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Earth Ministry engages the religious community in environmental stewardship. We work in partnership with individuals and congregations to respond to this great moral challenge through education, modeling sustainable lifestyle choices, and organizing for social change through environmental advocacy.

Founded in 1992, Earth Ministry has a history of leading the way in caring for creation. Our Greening Congregations Program was the first in the country to help houses of worship implement sustainable practices, and our faithful advocacy program is on the cutting edge of empowering clergy and lay leaders to speak out on public policy issues. We support a growing network of congregations and have a national membership. While Earth Ministry is rooted in the Christian tradition, we actively engage all religious communities on climate and energy issues through Washington Interfaith Power & Light (WA IPL).

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Washington Interfaith Power & Light



Praised Be

Section 1: The Heart of Faith

The Heart of Faith

“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” This is the central question of *Laudato Si’* (Praise Be), Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical on the environment. Named after the invocation of Saint Francis, “Praise be to you, my Lord,” in his *Canticle of the Creatures*, the encyclical is one of Christianity’s most powerful statements calling us to care for the Earth.

As the pope writes, the Earth, “our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us...we ourselves are dust of the Earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.”

However, we have not treated the Earth with the same care it has shown us, and now it is suffering, along with the poorest and most vulnerable around the world who are most harmed by environmental destruction. Pope Francis invites

us to “listen to them, urging each and every one – individuals, families, local communities, nations and the international community – to an ecological conversion... We are invited to change direction by taking on the beauty and responsibility of the task of caring for our common home.” Working together with people of good will across the globe, we can make a real difference in leaving a better world for our children and for many generations to come.

Though eloquent and far reaching, the pope’s call for people of faith to care for God’s creation is not new. The following excerpt from the National Council of Churches’ theological statement on the environment, *God’s Earth is Sacred: An Open Letter to Church and Society in the United States*, made the same case a decade earlier:

God’s creation delivers unsettling news. Earth’s climate is warming to dangerous levels; 90 percent of the world’s fisheries have been depleted; coastal development and pollution are causing a



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sharp decline in ocean health; shrinking habitat threatens to extinguish thousands of species; over 95 percent of the contiguous United States forests have been lost; and almost half of the population in the United States lives in areas that do not meet national air quality standards. In recent years, the profound danger has grown, requiring us as theologians, pastors, and religious leaders to speak out and act with new urgency...

To continue to walk the current path of ecological destruction is not only folly; it is sin. As voiced by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who has taken the lead among senior religious leaders in his concern for creation:

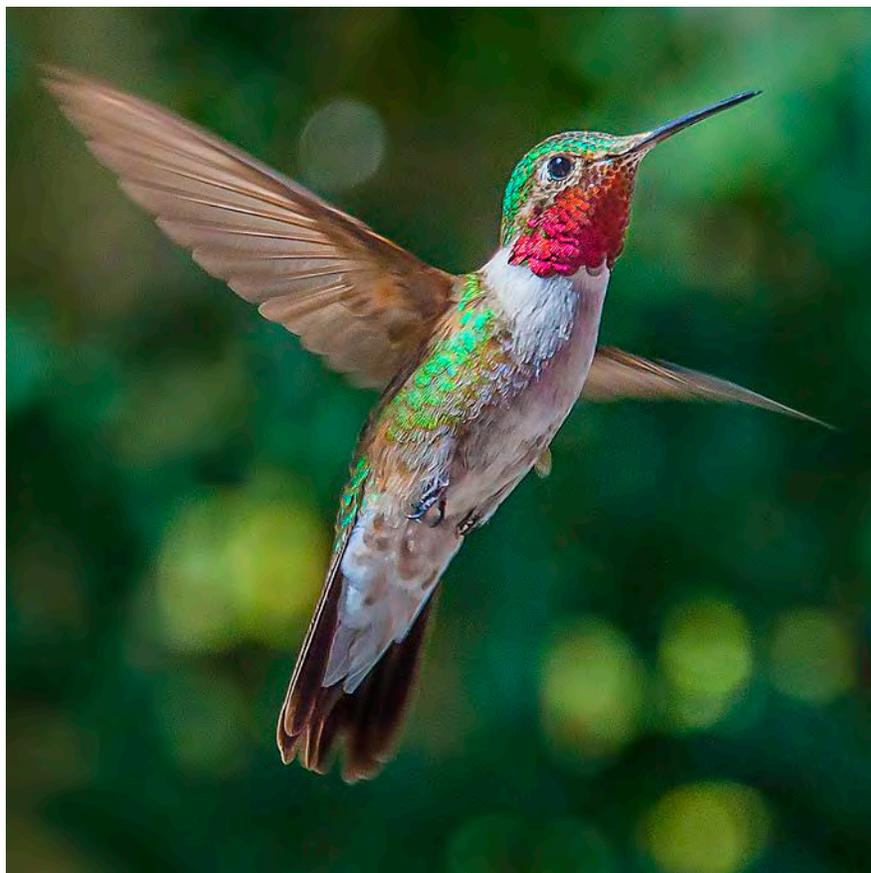
"To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin. For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation... for humans to degrade the integrity of Earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the Earth of its natural forests, or destroying its wetlands... for humans to injure other humans with disease ...for humans to contaminate the Earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life, with poisonous substances... these are sins."

We have become un-Creators.
Earth is in jeopardy at our hands.

This means that ours is a theological crisis as well. We have listened to a false gospel that we continue to live out in our daily habits – a gospel that proclaims that God cares for the salvation of humans only and that our human calling is to exploit Earth for our own ends alone. This false gospel still finds its proud preachers and continues to capture its adherents among emboldened political leaders and policy makers...

The imperative first step is to repent of our sins, in the presence of God and of one another. This repentance of our social and ecological sins will acknowledge the special responsibility that falls on those of us who are citizens of the United States. Though only 5% of the planet's human population,

we produce one-quarter of the world's carbon emissions, consume a quarter of its natural riches, and perpetuate scandalous inequities at home and abroad. We are a precious part of Earth's web of life, but we do not own the planet and we cannot transcend its requirements for regeneration on its own terms. We have not listened well to the Maker of Heaven and Earth.



The second step is to pursue a new journey together, with courage and joy. By God's grace, all things are made new. We can share in that renewal by clinging to God's trustworthy promise to restore and fulfill all that God creates and by walking, with God's help, a path different from our present course. To that end, we... call on our churches to rededicate themselves to this mission. We firmly believe that addressing the degradation of God's sacred Earth is the moral assignment of our time.

This letter was signed by theologians, clergy, and religious leaders from numerous Christian denominations, and makes it clear that caring

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for the Earth is a fundamental part of our faith tradition. With the climate crisis at the forefront of national conversation, we are witnessing untold numbers of people of faith speaking out on behalf of God's creation.

Together we share a set of core values that speaks to the heart of religious morals and ethics: **spirituality, stewardship, sustainability, and justice.**

Spirituality: Creation itself inspires us and calls us to care. We behold the power and love of God in a mountain range, a sunset, or in the timelessness of the ocean, and the hardest hearts among us are moved. Many people have profound spiritual experiences in nature, reminded that creation includes us – our families, our communities, and our own created landscapes. Our inspiration to care for both wild places and our own cities and backyards is closely tied with our willingness to truly understand who (and whose) we are. As poet and scholar John Philip Newell suggests, perhaps it is within creation that we can best hear “the heartbeat of God.”

Stewardship: In Genesis, we learn that God is Creator of all that has life. As Psalm 24 proclaims, “the Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it; the world, and those who live in it.” When our faith falters in the face of worldly power and greed, we too easily forget that the Earth is not ours. It can be too easy to trade the health of our planet and its vulnerable populations for our convenience and acquisition of wealth. But our biblical mandate is to “till and keep” the garden, and we are called to care for the creation on behalf of future generations and all species. God calls creation good, and we know it to be beautiful and sacred. Environmental stewardship – the caretaking of this planet – is the fulfillment of an important part of who God created us to be.

Sustainability: At the heart of sustainability is the goal of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In a world of finite resources, those among us who have more than enough must address their patterns of consumption so that we can provide for all. Acquiring more “stuff” has a direct effect on the sustainability of the planet and on the



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quality of life for people around the globe. The good news is that more and more people are realizing that spiritual emptiness can't be filled by consumption. What makes us happy is intimacy – intimacy with self, with others, with the created world, and with God. In the end, sustainability means seeing ourselves and our neighbors as children of God, not as consumers or competitors for Earth's resources.

heavily on the people around the world who are least able to mitigate these impacts – poor and vulnerable populations. It also disproportionately affects fragile plants, animals, and ecosystems. Working for justice calls us to channel our faith into power, to call for social and environmental justice at the local, state, and national level.



Justice: Justice means that in addition to providing aid to our neighbors, we are called to change societal systems that cause poverty, injustice, and environmental damage in the first place. It goes beyond helping to meet physical needs to creating a society with laws and policies that allow the needs of all Earth's inhabitants to be met. Care and responsibility for the "least of these among us" is a central tenet of Christianity and many other faiths and has a direct connection to environmental issues. The impact of environmental degradation falls most

The mutually life-giving relationship between people of faith and God's Earth is as old as time. The choice to take a clear stand as a community of faith and to become a Greening Congregation is well-grounded in our Christian tradition. Earth Ministry is committed to the possibilities in your congregation's greening commitments, supporting you with a cloud of witnesses spanning geographical and denominational boundaries.

We invite you to walk with us and many thousands of others as stewards of all creation!

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Section 2: The Work of Faith

The Work of Faith

Earth Ministry's Greening Congregations program is one of many ways we engage people of faith in environmental stewardship. There are at least three major pathways to care for the Earth: Individual Faith Formation, Greening Congregations, and Advocacy for All Creation. Here's a bit about each of these areas, and why we think Greening Congregations are especially important.

Individual Faith Formation

Individual Faith Formation is about personal conversion, the deep realization that God is calling us personally to care for and protect all creation. To know and experience the sacramental presence of God in the natural world is an experience as old as human history. People can connect with the divine through nature and with God's presence in wild lands and gardens.

Earth Ministry's earliest programs helped people make the connection between spirituality and the natural world through experiential field trips, inspirational gatherings, lecture series, and worship services. Feeling this connection with the divine in creation can help us to make individual choices for sustainability, such as driving less, eating local organic produce, installing energy-efficient light bulbs, recycling, and more.

