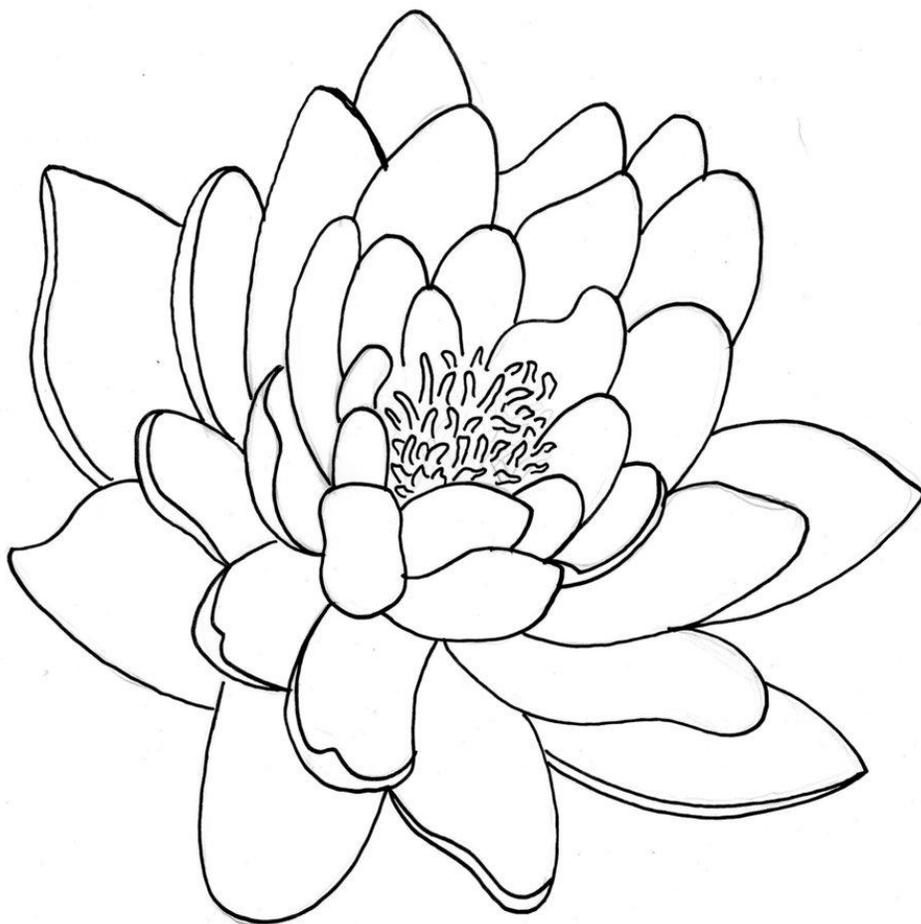


Environmental Steward: Caring for God's Creation

A Tool for Faith Communities



**Center for the
Environment
at
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Salisbury, NC

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

II. First Steps

III. Long-Term Plan

IV. Resources

V. Sustainability Efforts of Surrounding Faith Communities

I. Introduction

This booklet is designed to be a tool for faith communities looking to become better environmental stewards. If you want more information, or find the suggestions in this booklet to be things that your congregation has already done, please refer to the resources listed at the end. This booklet is merely a springboard, designed to point you in the right direction and give you a little push toward better stewardship of God's creation.

The recommendations listed herein have been compiled from a variety of sources, most notably from interviews with members of faith communities in Salisbury, North Carolina.



