

Training Manual

For

The Green Congregation Program
Revised 2011 edition

**Sponsored
By
The Web of Creation
(www.webofcreation.org)**

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See the Following Companion Workbooks and Resources
Available online at the Web of Creation

Theological Reflections on Greening Your Congregation
By David Rhoads

Environmental Guide to Churches, Their Buildings and Grounds
By David Rhoads and David Glover

Checklists for the Green Congregation Program
By David Rhoads

Earth Care in the Christian Tradition: Resources by Denomination
Prepared by Henry Martinez

GREEN CONGREGATION TRAINING MANUAL

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The Web of Creation offers on-line environmental resources for faith communities. The site is located at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. The website staff will provide guidance and resources for congregations (webofcreation@gmail.com). Many more resources are available online than can be put into a manual. And new ideas and suggestions are regularly featured on the site. See us at www.webofcreation.org.

Introduction to the 2010 Revision

We are delighted to offer a revised edition of the Green Congregation Training Manual. The manual has been used widely—downloaded for free from the site, distributed at many training events, and requested by individuals and groups for use in their congregations. The manual contains many features available in the 2006 edition and also many new items. The basic structure remains the same. As before, the Web of Creation website (www.webofcreation.org) offers many more resources, which may be downloaded for free and used as you see fit. We are constantly seeking to provide new ideas, suggestions, and resources for your faith expressions.

It is our desire to offer resources for a variety of faith communities. Most of our materials are addressed to Christian congregations; however, our hope is that any individual or community of any faith or other-than-faith persuasion may find resources that will be helpful in your efforts to care for Earth. Father Thomas Berry has said that we collectively on Earth are entering an Ecozoic Era in which ecological matters will be at the forefront of our life together. Earth-care, he argues, is the “great work” of our time. It is work that every individual and every corporate entity, including faith communities, can and should embrace. We at the Web of Creation are seeking to do our small part in the conviction that we are all in this together and that we need the cooperation and partnership of all groups—of every religion and of those who are not religious—to address the ecological crises. To assist with such cooperation and interaction, we provide resources from and annotated links to faith communities of diverse cultural and denominational identities, as well as to secular organizations.

We need everyone. We believe that all people of diverse cultural backgrounds and economic status will participate in this work. Our website is visited by people from all corners of the globe. Most of our resources on the Web of Creation are directed to those of us in the Western world who have contributed the most to ecological devastation. The flourishing lifestyle of many of us in the West and North has led us to use a high percentage of the world’s resources compared with the rest of the world. We have the most responsibility to clean up after ourselves, to change the systems and practices that have caused such ecological degradation, and to live simply so that others may simply live. We seek to challenge ourselves to live in solidarity with all in an effort to live and act in ways that foster justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. It is our mission at the Web of Creation to provide resources that may be accessible to any community—including resources/actions that involve little or no cost (and that may save money) as well as resources/actions that take little effort and that may be effective in the short term.

Call to Earth-care. We believe Earth is in trouble from global climate change, the pollution of air, land, and water, the loss of species diversity, a deteriorating ozone layer, population expanding at an exponential level, and much more. Those of us in communities of faith may approach these problems as “environmentalists;” however, we also, and more fundamentally, do so as people who are motivated by our love of God the creator and our love for God’s creation. We believe that the degraded ecological state of the world is in part a spiritual problem rooted in our modern Western separation and alienation from the rest of nature. We affirm that our common ecological problems need

to be addressed not only with new technologies, with foundational changes in our systems, with alternative culture beliefs, and with massive changes of behavior, but also with a “conversion to Earth,” a turn toward a love of Earth and of Earth community that will serve as a basis for a new world of sustainable living. We will not save what we do not love. Therefore, in this program, we seek to take a holistic approach to Earth-care.

As people of faith, we also believe that the most vulnerable among us are and will be affected the most by ecological degradation—the poor, the oppressed, people of color, people in “under-developed” countries, the elderly, the sick, those with disabilities, among others. Generally speaking, those who are vulnerable contribute the least to ecological degradation and also have the least resources to cope with the consequences. Vulnerable individuals and communities are affected by ecological injustice and widespread exploitation of people and nature. We have seen it clearly in the patterns of environmental racism, in the human impacts of global climate change on melting ice and weather systems, and in such specific events as hurricane Katrina. Those of us in more secure positions must avoid the temptation simply to save ourselves. Out of our human commitments, we must make every effort to reach out to those most devastated by ecological degradation.

An Open and Creative Program. The Green Congregation Program is meant to be generative. The structure and suggestions of the program are not to be seen as a top-down, rigid set of steps. Rather, they are intended to offer helpful ways to organize the material and promote a holistic approach. Our goal is to offer many different resources for you to choose from—given your commitments, circumstances, and situation. Do not be overwhelmed by the number of choices. Simply work with some and then come back again and again to the manual and the website for more ideas. Our suggestions are also meant to stimulate you to generate and to develop new programs and projects, fresh approaches and actions, innovative insights and commitments, in your personal and communal efforts to care for creation.

Work for Sustainability. In all of the actions you take, seek to promote sustainability. Sustainability is the effort to live in such a way that Earth will be passed on to the next generations in ways that will enable stable and positive life-patterns to endure. Sustainability is a complex issue. Nevertheless, speaking generally, it can be seen in simple terms. Sustainable living has often been compared to a three legged stool. We would add a fourth leg in order to give the stool even more stability. In every action and project you undertake, ask yourself: What can we do and how can we do it so as to promote 1) ecological sustainability (Is it earth-friendly?); 2) economic sustainability (Does it support a just and equitably sharing of life’s resources); 3) social sustainability (Does it create and strengthen community?); and 4) spiritual sustainability (Does it deepen our faith relationships with and commitments to Earth?). These considerations will not only promote sustainability; they will also enable your efforts to have the greatest impact.

Be visionary. We also encourage you to be visionary, to operate out a holistic vision of the future in relation to your faith community. We seek to “re-imagine the world”! Imagine what your community might be like, say thirty years from now, when care for

creation is fully integrated into the life of your congregation—worship, educational programs, care of building and grounds, best practices of your congregation in all events, lifestyle of members at home and work, your commitment to public ministry in the larger community in which your congregation is located, and your political advocacy in public arenas of life. Then begin to go about working to enact that vision *in the present*. Such efforts need endurance and occasional new starts. You will reach certain plateaus and thresholds; and you may need help going beyond them. That is why in this new edition we have included additional sections for “Renewing Your Efforts” and Taking it to the Next Level.”

Changing the Ethos. As you will see, the vision of greening your congregation is deep and profound. The goal is nothing less than changing the ethos of your congregation so that care for creation becomes integral to the full identity and mission of your faith community. Care for creation is not an add-on, not a few things designed to make us look green, not the activities of one more committee, not the things we do only when we can afford to or when we have done everything else. Rather, care for all Earth community belongs to the whole congregation such that all committees and all members take ownership for it. The role of a Green Team therefore is to be a catalyst to engage all committees and all members in this endeavor. “Greening” is not a veneer or a coating of practices but a deep, soaking penetration—an embrace of new understandings of faith, fresh practices of worship, a deep and enduring commitment to care for creation, changes of habit, and a willingness to sacrifice for Earth community in order to make it happen.

We wish you the best in your venture to care for creation. We stand ready to be helpful in ways that promote your efforts. Please consult our website for new ideas and more extensive resources (www.webofcreation.org). And please contact us with ideas, suggestions, and requests (webofcreation@gmail.com).

HEADS UP! WHAT’S NEW IN THE 2011 EDITION?

1. The Introduction.
2. Editorial and content changes in the organizational sections.
3. Suggestions for levels of action: money and time commitments
4. Many new suggestions in the five areas of the action plan.
5. Transfer of Theological Reflections to a separate document.
6. An entirely new section of suggestions for “Renewing Your Efforts”
7. An entirely new section enabling you to be “Taking it to the Next Level”

PART 1: GETTING STARTED AND KEEPING GOING

THE OVERALL PLAN

These materials are designed to train a small group of lay people and clergy to bring care for creation into the full life and mission of your congregation. You may use this manual in different ways, doing some or all of the processes and projects suggested here. For the program to work well, you may want to follow the steps and the principles recommended. In brief, the following steps represent the procedures to become a Green Congregation.

1. Gather a small group of people (2 to 8) to serve as a Green Team.
2. Become familiar with the Green Congregation program.
3. Inform/involve the pastor(s)/staff as to your interest and commitment.
4. Approach the church governing board for authorization to proceed.
5. Develop an Action Plan for the congregation in several or all of these areas
 - a. Worship
 - b. Education
 - c. Building and Grounds
 - d. Discipleship at Home and Work
 - e. Public Ministry
6. Work with the appropriate committees/ individuals to carry out the Action Plan.
7. Promote with members your identity as a congregation that cares for creation.
8. Meet regularly (monthly) to follow the Action Plan and to develop new projects.
9. Consider a congregation project to benefit the community/ city of location
10. Find structural ways to assure the long term life and activities of the Green Team
11. Apply to be recognized as a Green Congregation in the Green Congregation Program and adopt the Green Congregation Mission Statement.

In the following pages you will find many resources and suggestions for taking each of these steps. You may begin anywhere in the manual. Gravitate to what motivates you. However, we encourage you and members of your Green team to read the manual through one time and to do so every year or so in your work. Make it available to new Green Team members. Many more resources are available at www.webofcreation.org.

