

Checklists for the Green Congregation Program

Based on the Green Congregation Training Manual (2011 Revised Edition)

The goal of the Green Congregation Program is to transform the identity and mission of the congregation so that care for creation becomes part of the ethos of the community. Think of it as an “extreme environmental makeover.” Do Earth-care so thoroughly and so meaningfully that it becomes part of the DNA of your life as a parish community. Let it be on everyone’s screen as you worship together, learn together, make decisions about the buildings and grounds, live out your discipleship at home and work, and bear your witness to the larger community in which you are located. So promote it among your selves that you take it for granted that this is just who you are and that this is your purpose in life—a community that loves creation and cares for it as agents of God. So take it into your life together that you see God everywhere and embrace all living things as your kin in nature. Love creation so deeply that you do not want anything to happen to it, that you want to do whatever it takes to pass this astounding planet on to future generations as a sacred trust.

Not everyone likes lists. And creation will not be restored by lists. Nevertheless, these are meant only to be helpful means by which you consider all that you might do to let care for creation become fully part of your life and of your life together. It is in no way meant to overwhelm or to generate guilt. Rather, it is meant to suggest a smorgasbord of ways we might feast on a life lived in symbiotic joy with the rest of creation. So, pick and choose what will give you life and what will serve to restore God’s creation.

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Greening Your Congregation: Getting Started **A Checklist for Congregations**

There is no set way or best method to begin a program to green your congregation. There are many ways that congregations get involved. The Green Congregation Program can be initiated by the pastoral leadership, the staff, the governing board, or a social concerns committee. This program gives the steps for several interested lay people to initiate the program by forming a Green Team.

It may be best for the committee for greening to have its own group rather than be one part of a larger committee agenda. We call it a “team” to distinguish it from a standing committee that has certain tasks in one area. The difference is that the role of a Green Team is not to do all the projects related to care for creation. Rather, the Green Team serves as leaven and functions as a catalyst for all the committees and groups in the congregation to take responsibility for care for creation in their area of responsibility and involvement. The task of the Green Team depends on the partnership of other individuals and groups in the congregation. The goal is for the entire congregation to take ownership as a “Green Congregation.”

1. Find out who might be interested in joining a Green Team:

- Personal invitation
- Announcement
- Educational program

2. Getting organized

- Gather a small group of people (2 to 8) to serve as a Green Team.
- Become familiar with the Green Congregation program. Read the Manual. Check the Web site.
- Inform/involve the pastor(s)/staff as to your interest and commitment.
- Approach the church governing board for authorization to proceed.
- Choose a name for your Green Team (See “Names and Symbols”)

3. Develop an Action Plan for the congregation in several or all of these areas

- Worship
- Education
- Building and Grounds
- Discipleship at Home and Work
- Public Witness and Community Involvement

4. Next steps

- Work with the appropriate committees/ individuals to carry out the Action Plan.
- Meet regularly (monthly) to follow the Action Plan and to develop new projects
- Promote with members your identity as a congregation that cares for creation.
- Consider using some of the “Eight Strategies for Engaging the Whole Congregation”
- Consider a congregational project to benefit the community/ city of location

5. Other tasks

- Review the “Strategies and Principles” for the Green Congregation Program
- Discuss “What Church Leaders Should Learn about the Caring for Creation”

6. Long term concerns

- Find structural ways to assure the long term life and activities of the Green Team
- Adopt the Green Congregation Mission Statement.
- Apply to be recognized as a Green Congregation in the Green Congregation Program

Promoting Care for Creation in Your Congregation: A Checklist

One key way to give your parish an identity as a congregation that cares for creation is to keep announcements, suggestions, and reminders before the congregation.

1. _____ Employ seven media. Experts say that if you want to get a message across, do it in seven different media. Here are some:

- Bulletins
- Newsletters
- E-mails
- Announcements/talks in worship
- Bulletin boards
- Phone calls, word of mouth
- Develop a prominent section of your church website
- Local newspapers.

2. _____ Brief items of information and inspiration. In the various media listed above, put informative materials before the congregation on why we care and what to do. These are available online to be placed regularly in bulletins or newsletters.

- Bible Verses (52 for the weeks of the year)
- Eco-tips (52 for the weeks of the year)
- Brief articles on Environmental Stewardship by John Berge for newsletters
- Excerpts from your social statements (52 available from the ELCA “Caring for Creation”)
- Enter each week an item or action your congregation does for Earth-care
- Stewardship of Creation: A Thirty Day Devotion: available as bulletin inserts

3. _____ Sign. Put up a sign outside identifying your congregation as a green congregation or a creation-care center or a partner in Lutherans Restoring Creation.