II. *First Steps – 10 Cheap and Easy Things Every Congregation Should Do*

- 1) *Search for interest* – No matter your role in your congregation, and no matter what you might want to do, you can't do it alone. Spread the word and try to find a group of members in your community who will help you take action. You need to have at least a few people who will share responsibility before you can move forward. Ideally, start a formal "Green Team" (see *Green Teams* for more information).
- 2) *Turn off unused lights* – Many congregations rack up huge energy bills by lighting areas at times they don't need to be lit. Use natural daylight when possible, and put up signs asking community members to turn off the lights in bathrooms, classrooms, kitchens, or other common areas when they are the last one to leave.
- 3) *Put recycling bins in or near your sanctuary* – Even if you have big bins for curbside recycling, you first need to collect recyclables. Put bins with well-marked signs at the entrance to the sanctuary and anywhere you have a trashcan. Cardboard boxes make fine recycling bins as long as they are clearly marked. Far too many bulletins end up in the trash; give your congregation a greener alternative.
- 4) *Put in CFL lights* – CFLs last ten times longer than incandescent bulbs, and use 75% less electricity. There is truly no adequate excuse for using incandescent bulbs.
- 5) *Print less* – Many congregations print hundreds of extra bulletins every week. Keep track of the number of extras and regularly readjust how many you print. Post the bulletin and any newsletters online, and encourage community members to decline a paper copy and access them via the internet instead.
- 6) *Start an exchange or donation program* – Many community members have clothes, books, or other items that they never use. Put a bin by the sanctuary entrance or organize a drive every quarter to collect items to be made available to other congregation members or donated to a local organization.
- 7) *Stop using Styrofoam* – If you must use disposable cups and plates at events, use paper. If hot drinks will be served, make events "Bring Your Own Mug", and only keep a few Styrofoam cups on hand in case they are needed.
- 8) *Get an energy audit* – In most places, faith communities can get an energy audit done for little or no cost. Look for an Interfaith Power and Light in your area, or contact your power company.
- 9) *Go for the low-hanging fruit* – After you have an audit conducted, you should see a number of recommendations that have a low cost and high reward. Focus your energy on these. You will see results quickly and make progress that can be built on when your congregation is ready to take larger steps.
- 10) *Talk it up* – Once your congregation has started taking some steps to be green, let the community know about it! People love to hear about good things their communities are doing, and any excitement you can generate will be key to getting the support you need for bigger endeavors.



III. Long Term Plan – Checklist

Below is a list of actions, each of which is a step toward environmental stewardship. The list is designed to be useful to all congregations, whether you are new to the environmental stewardship movement or an expert. You don't need to do everything on the list. Instead, use it as tool to help brainstorm the next step for your own community, and let it serve as a reminder that there are always more things we can do to be more responsible stewards of the earth.

A. Community Gardens

- To start:* Plant an on-site garden to grow food for the community; if there is no on-campus space available, ask for a donation of land from a community member to be used as a church garden.
- Plant an ozone garden to raise awareness of air quality.
- Eliminate all pesticide and herbicide use.
- Post regular updates in bulletins or newsletters so that the community is aware of both the successes of the garden and the areas of need for volunteers or donations.
- Install rain barrels and use collected rainwater to water the garden.
- Collect food scraps from the church kitchen, compost them, and use them as fertilizer.
- Ask a local coffee shop for leftover coffee grounds to be used as compost.
- Partner with a local food shelter to donate extra food from the garden.
- Have children's Sunday school classes tend the garden on occasion, so that the children learn about where food comes from.
- Organize the creation of a community recipe book that highlights foods grown in the garden.
- Hold classes on canning and preserving techniques, so garden food does not go bad.
- Hold a vegetarian cooking class, highlighting foods grown in the garden.
- Plan a "Harvest Festival" in which community members can help harvest fresh fruits or vegetables while enjoying food prepared from garden produce.
- Rotate crops so that the soil does not wear out over time.



B. Energy Conservation

- Replace all incandescent bulbs with CFLs.
- Put up signs by light switches asking community members to turn them off.
- Get an energy audit.
- Install LED lighting in the sanctuary and any other often-lit places.
- Install programmable thermostats, and adjust heating and cooling of rooms and buildings based on when they will be used.
- Install curtains or blinds and use them as appropriate.
- Seal any air leaks around doors, windows, electrical junctions, wall cracks, and air ducts.
- Add insulation.
- Add weather strips to doors.
- Replace air filters regularly.
- Investigate renewable energy options (see “Renewable Energy”, below).

C. Greening Your Campus

- When renovating, remodeling, or building, make sure to set aside room for a natural setting.
- Create a labyrinth, meditation garden, or columbarium.
- Hold an annual tree-planting event on campus.
- Replace areas of grass, which needs to be watered and mowed, with trees, bushes, or food-producing gardens.
- If you must water grass, do it in the late evenings or early mornings to minimize evaporation.
- Plant flowers to be used in the sanctuary or at special events.
- Maintain an area outside to be used for classes, services, picnics, or other events.
- Get your campus certified as a wildlife habitat by the North Carolina Wildlife Federation.



D. Green Buildings

- Consult an energy engineer before any new construction is undertaken.
- Make sure that new buildings are appropriately sized, have windows placed to maximize natural light, and are well insulated.
- Think long-term: avoid the cost and energy of future renovations and repair by installing heating and cooling systems that have long lives and are energy efficient.
- Whenever possible, use local and sustainably produced building materials.
- Location is important: trees, hills, and even other buildings can shield a building from excessive sun and wind.
- Routinely inspect existing buildings to ensure that they are functioning properly and not losing energy.