The Green Congregation Program (Summary)

- 1. Why should Christians care for creation?**
 - a. The environmental state of the world: climate change, ozone depletion, loss of bio-diversity, depletion of forests/ arable land, waste, population.
 - b. All people, particularly the poor, people of color, and third world countries, are affected by these conditions.
 - c. The biblical view that creation is good and the biblical mandate for humans to take responsibility to care for creation—all of Earth community
 - d. The theological understanding that God is present and active in the ongoing creation of the world.

- 2. What is the larger purpose of the Green Congregation Program?**
 - a. To contribute to the transformation of society so that humans live in harmony and justice with all life and preserve earth for future generations.
 - b. The more immediate goal is the transformation of the congregation to be an intentional community celebrating and restoring creation.

- 3. What is the goal for the congregation?**
 - a. To revitalize the identity and the mission of the congregation by integrating care for creation as part of all the congregation is and does.
 - b. To make a difference as individuals and as faith communities.

- 4. What is the function and role of a Green Team (or Earth Ministry Team)?**
 - c. A Green Team is a catalyst in the congregation for the transformation of the congregation to care for creation.
 - d. A Green Team seeks to promote care for creation in every part of the life and mission of the congregation.

- 5. How does the Green Team work?**
 - a. Share concern for environmental justice, explain the program, invite dialogue about ideas and concerns.
 - b. Approach the church council for authority to proceed
 - c. Seek to make care for creation part of the task of all committees, activities, staff tasks, and decisions.
 - d. Listen to concerns and be pro-active in fostering open communication

- 6. How does the Green Team make a plan of action and move ahead with some projects?**
 - a. Use the Five-Part program to set goals in each area (worship, education, building and grounds, lifestyle at home and work, and public ministry). See www.webofcreation.org.
 - b. Make a plan to implement each project. Identify the committee or group you think will be responsible for the project, and plan how to promote it.
 - c. Seek ways to maintain each change for the long term.

The Green Congregation Action Plan (Short Version)

The goal is to make a difference 1) by transforming attitudes and commitments, and 2) by embracing concrete actions that reduce human ecological impact on the earth and contribute to justice for people affected by environmental degradation. Choose projects likely to succeed, institutionalize them, and then move on to others.

- 1. Transformation through Worship: “Let all creation praise God”**
 - a. Incorporate Earth-keeping confessions, intercessory prayers, hymns, and sermons into weekly worship throughout the year.
 - b. For four Sundays in September, observe a four-week *Season of Creation* as part of the church year, with liturgies, sermons, Scripture lessons focusing on a relationship with nature (www.seasonofcreation.com)
 - c. Observe Earth Day Sunday in April (www.ncecojustice.org)
 - d. Have a Blessing of the Animals. (www.webofcreation.org under Worship)
 - e. Appoint your sanctuary with care for creation greenery, banners, and art.

- 2. Education: “Know your tradition and your world”**
 - a. Study your denominational Social Statement and the “Earth Charter.” (www.webofcreation.org under Education)
 - b. A class/forum to study the biblical, theological, and ethical resources in the Christian faith for eco-justice ministry.
 - c. Forums with local experts on environmental issues and resources.
 - d. Hold a retreat in a natural setting for a cluster of churches/councils.

- 3. Building and Grounds: “The church as an alternative community”**
 - a. Carry out a comprehensive environmental audit and develop a plan.
 - b. Retrofit church lighting; develop a recycling program; reduce paper use.
 - c. Use grounds as community garden, prairie, low maintenance lawn.

- 4. Discipleship at home and work: “Love your neighbor and Care for Creation”**
 - a. Recruit members to do an audit of their homes and/or work places.
 - b. Provide an opportunity for members to make a “Covenant with Creation” listing the eco-justice practices and disciplines. (See www.webofcreation.org under Lifestyle at Home and Work).
 - c. Offer a study/support group using a guidebook to encourage sustainable living. See resources at www.earthministry.org and www.nwei.org.

- 5. Public Ministry/ Public Witness: “The church exists to serve the world”**
 - a. Notify members with periodic action alerts about local, regional, and national environmental legal and policy issues.
 - b. Do a hands-on project in the community: restore a habitat, clean up trash, plant trees, or protest pollution-causing ill health.
 - c. Assist another church in becoming a Green Congregation.

For more information, see www.webofcreation.org or contact webofcreation@gmail.com.

The Green Congregation Program Task Descriptions for the Congregation

Initiating group:

Takes Green Congregation plan to the council
With a willingness to follow through and establish Green Team.

Contact Person:

Green Team leader as Congregational liaison to the Green Congregation Program.

Church Council:

Authorizes the Green Team to proceed and provides support.
Approves the Green Congregation Mission statement.

Green Team:

Gives information to whole congregation.
Develops an action plan.
Brings ideas and resources to the appropriate committees/people for action.
Follows through on action plans.
Assesses the results.

Standing Committees of the Congregation:

Participates in suggesting projects for Greening the Congregation
Where feasible, adopts plans recommended by the Green Team.

Pastor(s)/ lay professionals

Support the Green Team and the Green Congregation Program.
Give general guidance to plans and programs.
Carry out plans that relate to pastoral functions, such as worship or education.

Office and maintenance staff.

Support the Green Team and the Green Congregation Program.
Work with the Green Team to suggest and carry out green projects.

Whole congregation:

Embrace the Green Congregation Program.
Carry out plans and projects as appropriate at church, such as recycling.
Embrace care for creation as appropriate at home and work.

The Green Congregation Program/ Web of Creation: www.webofcreation.org.

Provide training and consultation for the process.
Provide resource materials.
Upon request, provide certification for Green Congregations.

The Green Congregation Program

How to Proceed

Frequently Asked Questions

This section is designed to help Green Teams know how to take the next steps in the Green Congregation Program. This is basically a briefing on “community-organizing” in your congregation. Here are some of the questions that give focus to the training

1. Why Christians should care for creation?

- a. The environmental state of the world is of grave concern for us: climate change, ozone depletion, loss of bio-diversity, depletion of forests and arable land, waste, population.
- b. Our commitment to justice. All people, particularly the poor, people of color, and third world countries, are affected by these conditions.
- c. The biblical view that creation is good and the biblical mandate for humans to take responsibility to care for creation—all of Earth community
- d. The theological understanding that God is present and active in the ongoing creation of the world gives us reverence to value all of life for its own sake and as a basis for our use of Earth’s gifts.
- e. The Christian commitment to care for others includes the commitment to care for the Earth that supports the human community.

2. What is the larger vision and purpose of the program?

- a. To contribute to the transformation of society so that humans live in harmony with other life and preserve earth for future generations.
- b. The more immediate goal is the transformation of the congregation to be an intentional community celebrating and restoring creation.

3. What is the goal for congregation?

- a. To revitalize the identity and the mission of the congregation by integrating care for creation in what the congregation is and what the congregation does.
- b. We seek to create an ethos of care of the earth in all that the congregation is and does.
- c. To *be different* and to *make a difference*.
- d. Personal spiritual transformation to a new relationship with God and with all creation: conversion to a new relationship with Earth.
- e. To be actively promoting (outside the congregation) ecological justice for Earth community.

4. What are some key principles and strategies to keep in mind?

- a. Care for creation is a religious issue and a religious practice.
- b. Obstacles may be theological, political, financial, or strategic.
- c. Working with other groups and other congregations strengthens everyone and increases our impact.

- d. For more key principles, areas of concern, and strategies see below and visit www.webofcreation.org.

5. What is the function and role of a Green Team (or Earth Ministry Team)?

- a. A Green Team is the catalyst or leaven in the congregation for transformation.
- b. A Green Team seeks to promote care for creation in every part of the life and mission of the congregation.
- c. The Green Team keeps before the congregation care for creation as integral to the life and mission of the community.

6. How does the Green Team work with the pastor(s) and lay professionals?

- a. Involve pastors and lay professionals insofar as they are able to participate.
- b. Share your concern for environmental justice, explain the program, and invite dialogue about ideas and concerns.
- c. Take responsibility as lay leaders for initiating and following through with the program
- d. Discuss how you can support the pastor/staff supporting you.
- e. Address concerns: possibility of controversy, the pastor is already overextended, how controls can be maintained, among others.
- f. Listen to concerns and be pro-active in keeping lines of communication open.

7. How does the Green Team work with the church council?

- a. Approach the church council as a group. Discuss it beforehand with the pastor, the church council president, and the executive committee.
- b. Present your concern for environmental justice, the goals of the Green Congregation Program, and your commitment to follow through.
- c. Seek to show how the program fits into the mission of the congregation. If it is not explicitly stated, ask if care for creation could be made a part of the church mission statement.
- d. Address concerns: financial cost (some grant money may come, and all other decisions involving financial commitments will be approved by the appropriate groups); whether this will drain volunteers from other tasks (only a few are needed, and the program may bring in other members not otherwise active); how will the committee report to the council (that can be up to the council); and so on.
- e. Ask the council for authority to approach church committees/committee chairs with ideas and resources and to work with other staff of the church.
- f. Listen to concerns and be pro-active in keeping lines of communication open.

8. How does the Green Team work with committees?

- a. Seek to make care for creation part of the task of all committees, activities, staff tasks, and decisions. Build it into job/committee description.
- b. Meet with committee chairs and committees: share your concerns, explain the program, invite their input, suggest a project or two (brainstorm about others), provide resources to do the projects, offer to be helpful if needed.