4. _____ Mission Statement. Incorporate care for creation into your mission statement and include the mission statement in the weekly bulletin or post it prominently in the church.

5. _____ Display. Put a care for creation display in the narthex where people enter and leave the church. Rotate the content. Have a member of the LRC team present to comment and answer questions.

6. _____ Challenge. Engage the congregation in a challenge: How many CFL lights can the congregation as a whole replace in their homes? Keep a rising chart of numbers in the church entrance. Announce how much burning coal and emissions have been prevented. Or ask members to sign onto a covenant with creation.

7. _____ Disciplines. Use the seasons of the year to engage the congregations in study or practices. For example, engage members in a carbon fast in the Lenten season or agree to connect with nature in the spring time of the Easter season.

8. _____ Property project. Choose a project on church property that brings the care for creation commitment before the community: garden, orchard, rain garden, solar panel, meditation garden, labyrinth.

9. _____ Earth Community on your property. Identify all species of plants and animals as your earth community and declare them to be your worshiping partners.

10. _____ LRC Partner. Sign up to get recognition as a partner of Lutherans Restoring Creation. Have the governing board and whole congregation adopt the statement of Green Congregations and develop an action plan. Receive a certificate honoring your efforts. Display it.

Be consistent and stay the course. Eventually, you will be able to change the ethos of the congregation so that care for creation becomes an integral and natural part of your identity and mission.

A Checklist for Congregations

In light of the renewed interest in Creator and creation in Bible, theology, and ethics and in light of the current ecological state of creation, it is time to renew worship in a new key. In worship, we focus on our relationship with God and our neighbor. Now we must also encompass God's relationship with creation and our relationship with the rest of nature. There is no better place to deepen and expand our faith in these matters than with the gathered community in worship seeking to worship God by giving praise in relationship with creation. The following list of possibilities for renewal is suggestive of actions and resources that might assist you in this endeavor in your congregation. Choose what works best for you, add to the list, and seek to do it all in communion with the love that God has for all creation.

A. Liturgies:

1. ___ Liturgies, e. g. The Greening of the Cross
2. ___ Litanies

B. Liturgical features:

1. ___ Invocation: of God the creator of all things
2. ___ Invitation: for all living things to join in praise of God; the choir of creation
3. ___ Confession and absolution: include sins against creation
4. ___ Hymns: with creation/ nature themes
5. ___ Scripture readings, including the Psalms (highlight the presence of nature)
6. ___ Preaching care for creation. Resources are available for the entire 3-year lectionary.
7. ___ Prayers: thanksgiving for and petitions on behalf of creation
8. ___ Offerings: time and money for creation-care
9. ___ Sacraments: Connect to the fruits of the Earth and the sacramental nature of all of life
10. ___ Blessings: for the thriving of creation
11. ___ Closing: "Go in peace, serve the Lord, remember the poor, care for creation."

C. Relate creator and creation to all seasons of the church year:

1. ___ Advent: await new humanity to care for creation
2. ___ Christmas: incarnation; Christ in, with, and under all things
3. ___ Epiphany: manifestations of God's light and life in creation
4. ___ Lent: solidarity with suffering Earth, confession, sacrifice for Earth
5. ___ Easter: celebration of new/renewed creation
6. ___ Pentecost: spiritual discipleship and ethical wisdom in caring for creation

D. Occasional services

1. ___ Baptism (new creation) and Confirmation (affirming our Earth-keeping vocation)
2. ___ Weddings (preparation, service, and reception)
3. ___ Funerals (including green burial practices)

E. Season of Creation:

1. ___ Optional four weeks in church year to celebrate Creator/ creation. www.seasonofcreation.org

F. Special days in the church year

1. ___ Saint Francis day: Blessing of the Animals
2. ___ Rogation Day: Celebration of harvest
3. ___ Reformation Day: a new reformation encompassing the restoration of creation

G. Special days of celebration

1. ___ Thanksgiving Day
2. ___ Earth Day Sunday

H. Special rituals

1. ___ Blessing of gardens
2. ___ Tree-planting ritual

I. Worship in relationship with nature

1. ___ Worship services outside
2. ___ Name, celebrate, and worship with animals/plants of “earth community” on church property
3. ___ Provide contemplative location/ meditation garden/ labyrinth

J. Devotional resources

1. ___ Common prayers for meetings and church dinners
2. ___ Devotions/prayers for personal devotions. See *Earth Gospel* by Sam Hamilton-Poore