E. Green Purchasing

- Make sure any electronic equipment is ENERGY STAR qualified, whenever possible.
- When buying food items in large quantities, avoid products with unnecessary packaging (individually wrapped cookies, small bags of chips, etc.).
- Purchase local food whenever possible.
- Purchase locally produced goods whenever possible.
- Purchase organic food and free-range meat whenever possible.
- Avoid buying unnecessary items by keeping an accurate record of what your congregation already has, particularly items like batteries that are easily misplaced.
- When buying expensive equipment, look for items with long life spans, to avoid the need for future replacements.
- Purchase cleaning products that do not contain harmful chemicals.
- Before making purchases, ask the congregation for donations of unwanted items that could meet the need instead.

- Try to divert materials from the landfills for instance, don't throw items away but donate them to thrift stores. Also, utilize buying gently used items including furniture and fixtures from businesses that specialize in selling overstocks.



F. Green Events

- Hold one earth-themed service a year, ideally on or near Earth Day: pick songs that emphasize nature, have sermons or discussions focus on the environment, and hold the service outdoors or beautify the sanctuary with greenery.
- Hold a fundraiser and dedicate the proceeds to an environmental initiative for your congregation (e.g. LED lighting).
- Hold an electronics recycling drive.
- Organize an item swap through which unwanted items can be left in exchange for those left by others.
- If your house of worship is in a rural setting, schedule regular outings to explore the surrounding area and experience God in nature.
- Plan a fun, green-themed social gathering: a “recycled runway” fashion show, a recycled art contest, or an all-local food potluck.
- Put together groups of volunteers to pick up trash on highways, clean creeks, or glean food from farms after harvesting.

G. Green Education

- Hold an event with a presentation on environmental stewardship.
- Plan a speaker series to address the key issues facing the environment today, why they are important to your faith community, and what needs to be done.
- Incorporate environmental stewardship into your religious education curriculum.
- Put a “Green Tip” into every weekly bulletin or newsletter.
- Preach on the importance of caring for creation.
- Draw attention to references to environmental stewardship in a sacred text, and encourage community members to find more such references.
- Encourage interested community members to share their passion and understanding with others in the community.
- Emphasize the importance of individual actions.
- Make sure all members know about your congregation’s environmental efforts.
- Find a topic that is of particular interest to members of your community, and organize a discussion group.



H. Green Teams

- To start:* Gauge interest among community members and organize a team of 4-12 people who are willing to take responsibility for promoting environmental stewardship in the congregation.
- Come up with a name that is descriptive and catchy (Green Disciples, Earth Keepers, Creation Care, etc.).
- Hold regular meetings of the team (recommended at least once per month).
- Identify areas of need and a vision for addressing them.
- Create a plan of action, seeking regular feedback from other members of the congregation.
- Build a working relationship with the your congregation's clergy, session, board, or other governing body, if any.
- Establish a schedule and routine in which all members of the team are actively involved, but not overwhelmed with responsibilities.
- Recruit volunteers from the community at large when the team needs help to accomplish a particular task.
- Employ good self-sustaining practices to keep team morale high (see "Optimism and Self-Sustaining Practices," below).

I. Messaging

- Always tie all environmental stewardship practices back to your faith: why is it important, as a member of your congregation?
- Emphasize financial benefits to your congregation when applicable.
- Avoid judgmental and negative statements ("it is sinful to waste electricity") and instead emphasize the positive opportunities for improvement ("this is a chance to be more responsible stewards of the gifts we have been given").
- Understand that you cannot please everyone and that you will meet resistance; focus instead on gaining the support of the majority of your congregation.
- Highly publicize any and all successes.
- Conduct outreach in person whenever possible, to avoid confusion or misunderstandings that can result from written materials.



J. Optimism and Self-Sustaining Practices

- Do not spread your team too thinly; it is better to do a few things well than many things poorly.
- Make sure all team members feel useful but not overworked.
- Frequently express gratitude to team members and other volunteers, and make sure all feel appreciated.
- Take time to enjoy successes.
- Address difficulties realistically yet optimistically.
- Acknowledge failures or impossibilities, but instead of dwelling on them look for other avenues to move forward.
- Conduct regular evaluations of your team and the congregation to assess how your efforts are being received.
- Establish an environment of honesty, and respond to complaints or disagreements with understanding and respect.