For individual or group reflection, Earth Ministry has three faith-based study guides on sustainability themes: *Simpler Living*, *Compassionate Life*, focusing on voluntary simplicity; *Food & Faith: Justice, Joy and Daily Bread*, a Christian look at food, farming, and sustainable eating; and *Money & Faith: The Search for Enough*, on financial stewardship. We also offer a set of study guides to accompany Ken Burns' PBS series "The National Parks: America's Best Idea," and an extensive selection of books, curricula, and videos available through Earth Ministry's Resource Library.

Greening Congregations

Once we as people of faith decide to honor creation in our own lives, we often seek to express those values with others in community. The goal of Earth Ministry's Greening Congregations program is for faith communities to honor the Earth in all aspects of their communal life.

Some churches commit to creation care language in worship services or educational offerings, and many make significant changes in the operation of their building and grounds. Choices can include instituting toxic-free grounds care, use of dishware instead of Styrofoam, conducting a church-wide energy audit, purchasing water and energy-saving appliances for the church kitchen, and hosting a community screening of an environmental film.

Earth Ministry's Greening Congregations program has a significant multiplier effect as people take what they learn at church into their home, business, and professional settings.



Section 2: The Work of Faith

These programs give congregations the resources to care for creation while building a stronger community of faith. If you can do it in your church, we can all do it in our neighborhoods, in our country, and in our world!

Advocacy for All Creation

Advocacy for All Creation brings our faith and our values into public discourse, and ensures that God's gift of creation is protected for the enjoyment of all God's children.

Earth Ministry is on the forefront of supporting people of faith to participate in environmental advocacy. It is not always easy for spiritual people to have the knowledge to make their voices heard on such important issues as climate and energy, clean air, and clean water. Earth Ministry's Faithful Advocacy program provides support and teaches skills to speak truth to power on behalf of Earth's fragile ecosystems.

Members of the religious community have a right and a responsibility to make sure that our values are heard by governmental decision makers. Earth Ministry members and people of faith across the country are now leading the way in being faith-based advocates, working for justice for the Earth and all its creatures.



Bringing It All Together

Each of these aspects – Individual Faith Formation, Greening Congregations, and Advocacy for All Creation – is crucial to environmental stewardship as a whole. Together they form a web of activity and contemplation. Understanding this complexity, Earth Ministry works to support you every step of the way.

In this toolkit, we provide resources and suggestions for the second of these pathways, Greening Congregations. However, we have integrated components of Individual Faith Formation and Advocacy for All Creation into many of the materials.

There is a unique power for meaningful change in communities of faith like yours. Earth Ministry's Greening Congregations program affirms the work of the body of Christ – the Church – at work in the world.

Communities in general are able to encourage and inspire one another. We understand ourselves in the context of other people and are accountable to our neighbor. We brainstorm better ideas in groups, and we share knowledge across professional and experiential dimensions. Communities of faith in particular have the distinction of a shared spiritual ground and purpose. Together we love and honor God the Creator and strive to protect our fellow creation.

By becoming a Greening Congregation, your church is about to enter an exciting and rewarding new chapter in what Thomas Berry calls "the Great Work." This program requires effort and commitment, but offers surprising rewards and satisfaction along the way. Community life is a shared journey, and becoming a Greening Congregation involves connecting with parts of your faith that you may not have encountered before. Thank you for joining us on this path, and for your commitment to a healthy and sustainable future.

Earth Ministry

Greening Congregations Toolkit



Section 3: How to Use the Greening Congregations Toolkit

How to Use the Greening Congregations Toolkit

The Greening Congregations Toolkit is designed to assist churches in successfully completing the certification process to become one of Earth Ministry's Greening Congregations.

The Toolkit is also intended for use by current Greening Congregations looking for fresh ways to revitalize their sustainability efforts. It may prove valuable for anyone looking for ideas to incorporate environmental awareness into programming and operations at their church.

The following section of the Toolkit provides an overview of the **Greening Congregations** program, complete with more background on the program and step-by-step information on the application process.

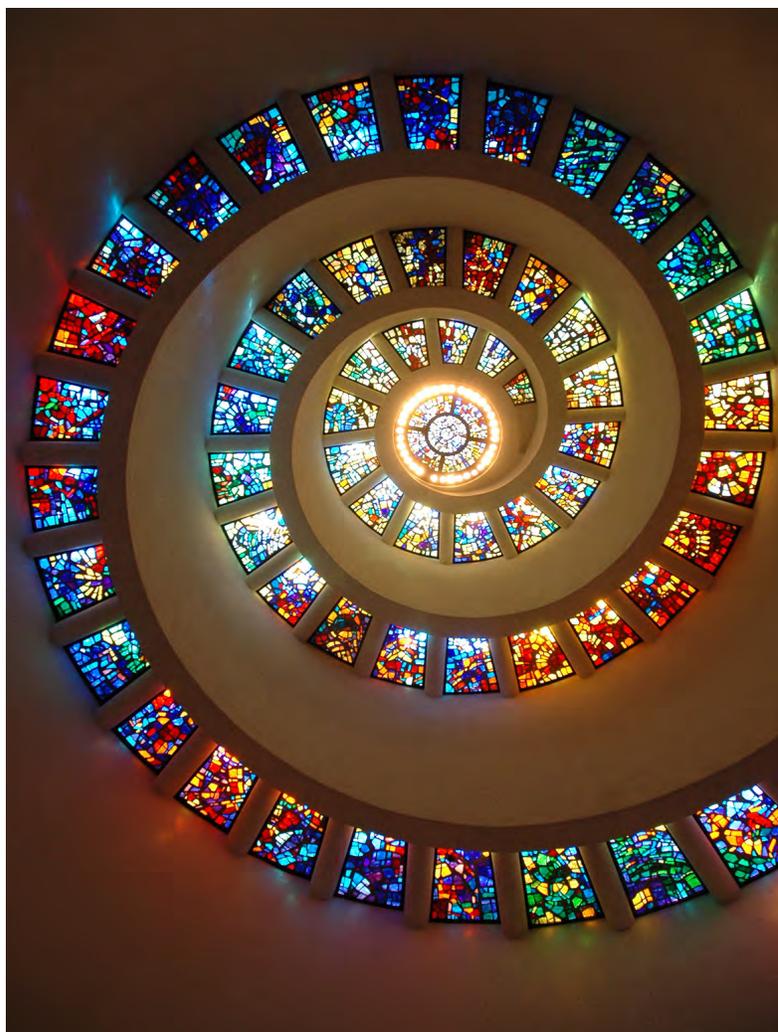
The Toolkit offers expansive descriptions of Earth Ministry's five **Green Fields**, which include Worship, Education, Buildings & Grounds, Community Engagement, and Faithful Advocacy. The Green Fields cover many different aspects of greening so that creation awareness and activities can be woven throughout all areas of church life. Specific projects and activities are outlined to equip you with the tools and resources you need to build a greening foundation for your faith community!

The Toolkit concludes with a group of appendices, packed with additional resources.

Appendix A contains templates for the Greening Congregations application materials to ease the process of joining the program. In addition, Appendix A includes a sample annual plan for inspiration in crafting your own.

Appendix B contains congregational profiles from a diverse cross-section of Earth Ministry's Greening Congregations. These success stories showcase the many forms that greening has taken in Earth Ministry's member churches. The possibilities for environmental awareness are as unique as the individuals and congregations who advocate for them and as plentiful as blades of grass in a field.

While advocating for sustainable practices in your congregation, there are choices you can make in your personal and home life to better steward the Earth. In **Appendix C**, we strive to respond to this desire for individual growth by providing suggestions for ways individuals and families can live more sustainably as the result of their participation in a Greening Congregation.





EARTH MINISTRY

GREENING
CONGREGATIONS

PARTNER

RACE TO STOP
GLOBAL WARMING

Section 4: Greening Congregations Program

Earth Ministry Greening Congregations Program

Join scores of other churches participating in Earth Ministry's Greening Congregations program — the first of its kind in the nation! This program offers comprehensive support from an experienced team and effective tools for faith communities working to foster a better awareness of caring for God's creation.

What is the Greening Congregations Program?

The Greening Congregations program offers Earth Ministry's partnership in a flexible strategy for engaging your faith community in creation-care efforts. This program supports your congregation as you envision and celebrate the greening of many different areas of your church's life. The Greening Congregations program provides a customizable, structured approach that allows you to utilize the unique gifts and passions of your faith community to build a successful greening campaign. Annual review and renewal help keep congregations both accountable to their goals and aware of their successes!

Who can participate in the Greening Congregations Program?

Earth Ministry invites any of our member congregations to engage in the Greening Congregations program. Congregations can become members of Earth Ministry as part of the application process.

What unique benefits can I expect in this partnership with Earth Ministry?

Earth Ministry offers a unique networking opportunity to our Greening Congregations.

By joining this program, you gain access to Earth Ministry's 25+ years of experience shepherding congregations through the greening process. We have accumulated resources and built connections within the faith community, environmental community, and government institutions to keep up with current sustainability trends and to better serve our members.

Earth Ministry also honors our distinctly Christian heritage while collaborating with interfaith agencies through our Washington Interfaith Power & Light Project (WAIPL). We work hard to balance ecumenical and interfaith concerns so that we learn from each other and grow stronger in our shared stewardship of the Earth.



Section 4: Greening Congregations Program

Earth Ministry's existing network of Greening Congregations expands our already considerable institutional knowledge into more and more arenas. Semi-annual networking opportunities allow Greening Congregations to share their projects, events, and plans with one another and gain valuable support and encouragement. Numerous opportunities for collaboration arise from these frequent gatherings, bringing together participating congregations multiple times throughout the year.

We supply diverse resources for green teams online (see our resource page), via email and publications, and through staff support. Our website contains many resources for greening, including worship aids, Greening Congregation Partner success stories, Earth Ministry publications, and more.

Congregations that successfully complete their first year in our program are awarded a banner to be displayed in their church. For additional benefits of congregational membership at varying levels, please see our membership page.



**This program sounds perfect for my congregation!
How do we get started?**

The application process is laid out next in the Greening Congregations Process section, which outlines step-by-step how to get started on the path to implementing more sustainable practices in your house of worship. Earth Ministry suggests that Greening Congregations adapt the following process to meet your congregation's needs. Our process is designed to be flexible and to reflect that different faith communities have different means, priorities, and passions.