K. Sanctuary

1. ___ Life in worship: (air-purifying) plants and trees (as fellow worshippers)
2. ___ Material symbols: water, rock, tree, grain and grapes.
3. ___ Banners: e. g. “Let all creation Praise”
4. ___ Artistic symbols: paraments, seasons, bulletin designs
5. ___ Earth Sounds: rain, river, wind in trees.
6. ___ Pictures of nature projected onto wall or screen
7. ___ Display nature art
8. ___ Life in worship: animals—gerbils, birds, fish (as fellow worshippers)

L. Earth-Friendly Worship Practices

1. ___ Living flowers or plants on the altar to be kept or planted later outside.
2. ___ Beeswax candles rather than (oil-based) paraffin wax candles.
3. ___ Local wine for communion
4. ___ Practice intinction or have re-usable glasses (not plastic) for communion.
5. ___ Wash communion vessels/ glasses with eco-safe dish-washing detergent.
6. ___ Provide communion bread of whole grain, organic and locally grown.
7. ___ Purchase fair trade palm fronds for Palm Sunday.
8. ___ Limit or eliminate use of paper for bulletins. Re-use where possible.
9. ___ Use post-consumer waste/ recycled paper for bulletins.
10. ___ Place attractive basket near exit from sanctuary for recycling worship materials.
11. ___ Consider the origin of the paraments made for worship—material, fair trade.
12. ___ Use outside light where feasible.
13. ___ Use outside air and fans instead of air conditioner where feasible.
14. ___ Use live Christmas tree and then plant on church property.
15. ___ Green decorations for holidays, e. g. decorative materials, LED lights
16. ___ Safe disposal of batteries from wireless microphones.

M. Study

1. ___ Read and discuss resources on the theology of worship
2. ___ Explanatory comment on worship practices as they are introduced

N. Resources for Worship and Ecology

Ben Stewart, *A Watered Garden: Christian Worship and Earth's Ecology* (Fortress Press, 2011)

Norman Habel, David Rhoads, and Paul Santmire, editors. *The Season of Creation: A Preacher's Commentary* (Fortress, 2011) .

Paul Santmire. *Ritualizing Nature: Renewing Christian Liturgy in a Time of Crisis* (Fortress Press, 2008)

Gordon Lathrop. *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology* (Fortress Press, 2003)

Sam Hamilton-Poore, *Earth Gospel: A Guide to Prayer for God's Creation* (Upper Room, 2008)

www.webofcreation.org Ecumenical website with worship and devotional resources

www.seasonofcreation.com Official site for the optional four-week Season of Creation

www.letallcreationpraise.org Ecumenical site for creation-care worship through the year. Resources for a Season of Creation. Also a bibliography on theologies of worshipping with creation.

Earth-Care Education

A Checklist for Congregations

Education can be transformative, especially when pursued regularly over a period of time. Here are some ideas from which to choose actions and activities that can foster the change of understanding and consciousness needed to restore God's creation and to move into a new era of sustainability on Earth.

1. **Adult Education**

- Study your denominational social statement: www.webofcreation.org.
- "Earth Charter" with study guide: www.earthcharter.org.
- *Theological Reflections on the Green Congregation Manual* www.webofcreation.org
- *Earthbound*: six week DVD series, each video 25-30 minutes. Christian foundations of Earth Care
- *Renewal* video: Projects on the environment by faith groups: www.renewalproject.net.

2. **Children and Youth**

- Curriculum for Sunday School
- Curriculum for Vacation Church School: Consider ReNew at www.wearesparkhouse.org .
- Projects for Youth Program

3. **Forums with subjects and/or guest speakers.**

- Ecological State of the world from local scientists
- Local ecological issues and conservation efforts
- Local environmental organizations: gardens, restoration, and so on.
- Community Supported Agriculture
- Public policy and opportunities for action alerts and advocacy

4. **Study Groups**

- Book discussion group
- Northwest Earth Institute resources www.nwei.org
- Simple Living, Compassionate Living. www.earthministry.org
- Covenant group meeting give each other support and accountability for Earth care.

5. **Workshops to conduct or underwrite:**

- Greening your home (see checklist for personal lifestyle)
- Greening your work
- Greening your community. See e. g. www.racinegreencongregations.org.

6. **Retreats: for adults, families, youth, church leadership**

- Silent meditation in natural setting
- Time in nature with a naturalist guide
- Time in nature with Bible study on earth care

7. **Location, location, location**

- Learn the Earth community present on your property and in your neighborhood
- Learn the geographical history of your region

8. **Learn Your Tradition Forums**

- E. g. Lutheran theological and ethical foundations: www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org
- Biblical resources for Earth care: www.bibleandecology.org.