- c. Follow through with each committee and each project in order to provide support and accountability.
- d. Publicize and celebrate the work of the particular committee. Thank them after the project is completed.
- e. Listen to concerns and be pro-active in keeping lines of communication open.

9. In what ways might the Green Team assess the congregation—interest, assets, needs, opportunities, and support?

- a. “Asset/interest” based assessment in which you draw on the resources and commitments in the congregation to develop plans and programs.
- b. “Opportunities/needs” based assessment in which you look to the programs, possibilities, and eco-justice crises of the community in which the congregation is located.
- c. “Gauging support” for various projects, whereby you survey the congregation with a list of possible projects, costs, and payoffs, as a means to see what support there is for each project.
- d. A “comprehensive environmental” audit by which you assess every aspect of the building and grounds: what comes in, how it is used, where it goes. Develop an action plan to address the issues raised by the audit.
- e. See below, for additional ways to engage the congregation.

10. What strategies might the Green Team use to make the congregation aware of the Green Congregation program?

- a. Clarify the message and say it in seven different contexts/media: worship, education, newsletter, personal contacts, bulletin board, bulletin announcements and inserts, and e-mails.
- b. Choose different projects that get everyone involved at some level.
- c. Symbols, signs, actions, banners, and slogans that bring the issues before the congregation.
- d. Plan education/ worship/ projects/ changes so that they can be public teachable moments for the congregation.

11. How do you deal with obstacles and resistance?

- a. Be proactive in talking with people. Share your concerns about the environment and explain the source of your Christian commitment to care for creation. Give reasons/evidence to support your ideas.
- b. Listen, learn, work constructively to address the issues/ differences, seek a consensus, and compromise where necessary. Seek to avoid confrontation and pressure tactics.
- c. Explain and keep on going with the things that can be done.
- d. As you keep working at this, you will get to various thresholds and critical masses of support—after which things you already do are easier and new things are possible.

12. How does the Green Team make a plan of action and move ahead with some projects?

- a. Use the Five-Part program to set goals in each area (worship, education, building and grounds, discipleship at home and work, public ministry)
- b. Brainstorm about a special project of the whole congregation for the community. Will be chosen later in conjunction with the whole congregation.
- c. Make a plan to implement each project. Identify the committee or group you think will be responsible for the project, and plan how to promote it.
- d. Meet and/or communicate regularly (monthly?) as a Green Team to keep plans alive, hold each other accountable for commitments, and set up new projects.
- e. Seek to institutionalize each change as a regular integral part of the life of the congregation.
- f. Set a time after the project to evaluate and assess the outcomes. This will establish accountability, enable you to celebrate successes, and give an opportunity to determine needed changes for the next time the project is carried out.

13. Other steps

- a. Seek partners among community agencies and other congregations to do projects that would be difficult to do alone.
- b. Keep in touch with denomination at local, regional, and national levels to seek resources and connect with happenings elsewhere.
- c. Make use of the materials at www.webofcreation.org and the links to many other faith-based environmental sites available on Web of Creation.
- d. Make your Green Team meetings fun with healthy snacks and meals, walks in nature, poetry selections, or occasional trips to environmental sites.

Getting Started and Keeping On Strategies and Principles

There are many strategies to be pursued in the course of greening a congregation. What follows are some suggestions to consider as you chart your own course. Attend to those most relevant to your congregation and most appropriate to your assets and opportunities.

Keep the larger purpose in mind. Any effort to green a congregation is related to the degradations of the eco-system of Earth and the human efforts to restore rather than to destroy our Earth habitat. As Christians, we are called to be servants and keepers of God's whole creation. In your Green Team meetings, include a brief educational/devotional component that centers everyone to their larger purposes in meeting.

You are not alone. Congregational efforts are part of a larger ecclesial movement to incorporate care for creation into the life and mission of the church. There are many religious faiths working for the environment—the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, The National Council of Churches Eco-justice Working Group, the National Catholic Conference, the Evangelical Environmental Network, and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life. There are numerous para-religious groups (see links at www.webofcreation.org).

Double your commitment to human justice. Every ecological problem affects the human community, usually having the greatest impact on the most vulnerable—the poor, people of color, third world countries, the elderly, the disabled, among others. Every human justice problem is exacerbated by the degradation of creation. It is sometimes thought that social justice and care for creation undercut each other. The truth is that we desperately need commitment to both causes as one commitment, because the concerns are inextricably intertwined. Therefore, as you articulate your care for creation, double your commitment to human justice, because the recognition of the role played by the environment will give you an awareness of the full extent of the injustice. *So, as you plan activities, ask: How does this further the care for all creation?*

Keep the immediate goal in mind. The immediate goal is to transform the life and mission of the congregation so that care for creation is incorporated into every aspect of the congregation. *The key here is that the “environment” is not one more issue among others. Rather, as we define it, care for creation is fundamental to what it means to be human.* It is as fundamental as “Love God, love your neighbor, and love creation.” Hence, the approach is to make the care for all creation an integral part of every aspect of the life of the congregation.

Seek to act out of gratitude and grace. In response to the ecological state of the world, it is natural for people to be motivated by fear or grief or guilt or outrage. While these emotions are indeed appropriate responses, they are not a solid basis to make wise decisions, and they will not sustain one's efforts in the long run. This is true both for your

own sources of life-giving support and for the motivation you seek to engender in others. Be alarming without being alarmist. Do not become the environmental police. Avoid raging against the powers that be. This advice in no way minimizes either the problems or our part in them or the urgency of the situation. *We should seek to work positively and constructively out of the deep reservoir of God's grace present in nature itself.*

You are not starting from scratch. There are many different ways to get a started on the process of transforming your congregation into a community that cares for creation. It is likely that there are already a number of people who recycle and reuse. There are probably people who read about environmental issues but have never connected them to their faith or parish community. There may or may not be a lot of people willing to jump in and take a leadership role in getting the congregation involved; but that does not matter, because it only takes a few folks to make a lot happen for everyone. Make use of commitments already there.

Different Levels of Commitment. The key to understanding how this works is that you want to think about different levels of commitment. Do not assume everyone will be involved at the same level. Some people may take leadership roles in initiating programs and ideas. Others may be part of the church governing board to authorize or approve plans and related budget items. Others may be members of committees (such as the property committee) that would carry out a project. Still others may teach children, youth or adults in one class or another. Virtually everyone may be involved simply by participating in the bulletin recycling program after worship or by turning out lights in the bathroom when they leave. Celebrate the level at which everyone does their part, without expecting everyone to be involved at the same level of commitment.

It Only Takes a Few. So you may need a few people to get the ball rolling. This can be done whether you are a pastor or a lay leader or an interested parishioner. If you are a pastor, you may be in a position to give some impetus or direction to the process of becoming a creation-caring community. If you are a lay person, you may want to ask permission or inform the church council that you are planning on initiating some of these efforts in the parish, or you may wish to seek out others in the community who would be interested in offering some leadership on these issues with you. If you are in a position to get a formal committee or subcommittee established, all the better. You may talk personally with others who may be interested or you may want to put a notice in the bulletin or newsletter inviting anyone interested to a meeting. There may already be a standing committee of social concerns where it is appropriate to initiate eco-justice concerns. It is best to keep the process as open as possible and let the leadership and the congregation know what is happening and what is being planned. There may be people who object to the presence of this issue in the church; however, it is not necessary to achieve consensus in order for those who wish to go forward to do so. In the paragraphs below, we outline several first steps that may be taken.

Small Group. A small group or committee may form in the congregation in an ad hoc way and begin to serve as leaven for the rest of the congregation. The group may carry out projects on their own, propose projects for the church council to approve, and

promote ecological concerns through education and other promotional means. The task before you requires only a small group of dedicated and committed people who are willing to grasp a vision for the congregation and to stay at it for the long term. One individual or a small group of people can do the planning together and recommend the projects to other groups from year to year. Seek to diversify involvement in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, and occupation. Always have open meetings promoted so that all who wish to participate may do so.

Get Authorized. It is so important to locate the committee in the congregational structure. It may stand on its own, for example, under the aegis of the governing board. Or it may serve as a subcommittee of another committee, with a member of the oversight committee serving as a liaison member. It may simply be necessary for the small group of people working to green the congregation to let the pastors and governing board to know of their work and seek their blessing or authorization to proceed. Report regularly to those to whom you are accountable and let your activities be known to the community.

The strategy of the Committee is to green the whole congregation. It is crucial to recognize that the purpose of a committee is not to do all or even most of the “care for creation” activities but to serve as leaven to green the congregation as a whole. *The committee functions as a catalyst to lead other committees and employees of the church to incorporate eco-justice concerns into their arena of responsibility.* In this way, everyone participates and takes ownership at different levels and in different ways. *The committee serves the whole congregation, such that care for creation becomes part of the ethos of entire life of the congregation.*

Develop an Action Plan: It is important to have a plan for greening your congregation. Otherwise, the process will be scattered-shot and haphazard. *It is also important for the plan to be comprehensive.* Otherwise the actions will be quite limited. We recommend the following model to use when making an action plan. It has five areas: Worship, Education, Building and Grounds, Discipleship at Home and Work, and Public Ministry (www.webofcreation.org). We encourage you to keep coming back to this action plan regularly so that you keep the larger picture before you and that you keep the process of brainstorming and planning as an ongoing part of your work.