Even if your congregation has been greening for years, join the program now to receive recognition for your efforts and utilize the support and resources to take your work to the next level!



Section 4: Greening Congregations Program

Apply to Become an Earth Ministry Greening Congregations Partner

1. Form a congregational creation care group.

These groups, or green teams, may consist of two or three individuals, a larger ad-hoc group, concerned friends who meet on an ongoing basis, or an entire congregation.

2. Gain acceptance within the congregation for becoming a Greening Congregation.

This acceptance is twofold: First, we require a statement of intent signed by the governing body (such as a vestry, church council, or priest) of the church; second, the congregation must become a congregational member of Earth Ministry if it is not already. We encourage all Greening Congregations to join at the \$250 level, which is renewed annually. These steps formalize your relationship with Earth Ministry.

3. Adopt a mission statement to guide your group's vision and ongoing efforts.

A mission statement serves as a touchstone for how your group envisions fostering creation awareness and care in the congregation. You are welcome to develop your own statement or use the mission statement template provided in Appendix A.

4. Write a summary of past activities, if applicable.

This summary serves as both a record of your past accomplishments and a chance to celebrate what you have already achieved. It is not a requirement for admittance into the program, but it is a helpful tool for forming your annual plan.

5. Develop an annual plan that brings your mission statement to life.

Each year's plan should be manageable in scope and viewed as one piece in an ongoing, year-by-year effort. This plan should bring creation awareness and care into the various Green Fields of congregational life (see next section). A sample annual plan can be found in Appendix A to streamline this process. As part of the annual plan, we ask that you create a Green Team roster and submit

names, phone numbers, and email addresses of your Green Team members to Earth Ministry each year to ensure effective communication regarding Greening Congregations news and events moving forward.

6. Submit your completed application materials.

Earth Ministry requires that member congregations submit four items: a signed statement of intent, a mission statement, an annual plan for the upcoming year, and your membership dues for the year if not already paid. These materials can be mailed to Earth Ministry, 5515 Phinney Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103 or emailed to emoffice@earthministry.org.



Section 4: Greening Congregations Program

Tending Your Green Fields: How to Keep the Momentum Going

1. Your group and congregation members carry out your annual plan. This is the most exciting part of the process! Earth Ministry's Greening Congregations Toolkit is full of resources and tools to help bring your plan to life.

2. Schedule a staff consultation with Earth Ministry. Benefits of congregational membership at the \$250 level and above include a staff consultation with Earth Ministry's Outreach Coordinator; if you are local to the Northwest, this consultation is in-person, and an adult education class for your congregation can also be arranged. Consultations with congregations outside of the region will occur by phone.

3. Evaluate your previous year's annual plan and create a new one. This is a self-evaluation process for your Green Team to celebrate your accomplishments and look at areas of desired growth. It is especially helpful to review your old plan shortly before creating one for the upcoming year. See the template in Appendix A for help in submitting your annual plan renewal.

4. Celebrate your annual accomplishments!

Earth Ministry will honor your achievements by presenting a Greening Congregations banner to your congregation in the first year of the program. In subsequent years, Earth Ministry will review your annual plan with you and help connect you with useful resources to accomplish your goals.

We encourage Green Teams to let Earth Ministry know about events in your congregation that are open to the public, as well as to highlight greening activities by reporting back to the congregation via newsletter articles, bulletin blurbs, short announcements in worship, and other means. Often your accomplishments are of interest to local media as well.

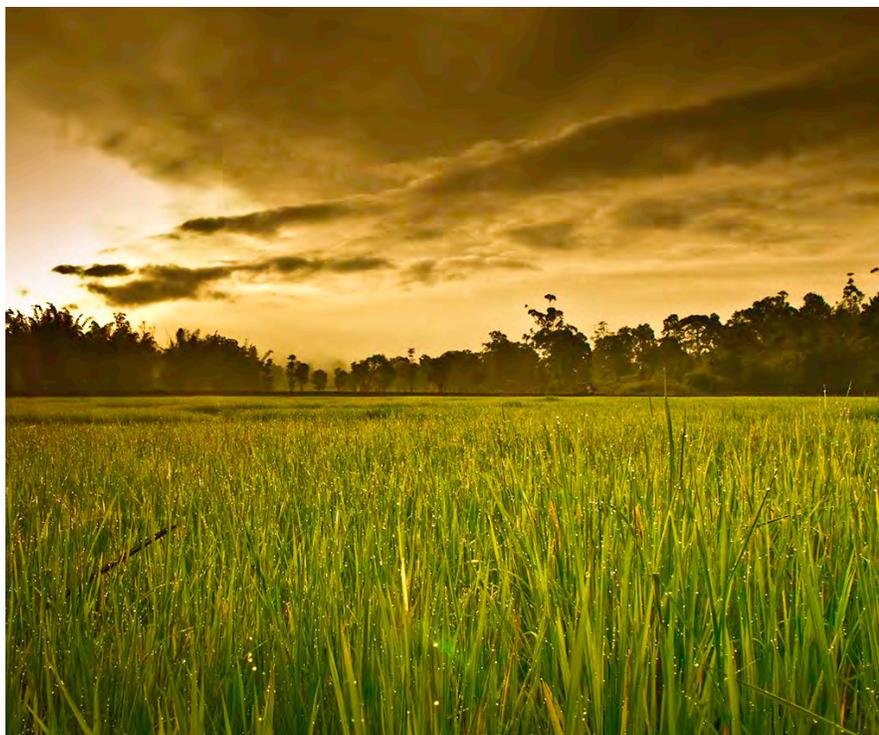




Section 5: Green Fields

Green Fields

Earth Ministry encourages a multi-faceted approach to greening your congregation, dividing projects and activities that reflect care for creation into five **Green Fields**. These Green Fields are five different areas of congregational life, often intersecting, into which greening can be incorporated. Greening Congregations' annual plans reflect activities or projects in each of the Green Fields, approaching environmental stewardship from multiple directions.



An organic place to start greening is through **Worship**, weaving creation care into the life of the congregation through prayers, sermons, and liturgies.

Another place to explore the relationship of faith and God's broader creation is within your church's educational programs. Religious **Education** is a great way to help adults, youth, and children understand how threats to creation are a concern for people of faith.

As we grow in appreciation of God's creation, we often grow more aware of opportunities to steward our sacred spaces, including our church building and surrounding grounds.

As a third Green Field, let your **Building & Grounds** be a tangible example of your congregation's commitment to reduce the ecological impact of your institutional life.

While taking steps within your congregation to care for creation is important, it is equally important to live out that mission in the world. Through various acts of **Community Engagement**, your church can play a lead role in advancing social change. By engaging your neighborhood and local community through hosting events, you can live out the call to steward the Earth outside your church doors.

Our fifth Green Field is participating in **Faithful Advocacy**. As people of faith, we are called to speak out for the poor, oppressed, and voiceless among us. We know that environmental degradation disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations both globally and locally, and we have a moral responsibility to respond to injustice here and around the world.

The Earth and its nonhuman creatures cannot speak for themselves. Faithful Advocacy provides congregations a way to connect to legislation on nonpartisan issues that can unite us all. Let us lift our voices as people of faith in the halls of power!

Section 5: Green Fields

We've compiled a collection of potential projects and activities under each Green Field to promote greening activities within your house of worship. Many of the examples come from our Greening Congregations' proven successes. This list is not comprehensive, and the ideas listed here are intended only to provide inspiration and concrete suggestions that will assist you in your planning. We encourage you to adapt any of these ideas to the unique passions and capacities of your faith community.

In addition to taking steps in your congregation, the choices you make in your personal life can reflect a care for the Earth. Though **Individual Stewardship** is not a Green Field, we recognize it is important to many congregations as they consider their greening ministries. Please see **Appendix C** to find suggestions for ways you can personally live more sustainably. Bringing greening practices to your home and workplace are wonderful ways to further your stewardship of God's gifts.



Section 5: Green Fields

Worship

Honoring the gift of God's creation during our worship services is a fundamental way to introduce others to the call to care. **Worship** connects us more intimately with God, and – when we bring images of nature into that relationship – it reminds us that we are not as far removed from nature as we often believe. Here are examples of how creation care can be integrated into your church's worship services.

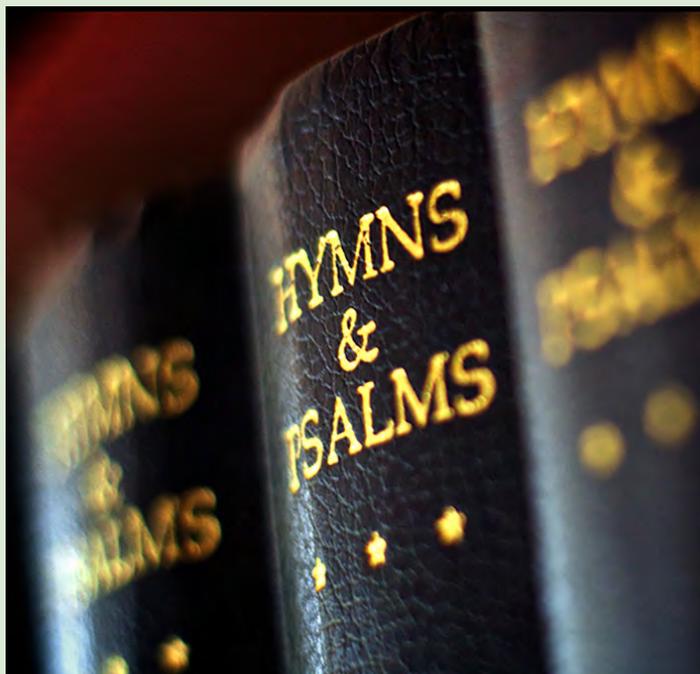
- Preach it! Proclamation of the Word through sermons/homilies and children's sermons support members' awareness of God's compassion for all of creation. Ask your pastor to consider regularly integrating Earth-awareness into her or his sermons. Several examples of creation-honoring sermons are available on Earth Ministry's website.
- Sing hymns or praise songs that uniquely resonate with themes of environmental stewardship. Look in the index of your hymnals and worship songbooks for hymns that celebrate creation, such as *For the Beauty of the Earth* or *Morning has Broken*. More hymns can be found on Earth Ministry's website under Worship Aids.
- Call members to deeper communion with God, each other, and the rest of creation through prayers, litanies, and scriptural readings that emphasize care for the Earth.
- Insert one or two lines expressing gratitude for God's creation in prayers of the people or other times of congregational prayer.
- Hold worship services outdoors to help members remember that the Holy can be experienced in the beauty of nature, as well as in the beauty of church.
- Invite people to connect with nature through an outdoor processional prior to or following a service. This might be an especially appropriate idea for a Palm Sunday or Rogation Sunday processional.
- Adorn the sanctuary with greenery to keep your Earth-keeping identity at the forefront of your congregation.
- Use flowers or plants grown on church grounds to decorate the sanctuary.
- Plant and grow a Bible Garden featuring plants named in scripture.