K. Recycling

- Put recycling bins for paper and plastic by the doors to all buildings on your campus.
- Have children design recycling bins out of cardboard boxes.
- Put several paper recycling bins in the congregation office.
- Make a note on bulletins or newsletters to recycle after use.
- A good way to make \$\$\$ for your community—Collect aluminum cans. Cans can be taken to local scrap metal yards once a month by a member of the community.
- Hold an electronics recycling drive. Old electronics can be taken to some retail stores.
- Organize a rotating schedule of volunteers to take recycling to a processing facility once a week or as needed.
- Organize a collection for hard-to-recycle materials like Styrofoam.
- Make sure every trash can is next to a recycling bin or a sign indicating where to recycle.



L. Renewable Energy

- Take advantage of tax credits and other financial incentives as they become available, and advertise them to the congregation.
- Use knowledge from other congregations that have invested in renewable energy to help find funding.
- Install a windmill on the sanctuary or elsewhere on the grounds.
- Install solar panels on a non-shaded, south-facing part of the grounds.
- If on-campus renewable energy installation is not an option, purchase solar panels or a windmill to be installed elsewhere and sell the power generated back to the utility companies.
- Partner with other local congregations to collectively purchase an ecumenical solar farm, and split the revenue from the electricity.
- After installing a renewable energy source, closely monitor the energy it produces and the amount of money it saves.
- If you have an on-campus renewable energy installation, hold outreach events to educate others.

M. Transportation

- Post “no idling” signs by your sanctuary, school, and all parking lots.
- Organize a carpooling group with rotating drivers every week.
- If public transportation is available to or near your sanctuary, encourage members to use it.
- Put a bike rack on the grounds and encourage members to bike to services and events.
- Provide free bike helmets to community members.
- If there is sufficient interest, look into acquiring a bus or van and providing transportation to and from services.
- Draw attention to the harmful effects of driving and encourage congregation members to consider hybrids or electric vehicles.
- Hold an annual “car-free service” and ask congregation members to bike or walk, if possible.
- Work with the local government to ensure there are well-maintained bike lanes and sidewalks near your campus.
- Hold an event and hire a local bike mechanic to service the bikes of all congregation members



N. Waste Management

- Eliminate the use of Styrofoam cups, plates, and bowls.
- Eliminate the use of paper or plastic cups, plates, bowls, and cutlery.
- Eliminate the use of plastic water bottles.
- Ask all congregation members to donate a few old pieces of dishware or silverware for congregation use.
- Install an energy star dishwasher and organize a rotating schedule of volunteers to run it after events with food.
- For all in-church use, print on the back of used paper.
- Post bulletins and newsletters online, and encourage congregation members to decline a paper copy.
- Keep record of how many copies of bulletins and newsletters are handed out, and reduce the number printed as appropriate.
- Print mailings and flyers on the backs of used paper.
- Require registration for events that include food, and prepare an appropriate amount.
- Donate remaining food after events to a local homeless shelter.
- At events with food, encourage attendees to clean their plates.
- Create a compost pile and collect compost after meals.
- Conduct an audit of your office's printing policies and paper usage.

O. Water Conservation

- Regularly check all faucets, hoses, and water fountains for leaks.
- Install low-flow heads on faucets and showers (if applicable).
- Install timers on hoses to water early in the morning, to limit evaporation.
- Encourage congregation members to limit the amount of water they use.
- Put signs by all faucets reminding members to turn them off when not in use.
- When ready to replace toilets consider dual flush commodes in an effort to conserve water
- Publish the monthly water bill and ask for help in lowering it.
- Look for alternatives to grass that do not require watering (see "Greening Your Campus," above).
- Install rain barrels and collect rainwater for use in gardening, cleaning, or fountains.