Make it policy/ Institutionalize It: Institutionalize and regularize the actions as quickly as possible. This way, it will not depend on the committee to suggest them anew each year. For example, if you celebrate Earth Week one year, seek to make it a regular part of the worship schedule for every year. If you purchase green cleaning products, make that a standard procedure. *Do not reinvent the wheel each year!*

Do not try to do it all at once: Do not be overwhelmed by all that there is to do or all that could be done. The idea is to choose projects that are manageable and that have a good chance of coming to fruition. You cannot do all of them at once. So pick and choose. You will find that there are good starter projects. As you reach a threshold of interest/ support, other more ambitious projects will be possible. *Celebrate what you get done without worrying about what does not get done. You can only do what you can do!*

Work cooperatively and realistically. One goal of the committee is to foster eco-justice decisions and events among all activities and offices of the congregation. You may want to promote care for creation worship with the Worship Committee. Or you may want to promote Earth friendly lawn care with the custodian. Or you may want to develop a relationship with the Education Committee to suggest a creation theme in the next Vacation Church School. Look around to see assets and opportunities. The role of the committee is to suggest, encourage, support, and offer resources—rather than to take over any decision-making or job belonging to another. Again, do not try to do too much at once. Work realistically and cooperatively with people. In a small, close-knit community like a congregation, there is little place for pressure or protest. *Invitation, cooperation, influence, and support will go a long way.*

Assess assets and opportunities. Find ways to identify the people who are already committed to eco-justice and seek to determine the nature of that commitment. *The congregation is a busy place. People are already committed to tasks in the congregation. So, as much as possible, work with the committees already present. Encourage people not to add on new tasks but to incorporate care for creation into the tasks they already have.* Build a green congregation around the opportunities at hand.

Get everyone involved at some level. Strategize how to get everyone involved in some aspect of the greening of the congregation. *Only a few people need to join the committee. Engage people at the level of their involvement, in relation to the things they already care about—some in worship, some in teaching, some in community activism, everyone in recycling and conserving energy, and so on. Try to identify the nature of everyone’s potential involvement and then challenge them in that commitment.*

Keep care for creation before the attention of the community. Through worship, educational programs, Bible studies, green notes in the bulletins and newsletters, with displays, and so on, let people know the importance of the work of becoming earth-keepers who care about ecological justice. When the congregation grows, make care for creation part of the training for new members. A brochure may help in this endeavor. *If one goal is to shape the ethos of the congregation; then care for creation becomes part of the atmosphere!*

Provide practices and events that are repeated each year. Devise a strategy that keeps the commitment going and keeps the concerns before the community. For example, the committee may seek to foster some key events each year, such as:

Presentations in worship at the beginning of each fall.

Worship service in which members make a “covenant with creation.”

Celebrate the Season of Creation.

Blessing of the Animals on St. Francis Day (October 2)

Open committee meetings with an educational component

Adult forums for the congregation with guest speakers

An event with the youth, with the women’s group, with the older members.

Earth Week worship

Such a structure will give a familiar pattern to the program from year to year and engage committee members in keeping care for creation before the community. Delegate the responsibility for each of these events to the appropriate groups/ committees. Plan only those activities that you have resources and energy to carry out.

Seek to be in touch with nature. The feelings of closeness to nature are crucial for the commitment to care for creation. Nurture this relationship for the community—whether through greening the sanctuary with plants or getting a naturalist to show you the area of your congregation or providing retreat opportunities for the council or the congregation. We seek to restore nature by being in solidarity with all creation rather than by manipulating it from above. We are called to love creation as God does. *We will not save what we do not love.*

Develop a description of the tasks of the Green Team. It might include items such as:

- Work to green every aspect of the life of the congregation
- Prepare an action plan and carry out the plan
- Network and cooperate with the offices and programs of the congregation
- Organize and sponsor meetings, lectures, workshops when feasible
- Promote care for creation among the members in their homes and work

Update the description each year.

Publicize, publicize, publicize. Community organizers say that in order to promote effectively a movement or an event, you must do so in seven different media. Try e-mail, bulletin blurbs, newsletter articles, posters, personal contact, phone trees, announcements, bulletin boards, a brochure, among others. Even if fewer people than you had hoped show up for an event, the whole community knows what is happening.

Education

You may wish to have a series of classes in the evening or a series of forums on Sunday morning (perhaps coupled with sermons on our responsibility to creation). There are many resources available for such classes. Here are some ideas:

- Explore Biblical passages dealing with our human relationship with creation
- Study your denomination's social statements on the care for creation and on environmental justice
- Look at the local church resource center or church press catalogues for curriculum on caring for creation.
- Watch one of the many videos available for such a forum.
- Get speakers from local high schools or colleges who have expertise in environmental issues.
- Get speakers from local agencies that deal with eco-justice issues.
- Do a series of case studies on the environment.
- Get in touch with your denominational office responsible for environmental ministry and ask about resources and speakers.
- Identify other churches in the area who have done environmental ministry and ask them to share their experiences.

The educational process may enable you to find out who has a commitment to do further work with environmental ministry in the congregation. The group may plan a project or suggestion further steps. One congregation that held a six-week study on Sunday mornings decided at the last session to do a project retrofitting all the lights in the building!

Retreat. It may be that you want to invite interested persons on a retreat for a day or two to a place in the countryside. The retreat might include:

- discussion of people's concerns and experiences;
- input from an informed person about the environmental state of the world;
- opportunities to discuss particular local environmental problems;
- the relationship between environmental and justice issues;
- study of an eco-justice manual for congregational life;
- formulation of a plan to continue the process.

There are educational resources available in video format or church school curriculum that may be used to plan the retreat. It may be possible for the members of the retreat to commit themselves to a project, then meet again for another retreat in six months to report on the success of the project, and to plan another project, and so on; or you might formulate a plan for the next steps to engage the whole congregation.

Church Council. Plan a retreat for the church council or plan a presentation that would inform the congregation about environmental ministry as an important part of parish life and mission. From there, you may want to form a task force or standing committee or a subcommittee of the Social Concerns committee to begin the process of environmental ministry.

Survey. Do a survey of the congregation to determine who is interested, who has a commitment, what concerns people have, how they view the environmental state of the nation and the world, what experiences they have had, what expertise they may have, and so on. From the responses, plan a retreat or form a committee in order to share the results of the survey and to set a direction for the group and the congregation.

Keeping a Log/ Make Annual Reports. It would be helpful if one person was willing to keep a record of what was considered and how it was done and what the outcome was. This record will draw others into the process who were not there from the beginning. It will also track all that you do so the congregation can begin to build an identity as a community that cares for creation. Publicize your successes and achievements.

What's in a name? It is important to name your endeavor or identity. *People will respond to a name and remember what your congregation is doing in becoming green.* You will want a name that refers to the whole congregation: Green Congregation, Green Zone, Eco-justice Center, Care for Creation Congregation, and so on. Draw on the symbols and ideas from your tradition to connect your efforts to your denomination. Develop a logo that reflects your purpose. You may want to name the committee

accordingly or have different name. It might help to call it a “team” (such as The Green Team or The Eco-justice Working Group or The Creation-Care Group) rather than a “committee”—as a means to emphasize the idea that it is not one committee among many but a catalyst and leaven for all the committees and programs.

You will need people resources. To a greater or lesser degree, you will need both persons and money to carry out activities of the action plan. To identify persons, it might help to send out a survey or request a survey response at several worship services. The survey might assess interest, skills related to environmental projects (such as a garden or publicity), environment-related occupations, desire to be on the Green Team, the willingness to participate in one environmental projects, the eagerness to give financial support to the program, and so on. Follow through with positive responses.

You will need financial resources. Of course, there are many activities and events that do not cost the committee or the congregation. However, it may be possible to get a line item in the budget. Or the committee could apply for a grant from local or national church organizations. Your committee may be able to cooperate with other groups or organizations that have funds. Fund raisers are very helpful. Make sure the kind of fund raiser you embrace furthers the environmental efforts, such as selling compact fluorescent light bulbs or fair trade products.

Seek Recognition as a Green Congregation. The committee and the congregation may wish to seek accreditation from the Green Congregation Program. *Such a program will give focus to your efforts. The achievement of the accreditation will also give publicity and a boost to the efforts.* And there will be incentive to develop ongoing plans as means to maintain the accreditation.

The success of the program will draw new members. Prospective members who learn about your environmental activities and the greening of your parish will often consider this an important factor, perhaps the decisive factor, in their choice of a church home.

Be visionary. Instead of thinking about change as incremental in relation to what now exists, imagine the congregation as it might be 50 years from now in an ecological age when every aspect of the life and activities of the culture will be ecologically restorative—a place where the love for all creation and the care for all human and non-human creatures is obvious. *Such a vision may lead you to make a leap forward in an area and act in prophetic ways to live out our call to be servants and keepers of Earth.*

Conclusion. These are some ideas and suggestions for your consideration when setting up your own program. You will find what works best for you and what the pitfalls are as you go. The helpful thing is that when you have done a certain number of activities, you will attain a threshold of support that will enable you to do things you could not do before. Make the best use of these moments. Then when you have done further activities, you will attain another level that thrusts you forward even further. Before long, there is a climate in the congregation, a sense of identity, which empowers you to generate personal and institutional commitments that were not otherwise possible.

Eight Strategies to Engage the Whole Congregation
*What Steps to Take to Involve Many Members of the Community
at Different Levels of Commitment*

Here are some ways to get the entire congregation engaged in caring for creation.