Section 5: Green Fields

Worship, con't

- Use banners and other decorations in your congregation as symbols that serve as windows through which to glimpse God's incarnate presence in the world. Look at your congregation's current banners to see what creation images already exist. Call attention to them through an announcement in your newsletter or bulletin.
- Decorate common areas with artwork that captures creation care images, or showcase a seasonal photography exhibit featuring images that tie in with a theme relevant to a preaching series or liturgical season.
- Seek out sacramental elements that are good for people and good for the planet to enhance connection with creation.
- Use organic, whole-grain bread from a local bakery for communion, or have a member of the church bake bread!
- Use eco-friendly cleaning supplies to wash communion vessels.
- Provide communion wine from a local vineyard; or, if your climate allows, grow wine grapes right on your own church grounds. If you use juice in your communion liturgy, consider making it together from locally grown grapes.
- Practice intinction (dipping the host into a common cup) or use reusable cups for serving communion wine.
- Let your congregation know where the water for your baptism services originates. Highlight its connection to the rain, rivers, lakes, and oceans that sustain life.
- Honor your congregation's sense of place by bringing in water from a local lake or stream for baptism.
- Celebrate special seasons and holidays that provide an opportunity to incorporate creation-honoring worship into the liturgical year:
 - Carbon-Free Lenten Studies: Earth Ministry's Washington Interfaith Power & Light (WA IPL) project offers Lenten Resources, including a Carbon-Free Lent Calendar and a Prayer and Action Guide.
 - April can be celebrated as Earth Month, a time to rejoice in God's creation while drawing attention to environmental issues.
 - Observe Plow Monday, the first Monday after Epiphany, by preparing for spring planting with a blessing of plows, shovels, and garden tools.
 - Rogation Days — the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of the sixth week of Easter — provide an opportunity for entire congregations to take part in outdoor, public processions with songs and litanies to bless the gardens and grounds.



Section 5: Green Fields

Worship, con't

- Attend and invite others to join you for Earth Ministry's annual Celebration of St. Francis in early October (around October 4).
- Invite the congregation and community to bring their pets to a Blessing of the Animals.
- For International Arbor Day, December 22, congregations can plant trees.
- Additional resources for special worship services are available from Earth Ministry. Use live trees and greens to decorate for Christmas; then plant or compost them.
- Green your worship practices, such as by using beeswax candles instead of oil-based candles, or purchasing sustainable palm fronds for Palm Sunday from a reputable source such as *ecopalms.org*.
- Create an online forum where members can share their environmental tips and experiences, or encourage your members to post their ideas on Earth Ministry's Facebook page.
- Make oral announcements during worship as an effective way of letting others know about upcoming creation care events in the congregation and community.
- Design bulletin inserts to remain relevant for multiple Sundays, simultaneously saving paper and printing costs.
- Provide baskets to recycle printed materials after worship.
- Use recycled, chlorine-free paper for bulletins and printed materials. You can also look for paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

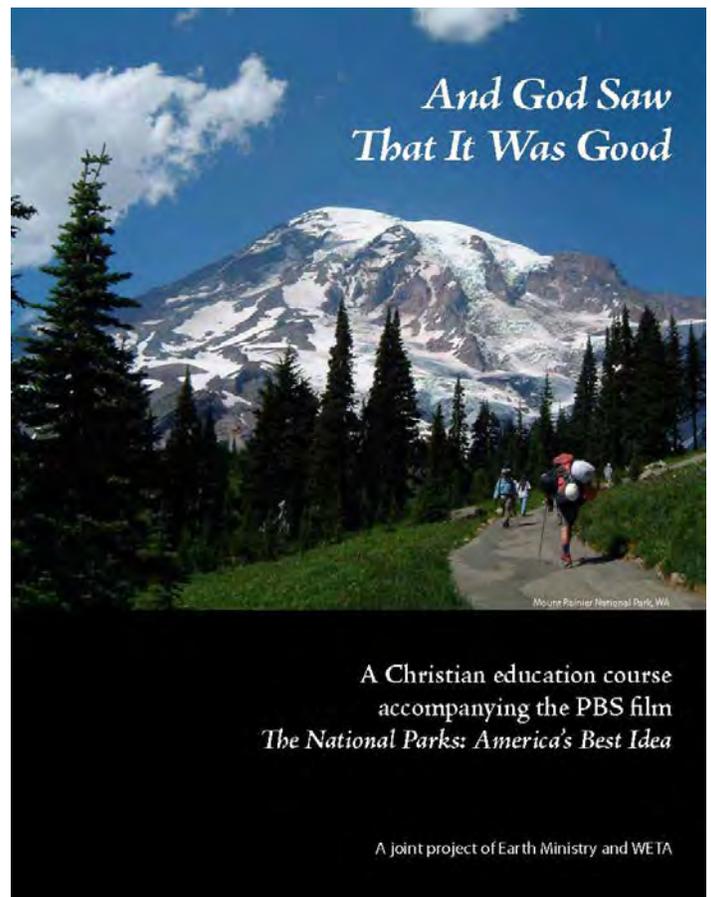


Section 5: Green Fields

Education

In your congregation, you can help people explore connections between their faith and God's creation through effective **Education**. For children and youth, teaching scriptural stories that include creation-based images such as water, seeds, and manna lays the groundwork for tomorrow's creation care leaders. Adult education on environmental issues can help develop the desire for sustained action, and can provide reflection, support, and ongoing learning for those who share this concern.

- Host a guest presentation on an environmental topic of interest to your congregation. Some ideas include:
 - Invite a member of the Earth Ministry staff to speak on *Laudato Si'* (Pope Francis' encyclical on care for creation), Faith & Environment 101, Advocacy for All Creation, Greening Congregations, our interfaith efforts through Washington Interfaith Power & Light, or other topics during an adult education hour.
 - Host a screening of *Covenant - Fighting Goliath*, about the role of the religious community in fighting new coal plants in Texas, or *Toxic Hot Seat*, about the devastating impact of toxic chemicals in our homes, both available from Earth Ministry.
 - Use Earth Ministry's "And God Saw That It Was Good" religious study guide and DVD of clips based on Ken Burns' *National Parks* PBS series as a study-course to reflect upon how we are to live in loving relationship with creation.
 - Show episodes of the BBC series *Planet Earth* for a weekly discussion series on creation care.
 - Invite someone from a local environmental organization to speak about important issues in your neighborhood or community and what you can do about them.
- Invite a member of the congregation or a local gardener to teach about using chemical-free gardening techniques.
- Plan a tour of an alternative energy facility, organic farm, or other sustainable local business.
- Organize environmentally-themed book studies for your congregation. Some books available from Earth Ministry that have been useful in stimulating discussion include:
 - *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life*
 - *Food & Faith: Justice, Joy, and Daily Bread*
 - *Money & Faith: The Search For Enough*
 - *Organic Prayer: A Spiritual Gardening Companion*



Section 5: Green Fields

Education, con't

- Conduct a congregational survey to see what topics are of interest for further study. Identify the top few topics and start forming ideas for potential projects. Don't feel the need to reinvent the wheel – connect with other churches or Earth Ministry for ideas!
- Organize a group of interested people from the congregation and surrounding community to go on nature hikes or bird watching trips, bringing people outdoors to connect with nature.
- Host a local food potluck and ask attendees to bring a dish featuring local fruits or vegetables, or even produce from their own garden or a community farm.
- Create a Food and Faith group that holds regular potlucks followed by a discussion about food issues.
- Assess your ecological footprint by taking a quiz online, such as the one designed by the Center for a Sustainable Economy available at www.myfootprint.org.
- Update the congregation on effects current greening programs have had on the church's financial bottom line, such as energy savings from efficient appliances, pounds of food waste diverted from garbage to compost, etc.
- Notify the congregation of ongoing and upcoming greening plans.
- Post environmental displays in the church during Earth Month.
- Publish an article in the church newsletter or include weekly "greening tips."
- Write an online newsletter focusing on environmental concerns or topics such as energy, food, water, and transportation.



- During Earth Month, provide a take-home list of green ideas for congregation members, or provide Earth Ministry/ Washington Interfaith Power & Light's calendar of ideas for a Carbon-Free Lent.
- Make an alternative giving catalogue available for your congregation during the holiday season, such as "I'm Dreaming of a Green Christmas," or host a local alternative giving fair with fair-trade items and goods made by members of the congregation.

Section 5: Green Fields

Education, con't



- Engage the youth group in an ecological restoration event. Pulling weeds and invasive species can be a great way to connect children with nature.
- In Sunday School, invite children to draw pictures of their favorite nature activity and share with one another. Better yet, go for a walk outside and enjoy God's creation!
- Invite your congregation's youth to participate in raising Earth-awareness and to take a leadership role in planning events and educating others.
- Adopt an Earth-centered curriculum for the children's religious education program, teaching that we are a part of, not separate from, nature.



Section 5: Green Fields

Building & Grounds

Congregational **Building & Grounds** are great places to practice stewardship and sustainability. For ease in navigating, the following section is further divided into specific areas of institutional life that can have an impact on reducing your church's ecological footprint.