9. **Action/ reflection**

- When you take an action in your church or community, announce and explain it to all.
- When you do Earth friendly worship or earth-friendly dinners, explain it to members.

10. **Use various media to convey learning:**

- See Promotion Checklist for ideas

Earth-friendly Buildings, Grounds, and Practices A Congregational Checklist

(Correlated to “Environmental Guide for Congregations, Their Buildings and Grounds”)

See under “manuals” at www.webofcreation.org.

Your congregation can be a model for the homes of your members and the wider community beyond the church when you adopt comprehensive green practices for your building and grounds. Let it be so obvious that anyone coming to your church will know immediately that you love and care for the creation with which you have been entrusted. It is your vocation and your witness.

Section 1. Worship (6-15)

1. ___ Living flowers or plants on the altar to be kept or planted later outside.
2. ___ Living plants or trees in the sanctuary to purify air and to be “worshippers”!
3. ___ Beeswax candles rather than (oil-based) paraffin wax candles.
4. ___ Local wine for communion
5. ___ Practice intinction or have re-usable glasses (not plastic) for communion.
6. ___ Wash communion vessels/ glasses with eco-safe dish-washing detergent.
7. ___ Provide communion bread of whole grain, organic and locally grown.
8. ___ Purchase fair trade palm fronds for Palm Sunday.
9. ___ Limit or eliminate use of paper for bulletins. Re-use where possible.
11. ___ Use post-consumer waste/ recycled paper for bulletins.
10. ___ Place attractive basket near exit from sanctuary for recycling worship materials.
12. ___ Consider the origin of the paraments made for worship.
13. ___ Use outside light where feasible.
14. ___ Use outside air and fans instead of air conditioner where feasible.
15. ___ Use live Christmas tree and then plant on church property.
16. ___ Green decorations for holidays.
17. ___ Worship outside in nature.
18. ___ Safe disposal of batteries from wireless microphones.

Section 1: Office (6-15)

1. ___ Use post-consumer/ recycled paper
2. ___ Paper-use guidelines to limit use and for efficient use/ reuse.
3. ___ Recycle paper, ink cartridges.
4. ___ Proper disposal of batteries, computers, printers, copiers.
5. ___ Limit mailings/ use e-mail.
6. ___ Unplug computers/ printers/ coffee makers/ microwaves when not in use.
7. ___ Use fair trade coffee, tea, chocolate.
8. ___ Healthy snacks.
9. ___ Purchase Energy Star appliances when replacing equipment.
10. ___ Cut down on junk mail. Notify senders.
11. ___ Bring plants into office for beauty and to purify air.
12. ___ Use refilled/ recycled ink and toner cartridges when feasible.
13. ___ Limit number of copies for use by groups.
14. ___ Use white or pastel color paper. Bright colors do not recycle.

Section 1: Education (6-15)

1. ___ Art projects: avoid craft foam products and wax (oil-based) crayons.
2. ___ Use recycled paper.
3. ___ Provide recycling bins in classrooms.
4. ___ Limit photocopies of material.

Section 2: Coffee hour, receptions, and congregational meals (16-22)

1. ___ Eliminate Styrofoam, plastic cups, and disposable paper and plastic products.

2. ___ Provide mug rack.
3. ___ Encourage people to bring their own plates, cups, and utensils to meals.
4. ___ Provide/collect ceramic plates and cups, glassware, and stainless-steel utensils.
5. ___ Purchase efficient Energy Star dish washer and other appliances.
6. ___ Use eco-safe dish-washing detergents and cleansers.
7. ___ Provide healthy/ organic/ locally grown food items for snacks and meals.
8. ___ Minimize waste from food or paper/ plastic products.
9. ___ If you cannot eliminate waste, use biodegradable plastic options now available.
10. ___ Use Fair-Trade coffee, tea, chocolate, etc.
11. ___ Share leftover food. Compost food waste.
12. ___ Consider cloth napkins/ towels with member using laundry facilities at home
13. ___ Establish guidelines for the congregation and for outside groups using facility.
14. ___ For dishwashing and laundering, establish a church team, rotate use, or take a collection each time to pay a person who especially needs the money.
15. ___ Avoid running water unnecessarily.
16. ___ Turn out lights when not needed.
17. ___ Unplug stove, microwave, and coffee maker when not in use.
18. ___ Use post-consumer paper products for napkins and towels.
19. ___ Get rid of soda machines/ Use refrigerator and honor system.