IV. Resources

Materials that may be of use to congregations seeking more information or ideas on how to be better stewards of the environment:

- *Green Church* by Rebekah Simon-Peter
- GreenFaith:
www.greenfaith.org
- Unitarian Universalist Green Sanctuary Manual:
www.uua.org/documents/congservices/greensanctuary/gs_manual.pdf
- Web of Creation:
www.webofcreation.org/
- Creation Texts in Scripture:
www.env-steward.com/reflect/creationtxt.htm
- NC Council of Churches Eco-Justice Programs:
www.nccecojustice.org/index.php
- Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology:
fore.research.yale.edu/
- Presbyterian Environmental Ministry:
www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/
- Interfaith Power & Light—A Religious Response to Global Warming
interfaithpowerandlight.org



V. Sustainability Efforts of Surrounding Faith Communities

1. Salisbury and Surrounding Area
2. Charlotte and Surrounding Area
3. Greensboro and Surrounding Area

Salisbury and Surrounding area	
First Presbyterian Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor use of lighting, heat, and A/C ▪ Have eliminated use of Styrofoam ▪ Installed CFLs and energy efficient sockets ▪ Recycle and reuse paper ▪ Held events on cooking, gardens, & sustainability ▪ Use "Eco-Palms" on Palm Sunday
First United Church of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Held green banquet with "Recycled Runway" ▪ Green Team ▪ 10-week series of classes on sustainability ▪ CFLs, including in sanctuary ▪ Recycling bins by doors ▪ Held 3 "Fifth Sunday" events on sustainability ▪ Electronics recycling ▪ Use real plates and silverware at events ▪ Tips or statistics in every newsletter ▪ Print documents on backs of used paper ▪ Changed insulation in sanctuary
First United Methodist Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community garden outside of town ▪ Classes on fertilizers and other environ hazards ▪ Recycle paper & bottles w/ Matangira Curbside
Milford Hills United Methodist Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recycling bins ▪ Have 1 energy efficient Sunday school building
Sacred Heart Catholic Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community garden ▪ Energy efficient facilities in new church ▪ School has had a garden in the past
St. John's Lutheran Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programmable thermostats ▪ Program zoning ▪ Energy efficient buildings ▪ Regular maintenance to prevent need for repair
St. Luke's Episcopal Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community garden ▪ Had energy audits to become more efficient



Charlotte and Surrounding Area	
Myers Park Baptist Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 kW photovoltaics on roof ▪ Hold educational events, including IPL emPOWERed ▪ Community garden ▪ Green Team ("Earth Keepers") ▪ Hired state engineer to make church energy efficient
St. James' Catholic Church of Concord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community garden (produced 2000 lbs in first year) ▪ Put in new insulation ▪ CFLs, and LEDs on altar ▪ Collect oil and grease (used to make diesel) ▪ Timers on hoses to water at ideal times ▪ Donate leftover food from events to a shelter
Unitarian Universalist of Charlotte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Composting ▪ "Green Sanctuary" (U.U. certification program) ▪ "Green Kitchen" (U.U. certification program) ▪ Ozone garden (educational garden of bio-indicators)

Greensboro and Surrounding Area	
First Friends Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nature hikes and walks ▪ Messages from the pulpit related to Earth care ▪ Plant trees on grounds ▪ Fair Trade coffee and tea ▪ Reuse coats through "Share a Coat" project ▪ Provide fresh produce to food pantry ▪ Host yard sales, booksales, and plant swaps ▪ 6-week study of Thomas Berry's "The Great Work" ▪ "Earth Gospel: A Guide to God's Creation" (6-wk study) ▪ Sunday School series on composting, gardening, etc ▪ Share "green" practices & tips over weekly email ▪ Newsletter over email (no hardcopy) ▪ Have representative on ESG
First Lutheran Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recycling, including styrofoam ▪ Reusable mugs (collected old mugs, bought a dishwasher)



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 "green" article in each newsletter ▪ Rain barrels ▪ Had energy audit through NC IPL ▪ Use green cleaning supplies ▪ Hold annual Earth Day events ▪ Community garden ▪ Some environmental education at Sunday School ▪ Have representative on ESG
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental Stewardship Commission (meets 1/month) ▪ CFLs, plans to put in LEDs ▪ Community garden; produced 7000 lbs in 2011 (donate 10%) ▪ Held education series on Transition Movement ▪ Recycling, including styrofoam ▪ Get old coffee grounds from Starbucks, use for compost ▪ Have representative on ESG
Temple Emanuel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 kW photovoltaics on roof ▪ Teva Committee (green team) ▪ Community garden ▪ Compost food waste from kitchen ▪ Use reusable dishware >50% of the time ▪ Have representative on ESG
Unitarian Universalist of Greensboro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Green Committee ▪ Recycling, including styrofoam ▪ Spearheaded Environmental Stewardship GSO (ESG) ▪ Occasional preaching on the environment ▪ Have representative on ESG

****Is your faith community involved in green initiatives? Let us know!****
EnvironmentalStewardshipCENV@gmail.com

A monthly news email will be sent to participants highlighting new green initiatives!