Landscaping and Grounds Care

- Look into converting church grounds into a garden, growing food instead of a grass lawn.
 - Compost yard waste and food scraps on-site for use in gardens and to reduce waste.
 - Use a rain barrel to collect gutter runoff; use it to water outdoor and indoor plants.
 - Explore the possibility of installing a cistern to supplement all grey water needs, such as plant watering and a water source for toilets.
 - Design and build rain gardens to absorb runoff from the church roof.
 - In the autumn, use leaves to mulch trees, flowers, and gardens.
 - Install a roof-top garden to insulate the church building and improve air quality.
 - Use native plants in landscaping and eliminate use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers on church grounds.
 - Salvage native plants during construction projects or replant during landscaping projects.
 - Consider the advantages of not watering the lawn; a brown lawn in the summer can be a badge of honor, as well as a way to save money for other ministries!
 - Create a plan for your church grounds and find ways to incorporate trees, shrubs, and other vegetation for shade and a pleasant atmosphere.
- Adorn the church with greenery – decorate the entrance, altar, narthex, and other spaces with plants. Bringing plants indoors beautifies the space and the plants act as air purifiers.

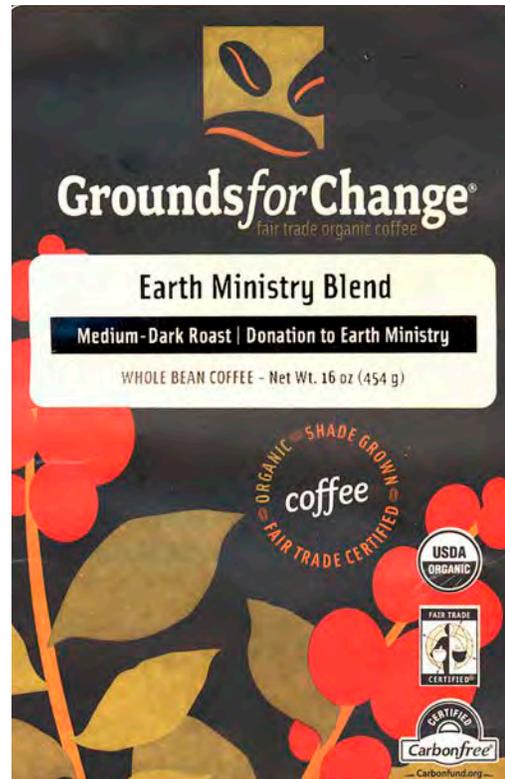


Section 5: Green Fields

Building and Grounds, con't

Hospitality

- Institute a Styrofoam-free facility policy and use only compostable or reusable dishes.
- Use cloth napkins instead of disposable paper.
- Transition to ceramic coffee mugs and dishes; have church members donate mugs they aren't using or find inexpensive ones at Goodwill or a local thrift store.
- Purchase a high-efficiency dishwasher and train church members to operate it.
- Serve organic, Fair Trade, shade-grown coffee (such as Earth Ministry Blend) and sell it to help fund your church's greening efforts.
- Compost food scraps and soiled paper products after events where food is served.
- Offer vegetarian and vegan options at church dinners or special events.



Office

- Use post-consumer/recycled paper when printing, and print double-sided.
- Explore paperless options, such as online documents and newsletters.
- Decrease the margins when printing to save space and paper.
- Limit paper waste by transitioning to online communications.
- Email the church newsletter to reduce paper and printing cost.
- Use refillable or recycled ink and toner cartridges, when feasible.
- Use white or pastel paper; bright colors cannot be recycled.

Section 5: Green Fields

Building and Grounds, con't

Waste Disposal

- Place recycling and composting receptacles around the church. Clearly marked stations are great for communicating what items belong in each receptacle.
- Use smaller bins for landfill waste to encourage recycling and composting.
- Compost food and yard waste – try getting the youth involved in caring for a worm bin.
- Invite youth to monitor proper use of waste receptacles. It allows them to make a difference – and they loving bossing adults around!
- Recycle glass, plastic, steel cans, aluminum cans, paper, and newspaper.
- Have a recycling receptacle prominently displayed by the door for church bulletins as people exit the sanctuary.
- Consider hosting a recycling center in the church for cell phones, printer cartridges, batteries, and gym shoes. Many waste retrieval companies will do this at no charge.

Water Efficiency

- Fix leaky faucets.

- Make sure all faucets have aerators installed to minimize water flow.



- Teach children to turn faucets off promptly when not in use.
- Install low-flow shower heads and timers on showers (if your building has showers for shelters or other overnight programs).
- Install low-flow toilets or place a tightly sealed plastic milk jug full of sand in the tank.
- Install a garbage strainer in kitchen sinks and compost food scraps instead of running an in-sink garbage disposal.
- Run only full dishwasher and laundry loads.



Section 5: Green Fields

Building and Grounds, con't

Energy Efficiency

- Retrofit lighting to increase energy efficiency, replacing old bulbs with compact fluorescent (CFL) bulbs or light emitting diode (LED) to save money and energy.



- Choose an energy efficient model when it is time to replace the boiler, .
- Look into implementing a capital campaign for green improvement opportunities.
- Prioritize the purchase of high-efficiency, Energy Star appliances.
- Moderate heat throughout building to times and areas of use by installing programmable thermostats.
- Turn out lights when not in use or install motion sensitive lights.
- Seal air leaks in doors and windows.
- Contact your local utility to arrange for an energy audit.

Transportation

- Host car-free Sundays that encourage carpooling, walking, biking, and busing. Calculate how much carbon was saved.
- Map congregants' home addresses to better visualize potential carpooling matches. Help make connections between neighbors who may not know each other very well.
- Install bike racks to encourage families to bike to worship each week.
- Provide information on your website, in your newsletter, and in the bulletin about public transportation to the church.
- Apply for transport grants – you could be the first church in your region to install an electric car charging station.
- Procure and display walking and biking maps of your surrounding community.



Section 5: Green Fields

Community Engagement

Greening our congregations is vitally important, yet it is equally important to extend that mission in the world. By hosting creation care events, we can live out the call to steward the Earth in the community outside our churches. Through various acts of **Community Engagement**, your church can play a lead role in advancing social change.

- Host an environmental summer camp for kids or youth retreat with a creation care theme.
- Support sustainable agriculture and local growers by arranging for your church to be a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) drop off point for congregants and community members.
- Sponsor a CSA membership for a local family in need or for a shelter near your church.
- Adopt the street for a neighborhood clean-up project.
- Host a plant sale or exchange to involve the community in greening.
- Publish announcements of special creation care celebrations and public events in bulletins and newsletters.
- Include "Greening Tips" in the church bulletin or on the website.
- Partner with local groups to host hikes or habitat restoration events for church members and the broader community.
- Screen a film on environmental issues and invite members of the community to watch the film and participate in a discussion.
- Collect recycled items that don't normally get recycled, such as shoes, batteries, and computers.
- Hold a "100-mile" potluck event using local foods. Invite participants to talk about the origin of their ingredients.
- Attend Earth Ministry's Celebration of St. Francis each fall to be inspired and meet other like-minded people.
- Host an annual gentle giving fair or holiday sale featuring Fair Trade and Equal Exchange products, opportunities for alternative giving, handmade toys, and used books.
- Encourage church youth to work with the appropriate city or county department to label storm drains in your area with "Dump No Waste, Drains to Stream" painted signs.
- Organize teams of volunteers in church T-shirts to help at community events with the zoo, aquarium, local parks department, or other organization working on environmental issues.
- Post regularly on your church's Facebook page to inform the community of your environmental stewardship efforts.



Section 5: Green Fields

Faithful Advocacy

Not all those who are part of God's creation have a voice. Clean air and water do not vote; animals are voiceless in the halls of human power; trees and wild lands have no lawyers among their own kind. The poorest and most vulnerable of humans cannot always speak or lobby for their own protection.

Faithful Advocacy is the caring act of citizenship by people of faith on behalf of God's created world. We stand in protection of creatures with no voice and for future generations whose voices are not yet raised. Earth Ministry invites you to engage in advocacy at all levels of the political process (local, state, and national) and for many kinds of environmental protection: climate, water, endangered species, wilderness, food security, and human health, to name just a few.

- Invite Earth Ministry or another organization to teach faithful advocacy skills to your congregation. It's easy, empowering, and fun!
- Contact your elected representatives by phone, email, or letter.
- Bring a group from your church to state lobby days organized by Earth Ministry.
- Participate in rallies, prayer vigils, or other public events on behalf of caring for creation. Attend an in-district meeting with your state legislators or members of Congress to share with them your perspective as a person of faith on issues that affect the health of our land, air, water, and neighborhoods.
- Testify at a state legislative committee hearing in favor of good environmental bills, such as getting toxics out of children's products or designating funding for the maintenance of state parks and local trails.
- Speak out at a public hearing in your community on a local environmental issue. Many members of Earth Ministry Greening Congregations have raised their voices at hearings opposing dirty and dangerous oil and coal trains in the Northwest.
- Don't ignore local politics! Contacting city council members regarding priorities in the city budget such as bike lanes, greenways, safe walking routes to school, and utility energy rebates has a powerful impact.
- Organize an offering of letters from church members to policy makers, urging them to take action for the Earth.
- Write a letter to the editor as a person of faith on a particular environmental issue.
- Forward and respond to email alerts regarding timely policy decisions.





Section 6: Appendices

Appendix A

Sample Earth Ministry Greening Congregations Application Documents

- Sample Statement of Intent
- Sample Mission Statement
- Sample Annual Plan

Appendix B

Selected Greening Congregation Profiles

Appendix C

Addressing Individual Stewardship in a Congregational Context



Section 6: Appendix A

Sample Earth Ministry Greening Congregation Mission Statement

Your faith community is encouraged to develop a mission statement unique to your interests, passions, and beliefs. However, you are more than welcome to adopt or adapt one of these mission statements as your own.

- We are called to live in harmony with the environment, respecting and honoring the gifts of God's creation. As people of faith, we affirm that all of God's creation is sacred. As a community of faith, we engage in activities that protect God's creation and conserve resources.
- We are called to be good stewards of God's garden. Drawing on our Christian tradition, we choose to live more lightly upon the Earth. We choose to work together to green our shared lives and facilities, and show our love for the Creator by honoring the gifts we have been given.
- We are called to be a caring people, concerned about both the health of our neighbors and our Earth home. We strive to be faithful advocates for all creation, serving as stewards in our personal lives and our faith community, as well as through advocating for environmental protection.

Mission Statement Examples from other Greening Congregations

Our mission is to celebrate God's creation and participate in the restoration of the interconnected natural world, grounded in the wholeness of creation and with faithful commitment to ecological stewardship.