Section 3: Energy usage: Electricity (24-40)

1. ___ Get off the grid with renewable energy: photovoltaic panels or wind mills.
2. ___ Replace all incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs. Exit lights.
3. ___ Retrofit fluorescent lighting and replace bulbs with the most efficient available.
4. ___ Use electric timers on some indoor and outdoor lights. Use motion sensitive lights.
5. ___ Avoid (high energy) halogen lights.
6. ___ Use photovoltaic panels for exterior lighting or church sign.

Section 3: Energy Usage: Heat (24-40)

1. ___ Get off the grid with renewable energy: geothermal, wind, solar (hot water).
2. ___ Inspect, adjust, and clean all heating and air conditioning systems.
3. ___ Remove obstacles from vents and registers.
4. ___ Moderate heat throughout building to times and areas of use.
5. ___ Use ceiling fans for cooling.
6. ___ Raise thermostat for cooling in summer. Lower it in winter.
7. ___ Fix leaking faucets.
8. ___ Insulate hot water pipes and water heater. Use tank-less water heater.
9. ___ Purchase high-efficiency, Energy Star water heater and dish washer.
10. ___ Seal air leaks in door, windows, and gaps in the building envelope.
11. ___ Insulate walls and ceilings.
12. ___ Purchase energy-efficient windows.
13. ___ Use dishwasher only when full.
14. ___ Limit meetings to certain nights/ times for energy consumption.
15. ___ Foster practices among members to turn out lights when not in use.

Section 4: Paper and wood products (42-49)

1. ___ Set guidelines for paper use for office, worship, and education.
2. ___ Use recycled, chlorine-free office paper and envelopes, including stationary.
3. ___ Provide certified paper (Forest Stewardship Council).
4. ___ Use recycled paper for products in kitchen and bathrooms.
5. ___ Reduce paper use in office, worship and education.

6. ____ Provide handy paper recycling bins in various rooms.
7. ____ Reduce junk mail. Request senders to eliminate or ask for single catalogues.
8. ____ Purchase products—furniture/flooring/altars using only certified wood.
9. ____ Plant trees on church property, at homes/ businesses of members, in community.

Section 5: Water use (50-63)

Kitchen

1. ____ Repair leaky faucets.
2. ____ Do not let faucet run while doing other tasks. Put up reminders.
3. ____ Use dishwasher only when full.
4. ____ Do not contaminate water. Use only eco-friendly dishwashing detergent.
5. ____ Limit use of garbage disposals. Compost food waste.
6. ____ Install low-flow (aerator) faucets and dish sprays.
7. ____ Insulate hot water pipes.

Bathrooms

1. ____ Replace automatic flush systems with hand-flush or sensor, use-based system.
2. ____ Use pressure stops or hand-motion sensors on faucets.
3. ____ Repair leaky faucets and toilets.
4. ____ Install low-flush toilets or composting toilets.
5. ____ Install low-flow (aerator) faucets.
6. ____ Insulate hot water pipes.

Fountain

1. ____ Eliminate constantly running drinking fountains.
2. ____ Repair leaking fountains.

Outdoor church property

1. ____ Landscape with native grass and plants that require little or no water.
2. ____ Turn a church lot into prairie.
3. ____ Put in rain gardens to absorb runoff.
4. ____ Landscape to absorb runoff. Avoid bare areas.
5. ____ Use mulching mower.
6. ____ Mulch trees, shrubs, flowers, and gardens.
7. ____ Eliminate/minimize pesticides, herbicides, and toxic fertilizer.
8. ____ Limit watering lawn. Water at dusk or dawn. Do not water during droughts.
9. ____ Use a rain barrel to collect for watering.
10. ____ Use down spouts to distribute water for watering plants and absorption.
11. ____ Install a roof-top garden.
12. ____ Install a grey water system for watering lawn and plants.
13. ____ Plant trees.

Parking areas

1. ____ Install permeable surface for parking or walking area.
2. ____ Limit size of paved surfaces or eliminate with gravel and wood chips.
3. ____ Provide spaces in the parking area for trees and ground absorption.

Section 6: Green cleaning products (65-70)

1. ____ Use eco-safe cleansers for restrooms, kitchen, dining areas, and other surfaces.
2. ____ Use eco-safe detergents/soaps/cleaners for dishes, hands, windows, communion vessels.
3. ____ Use eco-safe cleaners/shampoos for carpets, tile floors, hardwoods floors.
4. ____ Use eco-safe waxing products for floors.
5. ____ Use eco-safe products for cleaning church vehicles.
6. ____ Use eco-safe detergents for washing cloth napkins, towels, and paraments.