Prayer and Bible Study. For discernment and the leading of the Spirit, begin and end your conversations and decisions by entering into prayer. In relation to care for creation, pray for your congregation, for your community and for the world. Gather participants around relevant Scripture passages. Identify passages that resonate with your community. A farming community may connect with creation stories. Communities close to wilderness or desert may seek Job. Inner city congregations may look to the vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation. All worshipping communities can relate to Psalm 104. In all your deliberations, stay rooted in biblical resources and the good news of the gospel.

Strategy One: Brainstorming as a Basis for Action

A small group or the church council may want to brainstorm about what your particular congregation might do to care for Earth. It might help to work with a model or list of ideas as a basis for suggesting possibilities. The idea or ideas might be presented to the church council for approval and for the delegation of tasks to carry out the initiative. The proposal should include cost, the people or committee to carry it out, timeline, and specific suggestions for whatever might be needed to complete the project. It would be helpful to begin with projects that have the greatest chance for success.

Strategy Two: Learning as a Basis for Action

This approach provides an opportunity for many people in the congregation to learn about care for Earth as an entry into possible organizing or taking action. The idea would be to have a forum or series of adult forums or a six-week class focused on care for creation. There are many resources available for leaders to draw upon as a basis for such a forum—congregational handbooks, denominational printed resources, denominational representatives, books oriented to lay people, internet sites, and local people with expertise in some issues. From the group engaged in these forums, there might emerge a core group of people eager to take leadership in enabling more to happen.

Strategy Three: Listening and Consensus as a Basis for Action. Develop a process for a small group to have one-to-one listening relationships with members of the congregation in order to determine: who is interested, who has a commitment, what concerns people have, how they view the environmental state of the nation and the world, what experiences they have had, what expertise they may have, and what projects they would like the congregation to embrace. From the responses, plan an event to share the results of the “listening” and to set a direction for the group and the congregation.

Strategy Four: Action Based on Need

This is an approach that assesses the needs. The idea is to identify the need and then marshal the congregation and its members to address the problem. Here the congregation can look to identify needs at different levels:

- *The Parish:* If there is a need to save money, the congregation may look at energy costs and determine a comprehensive approach to addressing them—insulation, boiler maintenance, heat distribution, a grant for “starter-funds” to get energy efficient lighting, and so on.
- *The Community:* Perhaps a nearby stream has been polluted and is causing health problems for the community; so, you organize to engage in habitat restoration or urge the local government to address the issue. Maybe an incinerator is causing health problems or a local factory is exceeding federal standards of emissions and causing local health problems or the water supply is being polluted by runoff pesticides. The parish can provide leadership in community organizing.
- *State and Nation:* Many in the congregation might be concerned that federal standards for clean water or clean air are being eroded and desire to engage in letter writing or phone campaigns to express their concerns and advocate for certain actions or legislation. This can also be true for other issues (e.g. smog, ozone, water conservation, logging, etc.)
- *Global:* The effects of global climate change loom large and the congregation can marshal its resources to bring influence to bear on government representatives to address the issue. Some in the congregation may be aware of global efforts to address climate change and related problems. There may be a desire to learn more about international conferences or treaties and to urge government to participate.

Strategy Five: Action Based on Opportunities

Opportunity-based organizing involves acting on an opportunity that does not necessarily involve a specific need. For example, you have property that is not well-developed and you can make a nature sanctuary area; or you are building an addition or a new building and have the chance to incorporate many eco-design features into your new building. Your grounds lend themselves to establishing a community garden, so you seek to gather people who might organize and lead the community to develop and care for such a garden, perhaps to benefit the poor in the neighborhood. Perhaps the youth group is looking for a service project. The opportunities are endless.

Strategy Six: Action Based on Congregational Assets

This approach draws upon the assets of the congregation. Instead of trying to identify needs and seeing how they can be met, this approach looks to assess all the resources available among members of the congregation as well as the assets of the congregation as a whole, and then to develop ways to move forward making use of these assets.

You will find many people already committed to care for Earth in a variety of ways—people who read about environmental issues, people who are recycling or composting as an expression of their commitment, people engaged in social justice that are deeply entwined with creation-care, or people who are concerned about the issue but are not sure how to act on their concern. Some folks may already have seen their concerns as a religious issue, while others may never have made the connection between their faith and their care for Earth. Now is an opportunity to encourage such people to transform their concern into a religious practice or discipline. People who already have a commitment to

Earth-care may be the greatest resource, and their commitment—once expressed—can be contagious for others.

In addition, many resources/assets in the congregation will come from people already doing environmentally-related activities in their jobs, people who may have ideas and expertise that would generate many actions and much learning for the congregation:

- Salespersons who sell energy saving appliances/ heating and air-conditioning units
- Engineers who promote energy efficient lighting
- Nurses who know about healthy diets that promote eco-concerns
- Farmers who are committed to environmentally-safe farming practices

Such people can serve as consultants for decision-making, offer forums on relevant topics, or just be part of a discussion group.

In addition, there will be people who have skills and interests that can be very helpful in enabling the congregation to become a creation-caring congregation. Those interested in gardening can develop a community garden on the grounds—for the benefit of food pantries and needy families. Abilities and interests—from boiler maintenance, to landscaping, to bringing greenery into the church, to insulating windows, to carpooling to church—can be a part of your congregation's environmental mission. Once people see the vision for their parish, many interested people may come forward.

Finding out about the resources can involve a survey shared through the church newsletter or distributed at a service or congregational meeting. It can also be done by phone pools or internet forms. Questions could include:

- How would you state your concern or commitment to care for creation?
- What eco-friendly practices do you do? Recycling, reusing, eco-purchases?
- Do you have a job that relates to environmental issues (list examples)?
- Do you have interests or hobbies that might be helpful (list examples)?
- Have you related these concerns to your faith and faith community? If so, how?
- Would you be willing to express/ act on your concern and gifts as a Christian?
- Would you be willing to meet and explore what our congregation could do?

Based on the gathering of information about these resources, some suggestions for action could be made that reflect the interests, commitments, and gifts of the people. Bringing a group of folks together around these issues might lead to some concrete decisions.

Strategy Seven: Action Based on Consensus

Here is an opportunity to survey the church or a group meeting to assess what people would be willing to do by consensus. A small group would prepare information about a range of things that could be done to care for Earth. For each item, a description is given, then the cost, payback possibilities, who would do it and how, and so on. (Be sure to include some items that people would be likely to support!) Then, people would check if

they would support enthusiastically, support provisionally, be cautious about, or outright oppose each item. Space should be given to allow people to explain their reasons (objections that could perhaps be addressed). Here are some project ideas:

- Recycling bins for the church
- Nontoxic cleaning supplies
- Retrofitting the lighting in the church
- Incorporate creation concerns into worship life
- Circulate a petition supporting efforts to address global climate change

It is best to determine your own list based on needs and opportunities in your congregation and the larger community, and on the commitment of parish members.

Strategy Eight: Join Forces

You may want to proceed by joining up with folks from a nearby congregation or people from another religious tradition. Some congregations naturally yoke well together. There may be a community project that needs the commitment of several organizations and more people. The cooperation may enable projects done in common to benefit from the low prices of contractors. Cooperation among several congregations may enable financial resources that would not be available from only one congregation. A project in the community, such as habitat restoration or opposition to the construction of an incinerator, might best be done by as many local organizations and groups as possible. The cooperation with people from other traditions gives an opportunity to learn from each other ways of addressing our ecological situation theologically, spiritually, and ethically.

In addition, you may want to work together with organizations that are not faith-based, in order to support them in a project they are doing already or to initiate a new project. Such groups might include local branches of national organizations such as the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Association, Nature Conservancy, the Wilderness Society, or Transitions US. Or you might join with local environmental organizations, such as the garden groups, tree-planting organizations, Community Supported Agriculture, Land trust societies, among others. We need all the cooperation we can muster among many groups in the quest to care for Earth. This is an effort that can unify rather than divide communities, and we need to do our part to foster such unity.

Conclusion

We suggest all these strategies not to overwhelm you with possibilities but to affirm that there are indeed many ways to proceed. The idea is to find what might be best for your congregation, given the interest you already have, given the personality of the congregation, and given the particular organization and procedures for decision-making. There will be obstacles along the way, which we hope that you are able to translate into challenges or find ways to shift gears and move in new directions. The goal is to keep moving forward together toward an integration of care for creation into the full life and mission of your congregation.

Names and Symbols: Promoting Your Identity

Names and symbols are important because they give a sense of identity and serve as reminders of the community's responsibilities for creation.

Naming the parish as a place to care for creation: Give the church an identity as a place where people care about all of life. Here are some possibilities:

- *Green Congregation*: This is the simplest and most descriptive name. It does not, however, convey the faith-based roots of the identity.
- *Creation-Care Congregation*. This also is a simple description and, in this case, does bear the faith-based commitment.
- *Creation Awareness Center*. This is the phrase used formerly by the National Council of Churches for congregations that covenant to model care of the earth. It emphasizes the church building as a place where the people and the buildings/grounds manifest an awareness of all creation and the human responsibility for it.
- *Covenant Community*. This is a different version that identifies the members of the congregation as people who are committed to all of God's creation. What about naming a new church the “Creation Methodist Church”?
- *Earth-Keeping Congregation* or *Earth-Healing Center*. Some congregations already think of themselves as healing centers, and so their identity can be expanded to include not only the healing of persons and communities but also a commitment to the regeneration of nature.
- *An Eco-Justice Community*. This phrase emphasizes the integral relation between ecology and justice, including the relationship between degradation of the environment and the exploitation of women, minorities, the poor, and third world countries. It identifies the community as a place where concerns for the environment are explicitly and intentionally related to the concern for justice among humans—as a community of advocacy and action.