– Flagstaff Federated Community Church, Flagstaff, AZ

As a Christian community we value God's creation. We are committed to protect and preserve for future generations the abundance of our God-given resources to insure that the quality of life not be diminished. Our mission is to promote sustainability both within our St. Luke community and as individuals. We strive to make a difference by increasing our awareness through education; taking appropriate action; and advocating for positive change.

– St. Luke Lutheran, Portland, OR

As stewards of God's creation, we are emboldened by our faith to understand, protect, preserve and conserve God's good Earth.

– United Church in University Place, University Place, WA

We foster awareness, education, and imperatives for action to lovingly care for God's creation and to be disciples in Christ's ministry for justice and social action.

– First Presbyterian Church, Port Townsend, WA

As a Greening Congregation, we seek to express our love for God by showing reverence for the Earth and all of its creatures. Toward this end, we will seek a greater understanding of our right relationship with creation, steward Earth's resources more justly and sustainably, and partner with neighbors near and far to advocate for the personal and public practices which advance these aims.

– Olympic View Community Church, Seattle, WA

Section 6: Appendix A

Sample Earth Ministry Greening Congregation Annual Plan

Use this annual plan outline as a guide to help you in the yearly renewal process.

Congregation Name

Annual Plan for 20XX



Mission Statement

Insert your mission statement as a guide for your congregation's greening activities.

Green Team Members

Please include names and contact information (name, address, email, phone) for each person involved with your creation care group. This allows us to contact you with pertinent information.

Green Fields

Under each Green Field are suggestions to assist in your planning.

Worship

- Switch communion bread to organic, whole-grain bread from a local bakery (January)
- Special worship services during Earth Month (April)
- Outdoor worship and potluck (July)
- Cosponsor an ecumenical Prayer Vigil for the Earth with neighboring churches (October)
- Begin using water collected from local lake for baptisms (yearlong)
- Increase Earth-awareness by including ecological message in prayers, litanies, and readings (yearlong)

Education

- Start including quarterly Greening Tips in the church newsletter (January)
- Invite an Earth Ministry representative to do teach an adult education class (February)
- Plan "local food awareness" education for Lenten soup supper – utilize Earth Ministry's *Caring for All Creation: At the Table* resource for information and presentation ideas (March)
- Encourage creation care themes for Sunday School children during Earth Month (April)



Section 6: Appendix A

Sample Annual Plan, con't

Education, con't

- Create a page on church website celebrating our work as a Greening Congregation to raise awareness about our commitment to greening stewardship (May)
- Use Earth Ministry's *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life* as the book of the month in congregational book club (August)
- Host a Carless Sunday and encourage congregants to bike, walk, car- or vanpool, or use public transportation instead of driving alone – have participants share their experiences and calculate reduced carbon emissions to report (September)
- Start an annual alternative giving fair with fair-trade items and goods made by members of the congregation (December)

Building and Grounds

- Switch to using shade grown, Fair-Trade coffee for church events (January)
- Speak with the pastor and groundskeeper about including more native vegetation – possibility of prayer garden or community garden? (start conversation by February)
- Add compost option to garbage and recycling in church kitchen – if worm bin sparks interest, involve Sunday School children (March)
- Host "Best/Worst Mug" contest to encourage ceramic mug donations for use at fellowship hour to begin transition away from Styrofoam and paper cups (April)
- Install a bike rack (May)
- Install "low-flush" or "dual flush" toilets in bathrooms (July)
- Replace light bulbs with CFLs or LEDs (August)
- Reuse inserts for weekly bulletin (yearlong)

Community Engagement

- Organize habitat restoration event for church and community volunteers (June)
- Host community "Blessing of the Pets" for Celebration of St. Francis – hold outside if weather permits? (October)
- Host Green Cleaning event at church, open to community, to teach participants how to make their own green cleaning supplies like all-purpose cleaner, window cleaner, and wood polish (November)
- Organize "Wandering Pilgrims" walking group to meet quarterly and encourage changing regional venues each time – local parks, trails, neighborhoods, etc (yearlong)

Faithful Advocacy

- Invite interested congregants to attend a lobby day or an in-district meeting and organize transportation (January)
- Testify at a state legislative committee hearing in favor of good environmental bills (Jan-April)
- Arrange an opportunity for adult congregants and children to create Valentine's Day cards for local and state legislators encouraging them "have a heart" for God's creation this year (February)
- Elect a member of the green team to write a letter to the editor as a person of faith on an environmental issue important to the congregation (May)
- Invite an Earth Ministry representative to host an adult education class on Advocacy for All Creation (September)
- Contact elected officials through emails, letters, and phone calls regarding environmental issues (yearlong)



FRACKING
IS Killing
GOD'S GREEN



fruit

vegetables

fresh bread

BUY FRESH
BUY LOCAL



Section 6: Appendix B

Earth Ministry Greening Congregation Success Stories

In this section, we highlight a few of the many creation care success stories of our Greening Congregations. May they serve as inspiration to you and your church as you undertake what Catholic priest and eco-theologian Thomas Berry terms this “Great Work.”

St. John’s Episcopal – Snohomish, WA

By Nancy McConnell

The Creation Stewards at St. John’s make sure our work is focused and fun. A light touch wins more converts than a heavy sermon. We have initiated events that both celebrate creation and nurture our church family. Every year we hold a “Greening Your Holidays” Family Movie Night that encourages our young families to emphasize time together rather than stuff. Children arrive in their PJs with sleeping bags in hand and spread out in the parish hall to listen to the Creation Stewards sing green carols like “I’m dreaming of a Green Christmas,” munch on popcorn, and watch a family-friendly movie.

But we also have our serious moments. As Episcopalians, we are committed to implementing the Genesis Covenant, a resolution passed by the national church in which it committed to reducing carbon emissions at all of its facilities by 50% within 10 years. We began by doing a self-audit of our facility – looking for air leaks, energy-hungry appliances and light fixtures, and other energy losses. Given that St. John’s was built in 1894, we found a few!

We decided to focus on using less energy, first by making sure lights and heat were either off or turned down when rooms were not in use, and by replacing aging light fixtures. Our vestry supported the plan and, with the help of utility rebates and a small matching grant from our diocese, all light fixtures and exit signs were either upgraded or replaced. After a year, we expect to have reduced our energy use by about 10%. That also means a reduction in our utility bills and more funding for our church’s missions.

Whenever possible, we reach out to work with others in our community. To honor the Baptism of Our Lord, we worked with other churches to carry water from the Snohomish River to St. John’s where it was purified and taken to churches to be used in baptisms.

We wanted to participate in Moving Planet, 350.org’s efforts to reduce the use of fossil fuels, so we decided to move food from our farm garden to the Snohomish food bank, a distance of about 7 miles, without the use of fossil fuels. We moved about 350 pounds of food – first with wheelbarrows; next with canoes; and then in backpacks, dog packs, bicycle baskets, and strollers to the food bank. Community members joined in and, once again, the Creation Stewards made the point of caring for creation with that light touch.

The Creation Stewards look forward to many more years as an Earth Ministry Greening Congregation and as stewards of God’s good creation.



Section 6: Appendix B

Greening Congregation Success Stories, con't

Holy Cross Lutheran – Bellevue, WA

By Janet Farness

What is God calling us to do at this time and in this place? This question prompted the Holy Cross Council to embark on a one-year process of discernment by reflecting on the stirrings within the congregation and intentionally developing some of the ideas generated.

Of the many ideas brought forward, one that has gained traction has become known as Earthkeeping. After a year of exploring assets related to approximately three acres of land and how we are called to creation care, this idea has become an affinity group focused on Earth-friendly practices within the community and also on sharing the bounty of the Earth with those who are hungry.

We were thrilled to discover Earth Ministry and become involved in this faith-focused creation care movement. The resources have been incredible – people, DVDs, books, and the sense of community shared among the many Earth Ministry congregations in the greater Seattle area.

Our Earthkeeping team hosts work parties that involved rejuvenating our orchard by pruning and harvesting in conjunction with other groups, community volunteers, and congregational members. With congregational support and donated tractor time, Earthkeeping also put into cultivation about 3,000 square feet of land that was developed into individual P-Patches for community use. With our second growing season just beginning, our cultivated area has expanded to about 3,600 square feet and many gardeners are returning.

By the end of the first growing season, nearly one-half ton (848 pounds) of fresh, organic produce had been donated to Hopelink's Bellevue Food Bank and many pounds of apples and other produce had been enjoyed within the Holy Cross community. The City of Bellevue awarded Holy Cross the "Most Innovative Project" award for the ways it used P-Patches, food growing, and orchard care to gather volunteers together and increase community connections.

Future plans include more food growing, more community reduce-reuse-recycle focus, more community connections, and, in conjunction with the ELCA World Hunger Project, more education about the root causes of world hunger.



Section 6: Appendix B

Greening Congregation Success Stories, con't

Fairwood Community United Methodist Church – Renton, WA

By Sharon Kenyon

Our church became a Greening Congregation with Earth Ministry in 2001, implementing a mission statement of “Answering God’s call to be careful, humble, stewards of this Earth, and to protect and restore it.” Earth Ministry’s resources and support of our mission have been invaluable.

Our church’s beautiful 1.5 acres of grounds is cared for by a garden committee and volunteers, with plans for more native and drought resistant plants. The lawn is not watered and we attempt to weed by hand without chemicals. We also have 2.5 acres of forest with creek and wetlands, which Greening Task Force and volunteers proudly protect.

Our forest with wetlands and creek is a certified “Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary” with WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, and a certified “Backyard Wildlife Habitat” with the National Wildlife Federation. We have planted about 100 types of Northwest native plants and lots of wildlife enjoy it. Our forest also has an outdoor chapel, which is used by many.

In the summer, our Greening Task Force hosts a Creation Church School every fourth Sunday. The children enjoy exploring and working in the forest and in the children’s butterfly garden. They learn about caring for God’s creation, the native plants and how Native Americans used them, and about the wildlife of the forest.

Our Festival of God’s Creation (Earth Day) is a time of recognition of all the wonderful greening things our church is doing. Hospitality hour includes healthy sustainable, organic, fair-trade and local food and drink, and we always sell our Methodist “GOD IS GREEN and SO ARE WE” reusable shopping bags!