Section 7: Food choices (71-80)

1. ____ Provide healthy food for snacks and meals.
2. ____ Purchase organic, locally grown food.
3. ____ Purchase Fair Trade products where feasible.
4. ____ Have a vegetarian potluck. Educate about the environmental impact of meat.
5. ____ Sponsor a world hunger meal with beans and rice or other solidarity food.
6. ____ Become a drop off point for Community Supported Agriculture. Encourage members to participate.
7. ____ Plant an organic, community garden to share produce with local food banks.

Section 8: Transportation (71-80)

1. ____ Install bike racks. Encourage walking to church.
2. ____ Give information about public transportation.
3. ____ Organize car pooling for church events.
4. ____ Purchase/ use a van to transport people to church.
5. ____ Reward pastors and other church workers for using high-mileage cars.
6. ____ Designate car-free Sundays or months for worship.
7. ____ Each month have someone check/correct tire pressure of cars in the parking lot.

Section 9: Indoor air quality (89-94)

1. ____ Test for asbestos, lead, formaldehyde, radon.
2. ____ Address issues of mold, mildew, bacteria, and dust mites.
3. ____ Avoid volatile organic compounds from certain cleaning products, furnishings, fabrics, carpets, and paints.
4. ____ Provide open windows for air circulation.
5. ____ Put selected plants indoors to serve as air purifiers.

Section 10: Nature inside and out (95-98)

1. ____ Plants inside: entrance, near windows, at the altar, around the baptismal font, in the office, in the narthex and other gathering spaces.
2. ____ Bring other life into the church: an aquarium, hamsters, birds.
3. ____ Ceate an indoor or outdoor herb garden.
4. ____ Create an outdoor worship space or place of prayer.
5. ____ Create a tree sanctuary or memorial garden with benches.
6. ____ Be creative about the planting of trees, shrubbery, ivies, and flowers.
7. ____ On an open lot, create a prairie or a small preserve or an orchard.
8. ____ Use memorial funds and gifts to dedicate trees and natural spaces.

Section 11: Recycling and waste (99-110)

1. ____ Find out the recycling system in your area for all items. Aim for 100% recycling.
2. ____ Assess what you buy and the packaging involved. Avoid Styrofoam. Pre-cycle!
3. ____ Consider reuse as option one.
4. ____ Recycle office paper (after use of both sides). Recycle newsprint and other paper.
5. ____ Recycle glass, plastic, steel cans, and aluminum cans.
6. ____ Consider a convenient recycling center in the church for cell phones, printer cartridges, household batteries, eye glasses, plastic bags, and gym shoes.
7. ____ Use biodegradable plastic bags for garbage.
8. ____ Compost food and yard waste.
9. ____ Have property committee or youth periodically assess church waste stream.
10. ____ Provide recycling information to members for home use (including toxic disposal).

DISCIPLESHIP: LIFESTYLE AT HOME AND WORK
A Checklist for Members of Congregations

Every action has consequences on other humans and on the earth. Become aware of the outcome of your actions, reduce your impact on others, and walk lightly on Earth. Consider these practices to be a spiritual discipline. Do an “extreme ecological makeover” of your home. Go room by room and identify every item or practice there that degrades nature and replace them with Earth-friendly devices, appliances, and practices. Combine efficiency and conservation to reduce your destructive impact on Earth and see your living space as a “sanctuary”—a safe place for all living things on your property.

1. EDUCATION

- ___ Learn about the environmental crisis and ecological justice.
- ___ Read about or join a study group fostering voluntary simplicity www.nwei.org.
- ___ Learn about biblical resources that can serve as your foundation. www.bibleandecology.org.
- ___ Learn about your faith traditions that inform and support what you do to love creation.

2. GREEN YOUR LIVING SPACE

Energy Use

- ___ Alternative energy: solar/ geothermal/ purchase wind from your energy company.
- ___ Purchase Energy Star appliances (refrigerator, dishwasher, washer/dryer, water heater, dehumidifier) and high efficiency furnace, air conditioner, and windows.
- ___ Get programable thermostat. Lower thermostat in winter; raise it in summer. Change settings when away. Use ceiling fans.
- ___ Clean/ replace filters for all appliances/furnace with filters.
- ___ Replace all incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs
- ___ When not in use, turn off lights, TV, computer, appliances. Prefer natural light.
- ___ Turn off TV, computer, microwave, etc. at the strip/ plug.
- ___ Run full loads in dish washer, washer, and dryer. Use short cycles/ clothes line.
- ___ Use microwave/ toaster oven/ slow cooker rather than oven/range.
- ___ Set refrigerator at 36F to 42F, freezer at -5F to +6F, and water heater at 120F.
- ___ Use cold or warm water when washing clothes; rinse in cold water.
- ___ Insulate walls/ attic. Repair leaks around windows/doors. Lock windows to seal.
- ___ Repair hot water leaks. Insulate water heater (“blanket”) + hot water pipes (wrap).