Green Zone. This is a concept that is less explicitly religious in orientation, but emphasizes the area as a place safe for the environment and therefore also for humans—similar to a drug-free zone as a place safe for children, or a hospital zone as a place dedicated to the healing of persons. A Green Zone is a place where the geographical area of the church, along with the community that gathers there, is a place that is Earth-friendly. The advantage of this concept is that it can easily be applied also to homes and neighborhoods and businesses.

- **Other Names.** You may come up with biblical images, such as the garden or the tree of life. You may come up with a name that relates to your region or area of the country. Whatever it is, it should be a reminder to the congregation of their commitments and their mission.

Naming the committee is also important. It should be a name that does not alienate some while it draws others. Seek to find a name that anyone can identify with.

- Green Team
- Environmental Concerns Committee
- Eco-Justice Concerns Committee
- Environmental ministry Committee
- Creation Awareness Committee
- Care for Creation Team

If the committee promotes the whole congregation by a certain identity, then the name should perhaps reflect this:

- Committee for Christ Presbyterian Church as Creation Community
- Committee for the parish as a Green Zone

Perhaps you prefer to name a program rather than a committee.

- Care for Creation
- Care of the Earth
- Restoring Creation
- Healing Creation
- Green Congregation Program

If the community is engaged in a local or regional advocacy program, you may want to establish a temporary name for the program during the period in which the advocacy is in effect.

Choosing symbols. It may also be helpful to have one or more symbols of your commitment to the care of the earth. A symbol can be a very meaningful expression of environmental ministry. The symbol could be displayed as a logo or given artistic expression.

- The tree of life
- Earth as seen from space
- Water of life

A public symbol can also give the congregation an identity with the larger surrounding community. Some of these symbols may display actual practices that are prophetic signs of future practices in a sustainable world. Here are some ideas:

- Create a community garden on your property. Make participation available to people in the neighborhood, especially the poor, or give to a local food pantry.
- Create an orchard on the property. Share the produce with needy families.
- Plant many trees and shrubs for the protection of the building from the cold wind in winter and the hot sun in summer.
- Create a small natural sanctuary on the property with trees and shrubs and flowers. It may have a small path with benches. This would be a place for people in the church and the neighborhood to sit quietly and meditate.
- Put up a wind turbine to generate electricity..

- Put up solar panels to power the outside lights.
- Create an eternal light in the sanctuary that is powered by the light from the sun.
- Surround the baptismal font with a garden of life. Perhaps include a waterfall for the font of running water made possible by solar power.
- Put plants in the church building and sanctuary so that worship is always held amidst the praise of all God's creation.
- Where there are wall to ceiling windows and the climate permits, plant the same trees, shrubs, flowers, and other plants inside as there are outside, so that the artificial separation from creation is overcome.
- Use recycled materials to build your church or some outside furnishings or a sculpture for the church yard.
- Your building itself can be a symbol.

The symbols you choose may come from the Bible or from your religious tradition or from the region or from nature itself or from technology or from your imagination!

Display your identity. You may want to display outside or at the entrance or on an inside wall a statement of your commitment in the form of a certificate and the name of your community. The testimonial could be in the form of a framed certificate or a printed announcement/sign or a plaque. Examples:

- First Baptist Church is a Center for Healing Creation
- Community Church is a Green Zone
- Christ Methodist: A Creation Awareness Center
- Commitment to Care for the Earth: St. Luke Episcopal Church
- This is an Eco-Justice Community
- Dedicated to Environmental Ministry

Church Newsletter and Web Site. As a means to keep before the parish a commitment to eco-justice concerns, consider the inclusion of regular reminders of concern for creation in the church newsletter. These can involve facts about the environment, sayings and proverbs about your commitment, reference to local, regional, national or global opportunities for advocacy, some effort that has been made to restore and protect the environment, or some suggestions for incorporating environmental practices in life at work and in the home. If you have developed a name or logo or phrase that captures your care for the earth, perhaps it can become part of the mast for your newsletter. If you have the congregation on an e-mail list-serve, use this means of communication to keep environmental issues before people. Put all the information on your church Web site.

Incorporate care for creation into the mission statement of the congregation. If your congregation has a mission statement, it is important to include your commitment to the environment in it. Including creation care in your documents of purpose serves to keep before you, at the most fundamental level, your ongoing covenant to serve and protect creation as part of your mission. Yearly planning will then be sure to include this vital dimension of religious life. If you do not have a congregational mission statement, perhaps now is the opportunity to adopt one.

Using a Parish Model

How to Use the Comprehensive Model Presented Here Below in the Action Plan

In embracing care of the earth, it is important to work with a vision of what the parish as a whole might become. Otherwise, you might do one project, such as retrofitting lights or getting rid of Styrofoam, and think you have greened your parish entirely! The whole idea is to change the underlying ethos, to incorporate concern for creation into every aspect of parish life.

These pages represent one possible model. As we have shown, the model has five areas for transformation: (1) worship; (2) education; (3) building & grounds; (4) lifestyle at home and work; and (5) public ministry. The idea is to keep the whole model before you as you address one area or another.

In no way is it possible to address all areas at once or to complete the vision in a brief period. However, unless you have a comprehensive picture before you of what is possible and desirable, the transformation will fail for lack of imagination.

What follows is a brief picture of the model to work with: the five areas, plus some ideas to implement in each area. You may want to jump in and do some dramatic things that will engage everyone immediately in the whole process, or you may want to work more gradually. As you set goals for each year, determine which areas you wish to address. These may be based on needs or opportunities or an expression of the gifts and interests people bring to the task for that year.

An Example of a Model: The Parish as a Green Zone

It is helpful to have a model or a name for your parish as a place to care for the earth. The model we are using here is that of a **Green Zone**. Having a model fosters creativity in thinking about how to deal with our impact on the environment. It encourages us to think comprehensively about the environment in relation to every area of parish life, so that we may work toward a holistic approach to the environment. This is not an agenda, but a visionary document identifying things you have done or might do in the future.

A Green Zone is a geographical area in which lifestyle and activities promote a healthy environment and where the people are committed to healing creation. Activities in a Green Zone have a fivefold thrust. This model follows the five-fold action plan we advocate throughout this manual.

1. Seek Transformation Through Worship:

1. Introduce concerns for creation into every area of communal life.
2. Incorporate concerns for creation into worship: confession, forgiveness, thanksgiving, intercession, preaching.
3. Create rituals for tree plantings, litanies over our despoiling of the environment, petitions for endangered species, blessings of the animals and trees, and so on.
4. Make banners and decorate worship with reminders of our life for creation.
5. Provide resources for personal devotions that foster creation spirituality.

2. Seek Transformation Through Education:

1. Teach care of the earth in classes for all ages.
 2. Provide forums and workshops on the problems of the environment and what we can do: Bring in speakers from local organizations.
 3. Provide information about local recycling centers and disposal sites.
 4. Expose attitudes which lead to damage of the environment, and teach theologies and resources which foster healing.
 5. Introduce people to ethical issues which we will be facing in the struggle over scarce resources, job losses, and environmental damage.
 6. Help people to love the natural environment, and develop a spirituality rooted in creation.
 7. Connect people to nature with retreats, nature walks, outings, awareness of nature around the church.
 8. Inform people about local, national and world issues on the environment.
 9. Provide symbols which enable people to identify with issues of creation awareness.
 10. Provide books and periodicals in the library. Promote them in newsletters.
3. **Make the Geographical Area of the Parish Into a "Zone" Which is Safe for the Environment.** Do a comprehensive "environmental inventory" for a) everything which comes into the building, b) the use of everything in the building, and c) everything which goes out of the building.
1. Everything that comes in:
 1. Where feasible, bring fewer resources onto the property and into the building: less energy, less water, less paper.
 2. Where feasible, purchase recycled stationary, bulletin paper, towels, toilet paper, as well as products which will be safely used and safely disposed.
 3. Consider, where workable, using no pesticides, prohibiting smoking, using cloth napkins (no paper cups, plates, tablecloths).
 4. Where feasible, provide as much of your own resources as possible: plant gardens and fruit trees, use water from drainage, plant trees near buildings for shade.
 5. Consider wind turbines, solar energy, and so on (even when only symbolic of what can be done in the future.)
 2. The efficient and full use of everything:
 1. Use products efficiently. When buying new equipment, look for furnaces and appliances which are energy efficient.
 2. Where appropriate, provide insulation (weather stripping, caulking, storm windows, shutters, thermal curtains, tinted glass, trees).
 3. Where workable, use less water by means of toilet dams, tap shutoffs, energy saving faucets, the use of drainage water, and limited lawn watering.
 4. Seek to avoid unnecessary use of paper. Try using office paper completely and efficiently.
 5. Where possible, use only safe products and use them up.
 6. Consider providing plants inside which purify the air.
 3. Everything that goes out:
 1. Recycle as close to 100% of the waste as possible: paper, bulletins, containers, cans, aluminum, plastic, furniture, appliances, batteries.
 2. Where possible, take toxic waste to proper disposal sites. Study the waste baskets and garbage cans periodically in order to see where you can recycle better or avoid products which produce such waste.
 3. Where feasible, compost food, grass clippings, leaves and other organic wastes.
4. **Promote a Personal Lifestyle Among Members Which Fosters a Healthy Environment.**