Summers often include a Blessing of the Animals, and a Hike or Bike to Church Sunday. Our newsletter includes Green Tips, environmental

advocacy action alerts, and info on our church Green Power Fund, which offsets our carbon footprint. And our members are often out participating in rallies or events focused on setting good environmental policy!



We see creation care working in many areas of our church: *Trustees* – yard committee, recycling & yard waste pick-up, composting, energy saving, safe yard and cleaning products; *Youth* – camp, recycling day and yard sale; *Office* – recycled paper; *Missions* – collection of new calendars, used toys & books for others; *Worship* – Fair-trade/Organic coffee, services include nature & music of creation; *UM Men & UM Women* – green programs & speakers; *Children & Adult Groups*, all are making a difference. What makes it so wonderful is that it all comes together so naturally.

Section 6: Appendix B

Greening Congregation Success Stories, con't

Richmond Beach Congregational Church United Church of Christ – Shoreline, WA

By Lois Harrison

Because we believe that environmental justice and social justice are intertwined, our Greening Congregation goals and commitments are under the umbrella of our Peace & Justice Board.

Our annual Gentle Giving Fair offers gifts that are gentle to the Earth and, because we offer Fair Trade merchandise and opportunities to support charitable institutions, are more socially just than many run-of-the-mill mass-produced products.

Our affiliation with Earth Ministry has also nudged us toward advocacy. Our year-long focus on water (another combination of environmental and social justice) began with two lines on the back of a Sunday bulletin that stated that people in one of the poorer areas in India were deprived of any access to water due to the Coca-Cola Company's business practices. Reading further about water issues, we came upon a source that referred to water as "the new oil, a natural resource that wars will soon be fought over."

We ran short educational blurbs in every Sunday bulletin, focusing on different water issues: the finite amount, sources of pollution, corporate control as best exemplified in bottled water, possible ways to conserve, etc. In January an entire intergenerational service – the prayers, litany, music, the sermon and even the coffee hour displays – was dedicated to water. More than fifty letters of protest were sent to the Coca-Cola Company. A list of other Coca-Cola products was made available as a resource for those who chose to boycott Coke.

In keeping with the water theme, our youth have collected water samples from various local waterways and sent them to the University of Washington for analysis. Toilets in the church building were refitted to use less water per flush. At some point, we are hoping to take a water-related field trip; perhaps a guided tour to a local wetlands or maybe to the Cedar River Watershed. Together, we can make a difference!



Section 6: Appendix B

Greening Congregation Success Stories, con't

St. James Cathedral – Seattle, WA

By Patty Bowman

St. James Cathedral's commitment to environmental stewardship takes many forms – education, advocacy, practices, and prayer.

Earth Ministry has been central to our education and advocacy efforts, helping St. James to make the connection between Catholic Social Teaching and care for creation. Together we hosted an eight-week course on faith and climate change entitled, "God's Creation Cries for Justice," and co-sponsored an eco-justice tour of the Duwamish River. We hold annual Environmental Health Fairs focused on eliminating toxics from our homes and providing safer alternatives, and hosted a 100-Mile Potluck featuring food grown or produced within 100 miles of Seattle.

Most importantly, our connection with Earth Ministry has resulted in members of our Environmental Justice Group participating in lobby days at the State Capitol each year, putting our faith into action in support of environmental bills in the State Legislature.

St. James has also implemented more sustainable parish practices. We've installed low-flow toilets, converted some parish buildings from oil heat to "waste" steam heat, renovated lighting systems in several parish buildings to include occupancy sensors and wattage limitations, instituted composting for all kitchen waste from our major free meal program, used green cleaning products, and served fair trade coffee for all parish functions. Perhaps most controversially, we banned individually bottled water at all parish events – hotly contested at first, we now find that we don't miss the bottles at all!

In the realm of prayer, St. James partners with Earth Ministry to host a Care for Creation Taizé Prayer Service, open to the wider community.

Members of the ecumenical community join together for prayer and meditation on the beauty of creation and the call for climate justice.

All of these activities have been instituted and sponsored by our Environmental Justice Group. Because we see environmental justice as related to all other issues of life and social justice, our Environmental Justice Group is a subcommittee of our parish Life, Peace, and Justice Committee. These activities have attracted many hundreds of participants over the last several years, and it is our hope that, by participating, those people have also been able to make changes in their own personal lifestyles. We are very grateful for the guidance and encouragement of the staff of Earth Ministry in helping us to shape our environmental efforts.



Section 6: Appendix B

Greening Congregation Success Stories, con't

Seattle First Baptist Church – Seattle, WA

By Sandra Jones

After partnering with Earth Ministry on the very successful Interfaith Creation Festival in 2007, the ECO Spirituality Group of Seattle First Baptist Church picked up new vision and energy in 2010 by joining with the church's Social Justice group. Our joint energy has produced clearer visions and commitments and has attracted greater interest and participation.

Pastor Tim Phillips came to us with strong affiliations with Earth Ministry, which has given us even greater resources. As a result, Seattle First Baptist is up-do-date on policy changes that impact the environment. One outcome is that we hosted a Lenten Adult Education series created by Earth Ministry entitled *Caring for All Creation: By the Waters, At the Table, and On the Road*. Earth Ministry staff led an adult education class to start off the series, which was very popular.

One of the most significant changes related to the purpose and vision of the ECO Spirituality Group is that Seattle First Baptist made significant changes on our premises. In partnership with the City of Seattle, we installed 696 new energy efficient light fixtures for an expected annual cost savings of \$6,500. Another public utilities program provided us with 19 new toilets for our three buildings, which are expected to bring significant water and cost savings.

We've hosted an Earth Day Sunday service emphasizing the Earth Charter and used our annual retreat to provide additional insight and energy for new projects with the Social Justice group. Members of the church have participated in eco-justice tours of the Duwamish River sponsored by Earth Ministry and a coalition of environmentally concerned churches, increasing our awareness and offering prayers for the river's

healing. Through Earth Ministry, we also partnered with Clean Greens, a non-profit whose farm and market provide Community Sustained Agriculture. For three months they provided fresh, local produce to ten Seattle First Baptist participant families.

All in all, we are very grateful for the collaboration and expanded impact that Earth Ministry and others helped bring and look forward to new possibilities in the future.



Section 6: Appendix B

Greening Congregation Success Stories, con't

First United Methodist Church – Bellevue, WA

By Nancy Berry

My involvement in the Christian environmental movement came about as a result of my work as director of congregational care for First United Methodist Church in Bellevue. Several of the older adults with whom I worked expressed an interest in learning more about nutrition and how the food we eat affects our health as we age.

Around the same time, I read *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver, about her family's project of eating locally. These two ideas resulted in a church supper of organic foods and a panel discussion on "Healthy Eating for a Healthy Planet." (Methodists like to eat.)

The following year, I joined Earth Ministry and attended their retreat at Holden Village, returning with the desire to start an environmental team here at the church. One of our first major projects was a program entitled "Earth Friendly Gardening."

We invite speakers from organizations such as Seattle Tilth and the City of Bellevue Conservation Office to talk about sustainable yard and garden

care, and people also bring plants to exchange. This has proved popular with not only our own members but the larger community as well.

In the wake of the Gulf Oil Disaster in 2010, we decided to dedicate each of our summer Taizé worship services to an ecological theme. This proved so meaningful that we are continuing the practice with new themes every year.

Speaking of food, one of our projects is to encourage our members to "lug a mug" to church for coffee hour to conserve resources and money. We serve fair-trade coffee, separate recyclables and compostables, and sponsor a "Chef's Surprise" brunch featuring local foods from members' gardens and area farmers' markets. (Did I mention that Methodists like to eat?)

In terms of education, we've hosted a speaker from Appalachian Voices, an organization opposing mountain-top removal coal mining in West Virginia, and Earth Ministry regularly provides adult education classes and opportunities for involvement on advocacy issues. Last but not least, we also host monthly nature walks, including visits to the Mercer Slough and Tiger Mountain.



Section 6: Appendix B

Greening Congregation Success Stories, con't

Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church – Seattle, WA

By JB Hoover

St. Andrew's has a group called "Creation Keepers," which has worked for a number of years to nudge our parish to be a greener congregation.

Having some experience in sustainable agriculture, I saw great opportunities for St. Andrew's when I joined the congregation. Noticing a small sloping piece of land with a southern exposure, I got support to put in a 4-level terraced set of raised beds. Over the course of about a month, I worked with volunteers from the congregation to till the soil, build the garden and plant vegetables.

The next summer Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) had to repair a sewer line that went right under the garden and informed us that the garden would have to be destroyed. We negotiated with the church and SPU to let us do the demolition and reconstruction work, and SPU gave us the money they would have spent on a landscaper. With these funds we purchased first-class building materials called Trex, and now we have beds that will last us 20 years. We also expanded the garden.

Working with Earth Ministry, Creation Keepers received a grant from the city of Seattle to become more effective at managing our waste stream. With some of these funds, we built a 3-stage compost bin. Before this a lawn service would haul our yard waste to the dump. Now we compost all the yard waste generated by the church.

Virtually all of the vegetables from the garden go to the food ministry of the church. Last year about 350 pounds of fresh organic produce from the garden went towards our once-a-month Jubilee dinners (about 110 people are served at each meal). Those working in the garden plan with the St. Andrew's cooks, led by master chef Doug MacMillan, on what to plant every year.

St. Andrew's youth are also involved in the garden and waste stream management. Sunday school classes turn compost, plant, and harvest vegetables. The youth groups make all of their events green by carefully planning to reduce waste and use compostable materials. One year's Vacation Bible School theme was "Back to the Garden: Renewing the Earth," and included spending significant time in St. Andrew's organic vegetable garden.

St. Andrew's installed solar panels in April 2015, and in the first year since the panels went online, the church saved \$1,400, or 29% of our electric bill. We also reduce our carbon footprint by purchasing credits through the Diocese of Olympia's partnership with the Episcopal Diocese of the Southern Philippines. In 2016, St. Andrew's received recognition as a Renewable Role Model in the Cool Congregations Challenge, a national contest sponsored by the nonprofit Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) and judged by a panel of experts from IPL, EPA's Energy Star program, and the US Green Building Council.