Cleaning Products

- ___ Use non-toxic dish detergent and laundry detergent.
- ___ Use safe cleaning products either purchased or homemade.
- ___ Avoid spray or disposable products for cleaning, air-freshening, and cooking.

Water Use

- ___ Do not let water run while doing tasks.
- ___ Install low-flow shower heads and faucet aerators.
- ___ Repair faucet leaks and toilet runs immediately.
- ___ Take a short shower rather than a bath, and shower less often.
- ___ Wash dishes and laundry on full load.

Food

- ___ Buy fair-trade products.
- ___ Buy organic products.
- ___ Buy local produce and products.
- ___ Buy only what you will consume, and then use all you buy.
- ___ Put on your plate only what you will eat, and then eat all on your plate.
- ___ Eat fewer (or no) meat meals each week. Have a “hunger” meal each week.

Paper Use

- ___ Use recycled, post-consumer paper products for kitchen, bathroom, and cleaning.

- ___ Avoid paper towels; use cloth napkins and handkerchiefs.
- ___ Use electronic media rather than paper.
- ___ Use recycled, post-consumer, acid-free note/office paper or paper from tree farm.
- ___ Use the paper completely on both sides.
- ___ Avoid bright-colored paper.

Reduce/ Recycle/ Reuse

- ___ Avoid use of paper, plastic, and Styrofoam in plates, cups, and utensils.
- ___ Recycle glass, tin, plastic, newsprint, mixed paper, cardboard, etc.
- ___ Recycle batteries, printer cartridges, cell phones, plastic bags.
- ___ Safely dispose of computers, printers, paint, and other toxic products.
- ___ Do not put grease or strong chemicals down drains.
- ___ Buy products with less packaging or recyclable packaging
- ___ Compost food scraps and lawn clippings.
- ___ Use canvas bags for shopping or reuse paper/plastic when shopping.
- ___ When eating out, take your own plastic container for leftovers.

3. TRAVEL

- ___ Purchase high mileage car. Maintain engine/tire pressure. Change oil/air filter.
- ___ Over 55 miles per hour, drive more slowly. Easy stops and starts. Do not idle.
- ___ Where feasible walk, bicycle, and carpool.

4. FAMILY

- ___ Engage in family activities that foster experiences of and love of nature.
- ___ Teach children the threats to creation and what they can do to care for Earth.
- ___ Let your adult lifestyle be a model for the youth. Explain why you do Earth-friendly practices.
- ___ Hold family meetings and devotional times to reflect on and pray about God's creation

5. WORK

- ___ Green the work space and work practices: office, shop, factory, classroom, farm
- ___ Advocate with employers to green your company, agency, or institution.
- ___ Promote greening among fellow workers and clients/customers/students.

6. NATURE

- ___ Name all the place and animals on your property. See this place as the piece of Earth community.
- ___ Enjoy as kin the plants and pets in your living space.
- ___ Take ten minutes a day to enjoy/love nature. Take a retreat with nature
- ___ Use devotional materials that enhance your love of nature and your care for it.
- ___ See programs and videos that enhance your understanding of and love of the rest of nature

7. DEVOTIONS

- ___ Use devotional materials that enhance your love of nature and your care for it.
- ___ Be intentional about including in your prayers gratitude for God's creation and petitions for endangered species and threatened eco-systems. Pray for clean air, water, and soil.

8. PUBLIC COMMITMENTS

- ___ Advocate for environmentally-friendly legislation and policies.
- ___ Restore a local habitat;
- ___ Protest a local environmental violation.
- ___ Join and contribute to social justice organizations and environmental organizations.
- ___ Invest in socially-responsible funds that foster eco-justice.

Select what you already do and what you will do and make a covenant with God to care for creation!

Public Witness and Community Action A Checklist for Congregations and Their Members

We must change not only our personal lifestyle but also the social forces and corporate systems in the economy and in the government that serve to degrade the ecological condition of our world and to advocate for life-giving, Earth-friendly laws, policies and public programs—by advocacy and action.