1. Encourage people to treat their houses, businesses, industries, and other public arenas as Green Zones.
 2. Provide the tools for people to do an "environmental inventory" of their homes and places of work.
 3. Provide a "covenant" with creation in which people commit themselves to certain actions on behalf of the environment. Pledge and renew the covenant annually at a special worship service.
 4. Encourage people to consider ecological concerns in diet, transportation, gift-giving, and so on.
 5. Provide books which list things people can do for the environment and work through the list together.
 6. Provide interest or support groups to foster change and develop habits.
 7. Get rid of junk mail.
5. **Advocate in the Political Sphere.** Promote a commitment to action on behalf of the environment in the local, state, national and global arenas.
1. Become informed about local, national, and global issues. Make your views known to governmental representatives and corporate officers.
 2. Seek to be advocates and reconcilers in controversy, pursuing creative and forward-looking solutions.
 3. Provide support groups for people affected by environmental issues.
 4. Engage in educational programs in your community. Organize grassroots environmental projects.
 5. Cooperate with other congregations and with environmental groups.
 6. Involve groups in the church in action programs in church and community.
 7. Conduct a letter-writing campaign. Write "letters to the editor."
 8. Encourage people to join environmental organizations and to participate in local and regional environmental committees.
 9. Give recognition to people who care for creation in outstanding ways.

How to Use the Comprehensive Model Presented Here in the Parish Pages

Be Visionary

The key to a Green Zone is to think comprehensively and creatively. View every external and internal obstacle as an opportunity to learn how you can move toward a new world. Think what a church might be like fifty years from now, a church which is an ideal place to care for the earth. Out of such a vision of possibilities, begin step by step to fulfill the hopes that will make your space a place where all God's creation is loved and celebrated. Insofar as you are able to do that, the kingdom is now.

This then is an example of a model. It needs to be adapted to your situation and filled with possibilities, issues and concerns appropriate to your situation. Always keep in mind that every issue related to the environment has human costs and consequences. That is to say, every issue of the environment is also always an issue of human justice. These ethical matters are extremely complex and may require openness, learning, sacrifice and risk.

The key is to address several areas of this model at once so that it is clear this has to do with the whole life of the parish. Also, it is important to make changes in such a way that they get incorporated into the ongoing life of the congregation beyond the year.

Institutionalize changes: establish ongoing recycling, make a policy of using safe cleaning products, regularize educational programs, determine set Sundays each year to celebrate and express concern for nature, found a committee to keep advocacy issues before the community, and so on. Doing something once may help in the short term, but if you seek to transform the community, the changes must have some sense of permanence or continuity to them.

The model helps to keep the larger picture before you. Fill in the areas of the model with your own accomplishments and projects in process and goals to achieve.

Sustainability

Finally, keep in mind the larger goal, namely to generate a lifestyle that sustains life for the next generations. In regard to each action, then, consider the four legs that hold up the stool of sustainability: ecological, economic, communal, and spiritual.

1. Does the project and the way it is done sustain the natural environment?
2. Does the project and the way it is done sustain the economic support of the people with fair and equitable distribution?
3. Does the project and the way it is done sustain the community? That is, can the project be thought of as a way to build and strengthen the community?
4. Does the project and the way it is done enhance a loving relationship with the rest of nature? Does it deepen the faith of the participants? Does it encourage them to endure in their commitment to care for Earth?

The issues involved in our transformation to creation-caring communities are matters of life and death. We are choosing to secure the future for our children and grandchildren by acting so as to sustain life, restore nature, and build hope that our environment will support those who come after us. What we do and how we do it are of utmost importance.

What Church Leaders Should Learn about Caring for Creation

1. The environmental state of the world—basic principles of ecology, information about critical issues (such as global warming, ozone depletion, loss of diversity, deforestation, desertification, waste, toxic waste, and overpopulation), the human/ natural causes of these conditions, and the potential consequences of their continuation.
2. The human justice issues involved in every aspect of environmental degradation: environmental racism, impact on the most vulnerable, rural/urban issues, global dynamics of poverty and underdevelopment, and neo-colonial exploitation of peoples and earth.
3. The systemic changes we need to make in the social, cultural, political and economic structures of our nation, corporations, institutions, and global patterns of interaction in order to address environmental crises and to create conditions for a sustainable world.
4. Familiarity with national laws and policies (Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, etc.) and global conferences and treaties (Montreal Treaty, Rio, Kyoto, Copenhagen) and effective means to advocate for strengthening these measures.
5. Knowledge about environmental ethical issues, the movement to create a global ethic (The Earth Charter), and the means to become part of this effort.
6. Awareness of Christian and denominational traditions that have contributed to Earth's problems, what theological and ethical resources might help us, and how we can think creatively about environmental situations.
7. What do other Christian traditions, other faiths, and other cultures bring to our common responsibility to care for creation? How can we work to lift up their gifts, learn from them, and cooperate with them to care for Earth?
8. What congregations can do to incorporate care for the earth into their identity and mission—worship, education, property, discipleship at home and work, and public ministry—and the organizing tools and leadership skills to bring about those changes.
9. How congregations can be places of moral deliberation for issues that face the larger community, assisting people to work together to address social conflicts over choices of justice and ecology—and to model how this might be done.
10. What lifestyle changes are necessary to counter the consumer culture and to live simply—in ways that minimize our impact on Earth and serve to restore creation.
11. How to work through fear, guilt, grief, and anger so that we are fed by God's grace and love, which enables us to make environmental choices with joy and commitment.
12. How to get in touch with nature so that a foundational experience with the natural world leads us to love creation.

Green Congregation Recognition Program

The Green Congregation Certification Program (GCCP) seeks to encourage, guide, and recognize congregations that significantly engage in the process of incorporating care for creation into the life and programs of their congregation. Here are the steps to follow.

1. ***Develop an Action Plan:*** Use the materials in the Green Congregation Training Manual to develop an action plan. A form is available online for this purpose. The plan will follow a model of action in five areas: Worship, Education, Building and Grounds, Discipleship at Home and Work, and Public Ministry. The plan invites you to choose one or more options from each area. When you have completed the planning process, submit a copy of the Action Plan with the letter of request (by mail or e-mail).
2. ***Make a request:*** Submit a letter of request to become a candidate to be certified by the GCP (see the following request form). This letter should be signed by a pastor/staff person, the chair of the governing board, and the Facilitator of the Green Team. The Facilitator of the Green Team will serve as contact person with the GCP. Provide all contact information. The Action Plan is to be submitted with the letter of request.
3. ***Receive Certification:*** The Green Congregation Program will issue a certificate for display certifying that the congregation has qualified to be named a Green Congregation. Proceed to carry out the Action Plan.
4. ***Adopt the Green Congregation Mission Statement:*** As an expression of your commitment, request that the governing board and/or the whole congregation adopt the Green Congregation Mission Statement (see below).
5. ***Maintain Status:*** The Green Congregation will submit to the GCCP a brief report of the actions of the previous year along with an Action Plan for the coming year. Employ the same forms used to develop the Action Plan as the means to report the results.

To request further information and to submit a letter of application for certification by the Green Congregation Certification Program, please send to David Rhoads, Director, Green Congregation Program, at drhoads@lstc.edu or to webofcreation@gmail.com. Be sure to provide all contact information, including names, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and mailing address.

Green Congregation Covenant

Sponsored by

The Web of Creation

We accept our responsibility to be Stewards of the Earth,
and we pledge ourselves to act accordingly.

We will ...

- Choose to participate in the Green Congregation Program.
 - Designate a group or an individual to provide leadership and oversight of this pledge, and to work with partnering groups for its fulfillment.
 - Set specific goals in these areas:
 - Worship in ways that celebrate and foster care for Creation
 - Educate adults and children in ecological issues and practices.
 - Green the buildings and grounds of our facilities.
 - Promote earth-friendly lifestyle of members at home and work
 - Community involvement in caring for the environment.

Name of Congregation

Address

Contact signature

Contact information (e-mail and phone)

Pastor Signature

Church Council Representative

Please mail a copy of your covenant to
Web of Creation. ATTN David Rhoads
Lutheran School of Theology
1100 East 55th Street
Chicago, IL 60615
Or submit electronically to
drhoads@lstc.edu or webofcreation@gmail.com

Green Congregation Mission Statement

As a congregation committed to care for creation, we affirm the creation in all its glory and beauty. We acknowledge God as the source of all things. We acknowledge Christ as the redeemer of all things. We acknowledge the Spirit as the sustainer of all things. As a result, we strive to respect all of life as sacramental. We accept our vocation as earth-keepers who care for creation. We see ourselves as part of the covenant of Noah that God made with humans and with all the animals of the land, sea, and air. We accept our responsibility to live justly in relation to our fellow human beings in ways that all creatures may mutually thrive together.

Worship: We seek to worship throughout the year so that we express our gratitude and praise to God the creator and so that we glorify God intentionally together with all creation. In worship, we will celebrate creation, confess our sins against creation, grieve the losses of creation, and commit ourselves to care for Earth.