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Greening Congregation Success Stories, con't

St. John United Lutheran Church – Seattle, WA

By Rev. Carol Jensen and Ryan Cosgrove

The members and leadership of St. John United Lutheran Church keep ecological concerns before the congregation through worship, education, outreach and advocacy. Prayers for creation are included on Sunday morning and bulletins are reused in the summer. Nature is brought into the worship space, and hikes are organized to get people out in God's creation.

A specific way members of St. John United live out this concern is through our community garden. In 2003, a small plot was created in the parking strip along the west side of the church. The following year the garden was expanded to the entire parking strip. Since then the community garden has become an essential part of the life of the congregation. The first goal of the community garden is to provide fresh and organic fruits and vegetables for the Phinney Neighborhood Association/St. John United Soup Kitchen.

Once a month there is a garden work day where members of St. John United can help maintain, plant, and harvest produce from the garden. The following Sunday some of the produce gathered from the garden is brought forward to the altar with the offering and communion elements. The garden functions as aesthetic addition to the neighborhood, a place to gather, a place to learn about gardening and a reminder of God's goodness.



Youth have been involved through helping create signage for the garden, maintaining their own plot, and attending a mini-Vacation Bible school held in the garden. Our youth also participate in many creation care events, such as our "Love the Earth" Sunday on Valentine's Day in 2011.

St. John United has taken steps to improve building efficiency through new lighting and toilets, as well as improving management of its garbage and recycling. Advocacy is an important part of the mission of St. John United, and we have weighed in on important issues in the state legislature. Throughout all of these efforts, Earth Ministry has provided wonderful resources, speakers, training, and support, which have helped make St. John United a better community member and steward of God's resources.

Section 6: Appendix B

Greening Congregation Success Stories, con't

St. Augustine's-in-the-Woods Episcopal Church – Whidbey Island, WA

By Elizabeth Davis

When a small group at St. Augustine's decided that we would like to begin the process of becoming an Earth Ministry Greening Congregation, we were surprised at how "green" we already were!

We adopted one mile of Honeymoon Bay Road (where the church is) and conduct a semi-annual pickup of roadside trash. For coffee hour and other church events, we use china cups and plates and linen tablecloths, avoiding Styrofoam, paper and plastic. We recycle and reuse clothing and household goods with two annual all-day sales of these goods. The office has reduced its use of paper and recycles its paper and Sunday bulletins. We have installed recycling bins in the parish hall.

We also take part in major ecumenical activities. Saving the 650-acre Trillium Forest from being clear-cut and developed involved working with several South Whidbey churches and the Whidbey Camano Land Trust to put on an evening event

explaining the project and answering questions.

We hosted a Faith Based Advocacy Workshop, which was co-sponsored by six south Whidbey Island churches – compassion, justice, and care for creation were the themes as we engaged in building a toolkit for action in this workshop. In recent years this group has become the Whidbey Greening Congregations Collaborative, which hosts a diversity of events around the island during "Earth and Ocean Month" in April.

We became a Greening Congregation about one year after beginning the process. The rector and vestry have been very supportive of this effort; an example of this is the new building constructed at St. Augustine's. The architect is well known for his dedication to good environmental, energy-saving principles. To a major degree, the old building was recycled or parts were re-used with very little going to the landfill. The new building was built to LEED standards although the formal certification process was not sought.

St. Augustine's has hosted two very successful diocesan retreats at which the participating parishes gathered to discuss their greening initiatives and ideas. During our Sunday Adult Forum time we also presented a well-received four week environmental series that Earth Ministry developed based on Ken Burns' PBS special *The National Parks — America's Best Idea*. This series is a faith-based look at the parks and aptly titled *And God Saw That It Was Good*. We heartily recommend its use in all parishes.





Section 6: Appendix C

Individual Stewardship in a Congregational Context

Earth Ministry believes in the unique power of communities of faith working together to live more sustainably. Of course, we also recognize that for many people, the first step towards caring for the Earth is to acknowledge our own environmental impact and to change our lifestyles accordingly. While advocating for sustainable practices in your congregation, there are choices you can make in your personal and home life to better steward the Earth. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Reducing Waste

An invaluable first step toward stewarding the Earth is to reduce waste. Recycling and composting provide hands-on opportunities to learn how to be more thoughtful consumers.

- Sign-up for recycling and/or yard waste service from your local utility.
- Reduce the size of your outdoor garbage can, and create an incentive to recycle and compost more with larger bins.
- Buy products with the least amount of packaging or that come in reusable containers.
- Make sure to have convenient indoor recycling bins in areas of the house where your family uses paper (office), sorts mail (living room), or discards cans, bottles, or plastic tubs (kitchen).
- Check your household bins to see if your family is in compliance; educate yourselves on what materials can be composted or recycled in your community (this information is often updated on city or county websites).
- Purchase items made with recycled materials.
- When making any purchase, consider where it will enter the waste stream—Will it go directly to the landfill? Is there a greener alternative?
- Compost your food scraps; worm bins are great for families with children.
- Donate used clothing or household items. In addition to traditional charities, new social media groups such as the hyper-local “Buy Nothing” groups on Facebook are a great way to pass things on and meet your neighbors.



Transportation

Transportation has been identified as the most significant, consumer-related environmental problem. Although it may not be intuitive, making sustainable transportation choices can be an act of worship. For example, choosing to walk rather than drive provides more time and space for you to appreciate God’s green Earth.

- Commute by bus, bike, carpool, or walking.
- When buying your next vehicle, try a smaller car or consider a hybrid or electric model.
- Walk or ride a bike for trips under 2 miles. Many of our journeys are short and don’t require a car. Spending time outside while walking or biking is a great opportunity to interact with nature!
- Check with neighbors and coworkers to see if carpooling is an option.
- Consolidate trips to reduce miles traveled.
- Use more efficient, less polluting vehicles.
- Check your car’s tire pressure monthly.

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Food and Farming

Food is often a central feature in many congregations: as a sacramental part of worship, an important dimension of fellowship, or an absolute necessity to those in need.

- Support local family farms by shopping at Farmers' Markets.
- Try to eat vegetarian at least once a week.
- Attempt a "100 mile diet" during the summer, eating only food grown or produced within 100 miles of your home – or try a "500 mile diet" if that is an easier place to start.
- Turn your front lawn into an edible garden. If you don't have the space, look into growing plants in pots indoors or on balconies.
- Dehydrate, can, or freeze fruits and vegetables when they are abundant and in season.
- Join a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, signing up to receive a box of farm fresh produce once a week.

Home Cleaning and Toxics

Some cleaners contain ingredients that are hazardous to people, as well as pets and wildlife. Help care for all God's creatures by creating a healthy space for your family and friends!

- Look through your cleaning products and remove cleaners made with harmful chemicals.
- Properly and safely dispose of hazardous cleaners and other chemicals.
- Assemble a safe cleaning kit using the least toxic products available; you can make your own cleaning solutions from common household items like baking soda and vinegar.
- Use non-toxic, biodegradable soaps, detergents, and cleansers.



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Individual Stewardship in a Congregational Context

Landscaping and Grounds Care

Concern for God's creation starts in your own backyard, literally, in the care devoted to landscaping and yard maintenance.

- Create permeable driveways that allow rainwater to seep into the ground rather than run off over an impervious surface.
- Grow vegetables in a garden space or pots.
- Eliminate the use of chemical fertilizers that harm water, air, and wildlife.
- Plant native trees and plants that conserve water, require less maintenance, and provide creature-friendly alternatives to lawns.
- Plant a rain garden to capture run off or install rain barrels under downspouts.
- Create "backyard wildlife habitats," butterfly gardens, or other natural spaces to enjoy.



Water Conservation

Conserving water is an act of stewardship. Water is a precious gift and we should seek to use only what we need so that there will be enough for all.

- Turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth.
- Install low-flow shower heads, toilets, and faucets – the savings will surprise you!
- Shorten the length of your shower – 5 minutes is more than enough time to get clean.
- Repair leaky faucets and toilets.
- Only run the dishwasher when full.
- Use eco-friendly, phosphate-free dishwasher detergent to avoid contaminating water.
- Consider rain water catchment systems for grey water needs.
- When you do laundry, wash your clothes in cold water instead of warm or hot.
- If you're going away for a few days, switch off the central water heater.

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Individual Stewardship in a Congregational Context



Energy Conservation

Home heating, hot water, air conditioning, and household appliances have the largest ecological impact after transportation and food consumption.

- Turn your thermostat down to 55° F at night and when you're not home.
- Weather seal your home's windows, doors, ducts, and plumbing.
- Insulate hot water heater and pipes to conserve energy.
- Turn your water heater down to 120° F.
- Turn off and unplug electronic equipment and lights when not in use.
- Upgrade to smart power strips that don't continue to use electricity even when appliances are turned off.
- Change at least five light bulbs to compact fluorescent bulbs or LEDs.
- Improve insulation in your home's attic, crawlspace, and walls.

- Choose energy-conserving products or get a loan to fund energy conservation upgrades.
- Take advantage of your local utility company's energy audit programs.
- Try drying some of your clothes the natural way by hanging them on a line or drying rack rather than using a dryer.

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy or "green power" is defined as electricity that is generated from environmentally preferable renewable resources, such as solar, wind, geothermal, biogas, biomass, and low-impact hydro. These resources generate electricity with less carbon dioxide emissions and buying green power helps support the development of new renewable energy.

- Purchase renewable energy through your utility's green power program.
- Take advantage of utility rebates and loans for home or small-business solar projects.

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Individual Stewardship in a Congregational Context

Green Building and Remodeling

Building and remodeling can help demonstrate your commitment to care for God's creation: through choice of sites, building contractors, construction materials, and design features, and through proper disposal of used materials.

- Reduce energy use with Energy Star qualified products.
- Invest in low-emissivity window panes to reduce heat loss.
- Use low or no Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) paint.
- Choose recycled or truly renewable materials for construction when possible.

Financial Stewardship

When we make purchasing and investing choices, we are casting votes for the ways businesses operate. We can use our buying power to support businesses that work to promote social justice and ecological sustainability.

- Read books on finances and living out your values, such as *Money and Faith: The Search for Enough* or *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life*, available from Earth Ministry.
- Support local businesses by buying products locally, when possible.
- Buy items with eco-labels, such as Fair Trade Certified, Certified Organic, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) approved, etc.
- Invest in socially responsible funds.