1. Learn about Ecological Factors

- ___ Environmental State of the world: “Restore Earth” at www.webofcreation.org.
- ___ Ecological Justice: Impact of the most vulnerable: www.ejrc.cau.edu; www.ecojusticenow.org
- ___ Environmental Racism: www.weact.org; www.ejnet.org
- ___ Sustainability: <http://masonweb.wm.edu/sustainability/>

2. Learn about Public Policies and Legislation:

- ___ local, regional, national, global
- ___ Department of natural resources
- ___ Laws on clean air, clean water, endangered species, among others.
- ___ Global conferences, treaties, and protocols.

3. Engage in Advocacy

- ___ Action alerts
- ___ Letters, phone calls, petitions, delegations, votes
- ___ Community organizing around a local environmental issue
- ___ Environmental voting record of candidates. League of Conservation Voters at www.lcv.org.

4. Transform your community

- ___ Work to create Green city. See internet for many resources and programs.
- ___ Support Tree City, USA. www.arborday.org . Support Bird City. www.birdcity.com
- ___ Habitat restoration projects

5. Collaborate with other congregations and groups

- ___ Form ecumenical/interfaith green congregation program: www.racinegreencongregations.org.
- ___ Hold cooperative events for the community, such as an eco-fair or workshop
- ___ Sponsor a speaker or film as a community event.

6. Members active in the larger community

- ___ Joining environmental organizations
- ___ Buy local, eat organic. Support farmer’s markets: www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/map.htm
- ___ Purchase fair trade products. Use and sell fair trade products at church.
- ___ Participate in Community Supported Agriculture: www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa/

7. Public witness

- ___ Church property as witness: wind turbine, solar panels, community garden, orchard.
- ___ Write opinion articles and features for local news outlets
- ___ Give awards/ recognition to outstanding efforts in your community.

8. Investments

- ___ Invest in socially responsible sustainability funds
- ___ Advocate for eco-investments for congregations and community organizations.

Make these commitments part of your role as responsible citizen and of your religious vocation.

Expand and Go Deeper

A Checklist for Congregations to Take Care for Creation to the Next Level

Green Teams and congregations often lose energy or reach a plateau or are not sure what to do next. This checklist is designed to review things you might do to take your efforts to the next level. The goal of the Green congregation Program is to renew the life and mission of your congregation at its roots. It is not easy to change the identity and habits of a community of people. It takes time and persistence. Once in a while, it will help to assess where you are and figure out how you can expand and deepen your efforts so that care for creation becomes fully integral to the ethos of the congregation. Try these ideas.

1. Reinvigorate Green Team

- ___ Confirm membership
- ___ Invite others.
- ___ Meet and review the Green Congregation program. What do new members bring?
- ___ Provide copies of the Green Congregation Manual to members.
- ___ Plan discussion of the manual as a whole or in parts
- ___ Capture a new of sense of vision for your congregation
- ___ Plan to meet with chairs of relevant standing committees to confirm their participation

2. Share commitments with each other and the congregation.

- ___ Tell your personal stories about your love of and care for creation
- ___ What encourages/ inspires you? What gives you energy?
- ___ What makes it hard?
- ___ What do you do to sustain and deepen your commitment?

3. Assess where you are as a Green Team

- ___ List all you have done. Promote it with the congregation
- ___ Strengthen, institutionalize, and regularize what you have accomplished
- ___ What thresholds have you reached that enable you to do now what you could not do before?

4. Assess the larger situation

- ___ What helps or hinders ecological commitments in the culture?
- ___ What helps or hinders in your denomination?
- ___ What helps or hinders in your congregation?
- ___ How can you address the obstacles so as to move forward?
- ___ How do you make use of the assets as you move forward?

5. Brainstorm new plans based on a review of the Green Congregation Training Manual

- ___ Fill areas of the Action Plan not yet addressed. Use the other checklists.
- ___ Expand from congregational projects to the commitment of members at home and work
- ___ Consider the “Eight Ways to Engage the Whole Congregation” (in the manual)
- ___ Choose larger project(s) that engage more members.
- ___ Choose projects that serve your congregational mission to the larger community
- ___ What opportunities and needs present themselves in your community?

6. Find ways to deepen roots and commitments to creation-care for team and congregation

- ___ The ecological state of the world
- ___ The biblical foundations for Earth-keeping
- ___ The theological roots of Earth care from your denomination
- ___ What can you do to deepen your love of nature?

7. Find new partners

- ___ Other congregations. Form a community Green Congregation Program.
- ___ Local environmental organizations
- ___ Discover anew what your denomination does to support Earth care.
- ___ Mentor another congregation into the Green Congregation Program