Education: We seek to learn about the biblical, theological, and ecclesial traditions concerning creation, including the biblical mandate from God for us to care for Earth. We will seek also to learn about the present degradations of creation due to human activity, how these degradations are related to human exploitation and oppression, how we as religious people are implicated in these matters, and what we as Christians can do to heal and restore creation for future generations. We will seek to train people to be leaders in the congregation and the community in our cooperative efforts to care for creation.

Building and Grounds: We agree to assess the destructive impact that our activities and the use and maintenance of our property may have upon creation—in such matters as energy use, toxic products, paper use, water use, waste, transportation, among others. We will strive to make choices that lessen our negative impact on the Earth and that serve to renew and restore Earth community.

Discipleship as Home and Work: We encourage ourselves as individual members of this congregation—at whatever age, economic level, ethnic group, or walk of life—to care for creation in our personal lifestyle, in our homes, and at our work—knowing that our habits and practices can contribute significantly to care for creation. We seek to foster a closer relationship with nature so that we can live simply and walk lightly upon the earth.

Public Ministry: We seek to change the systems that foster the degradation of creation and to rectify the injustices that result from it. And we seek to alert our members to environmental legislation that protects creation and to encourage their active participation in the development of public policy. We encourage members to participate in civic activities that foster environmental health. We seek to let our care for creation be known to others.

Because we desire to leave Earth a better place for our children, we will promote love and respect for creation in our youth, teach them responsible Earth practices, and engage them in projects that restore creation. We will explore the implications of these provisions together. We will pursue them in a graceful and non-legalistic way, seeking to find hope and joy in the commitments and sacrifices these provisions may entail and in the restorations they engender.

PART 2: ACTION PLAN

Action Plan Instructions

Make firm the foundation. The changes we make, and even the capacity to recognize changes we should make, will flow out of our response to the grace of God and the love of God. Taking time personally and communally for prayer, for spiritual practices, and for devotional time in relation to nature is vital to awakening, empowering, and sustaining our efforts in caring for creation. Make it an integral part of all that you do—planning, actions, and reflection on your actions.

Have a Plan: It is important to have a plan for greening your congregation. Otherwise, the process will be scatter-shot and haphazard. It is also important for the plan to be comprehensive. Otherwise the actions will be quite limited. We recommend the following model to use when making an action plan. It has five areas: Worship, Education, Building and Grounds, Discipleship at Home and Work, and Public Ministry. *Be visionary!*

Be a Catalyst We remind you that it is not the work of the planning committee to carry out all of the actions. Rather, it is the goal of the “Green Team” to be a catalyst for the whole community to become engaged. Work with the various people responsible in different committees of the congregation—provide ideas, resources, and support—so that they incorporate care for creation into their arena of responsibilities. *This way, the work is shared and many people take ownership for the greening of the congregation.*

Make it policy: Institutionalize and regularize the actions as quickly as possible. This way, it will not depend on the committee to suggest them anew each year. For example, if you celebrate Earth Week one year, seek to make it a regular part of the worship schedule for every year. *Do not reinvent the wheel each year!*

Do not try to do it all at once: Do not be overwhelmed by all that there is to do or all that could be done. The idea is to choose projects that are manageable and that have a good chance of coming to fruition. So pick and choose. You will find that there are good starter projects. Then, as you reach a threshold of interest and support, more ambitious projects will be possible. *Celebrate what you get done without worrying about what does not get done. You can only do what you can do!*

Use the Action Plan Scenarios. Use the descriptions of the action plan in the five areas to fill out the Action Plan Form to establish the projects and events you hope to accomplish. Then follow through.

1. Transformation through Worship
2. Transformation through Education
3. Building and Grounds as Model
4. Discipleship of the Community Members (at home and at work)
5. Public Ministry/Political Advocacy

Levels of action. It may be helpful to think of actions and projects at different levels. Resources for all suggestions are available on the Web of Creation website.

Level 1. Here are some examples of actions that require little or no cost and can be done in a short time period. These can be done quickly with little effort.

1. Arrange for creation-care petitions to be included in the prayers at worship throughout the three-year common lectionary. (see Worship)
2. Arrange for a personal covenant with creation to be distributed to members at worship, perhaps with a brief ritual of dedication. Materials are available. (Lifestyle)
3. Arrange to place creation-care messages in the weekly bulletins. These are already prepared for you to send electronically to the person who does the bulletins. (Education)
4. Work through the comprehensive “environmental checklist for congregations” with the chairperson or the members of the property committee as means to determine what has been done and what subsequent actions might be taken. (Building and Grounds)
5. Where available, arrange with the local energy company for a free energy audit. (Building and grounds)
6. Publicize creation-care devotional resources with members for personal use. (Lifestyle)
7. Promote organic products or commit to the purchase of local food or agree to have a vegetarian meal each week as a means to reduce carbon impact. (Lifestyle)
8. Get information about local environmental projects and publicize them. Identify and promote the priorities of local communities engaged in justice work that is explicitly or implicitly ecological. (Public Ministry)
9. Learn about the ELCA advocacy programs and get names of people who want to receive environmental action-alerts regarding national legislation, public policies, and local issues. (Advocacy)

Level 2. Here are some examples of actions that involve a short time period, such as three to six months, and may involve some limited financial expenditure.

1. Make plans to observe the Season of Creation for four weeks in the church year. Liturgies, lessons, and suggestions for celebration are available online. (Worship)
2. Develop your property with a community garden or establish a section as prairie or some other native, natural habitat. (Building and Grounds).
3. Engage your educational program to see and discuss books and curricula on creation-care. (Education)
4. Hold a retreat with families of the congregation focusing on our relationship with nature. Invite a naturalist to guide you. (Education)
5. Hold a workshop for members on how to green your home or apartment. (Lifestyle)
6. Recruit members of your congregation to receive action alerts on matters of public policy. (Public Witness)

7. Change overall purchasing practices—paper, cleaning products, food—to reflect care for creation. (Building and Grounds)

Level 3. Here are examples of some actions that may take a longer period, perhaps several years, and might involve substantial expenditure of funds.

1. Energy challenge: Set a goal and reduce the carbon footprint of your congregation in five or ten years, by 25% to 40%. (Building and Grounds)
2. Set a goal and reduce the carbon footprint of your members in five years by 25% to 50%. Work together and help each other out to meet these goals. (Lifestyle)
3. So transform your worship life, the sanctuary, and the ecological practices around creation-care in worship such that anyone worshipping with you would know your commitments. (Worship)
4. Plan, organize, and enlist 60 to 80 % of your members to be involved in a session to read and discuss the social statement(s) on the environment from your denomination, perhaps meeting in small groups. (Education)
5. Recruit and mentor another congregation in becoming an LRC green congregation. (Public Ministry)
6. Plan a care-for-creation emphasis for each month with information, congregational actions, and personal actions—around such issues as water conservation, reduction of energy use, transportation, change of eating habits, and so on. (Education)
7. Plant a tree for every ten members of your congregation. (Building and Grounds)

We encourage you to plan for something in each area. Or consider a 2-2-2 plan: two commitments for action from each level. Or plan things that can be done in 2 weeks, things that can be done in 2 months, and things that can be done in 2 years. Then affirm and renew the plan on a quarterly basis.

Revisit the model: We encourage you to keep coming back to this action plan so that you keep the larger picture before you and that you keep the process of brainstorming and planning as an ongoing part of your work. *Keep the vision alive!*

1. Transformation through Worship Action Plan

Commitment: We seek to worship throughout the year so that we express our gratitude and praise to God the creator and so that we glorify God intentionally together with all creation. In worship, we will celebrate creation, confess our sins against creation, grieve the losses of creation, and commit ourselves to care for Earth.

People: The pastor, the director of music, the organist, the worship committee, leaders of worship, the choir, and the whole worshipping community. It will be helpful to bring everyone on board, seeking guidance and leadership from them and providing resources and training where appropriate.

Goal: To make “care for creation” worship an integral and ongoing part of the policies and practices of congregational worship.

Actions: Here are some ideas to carry out these commitments:

A. Incorporate Earth-keeping confessions, intercessory prayers, hymns, and sermons into worship services throughout the year. For further resources, see the Worship section of the Web of Creation: www.webofcreation.org and go to www.letallcreationpraise.org.

1. Worship resources: Many resources for worship are available through diverse websites. Relate every element of the service to include God’s love for and our care for creation: invocation, invitation, hymns, confession, litanies, Scripture, preaching, offering, sacraments, blessings, and closings.

a. Liturgies: There are entire, care-for-creation liturgies to adopt that include care for creation throughout all parts of the service. Ideal for special celebrations.

b. Invocations (of God the creator of all things) and invitations (for all creation to join in praise and worship).

c. Prayers and intercessions: When you pray as a congregation, always include prayers for creation—thanksgivings, confessions, intercessions for endangered species and degraded eco-systems, and for vulnerable human communities so negatively impacted by the changing ecological state of the world. There is an entire set of prayers by Lutheran pastor and theologian Dennis Ormseth available at www.webofcreation.org that relate thematically with each Sunday of the three year common lectionary. Download them and offer them to the worship committee to include each week.

d. Hymns and songs: Keep a list of hymns from denominational and ecumenical hymnals that express themes related to care for creation. Then draw upon this list when planning worship. For Lutheran hymnals, see the congregational section of the site

www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org. Also, Earth Ministry has a detailed list www.eartministry.org. See the “Seven Songs of Creation” at www.seasonofcreation.com.

e. Litanies and confessions. Litanies are for responsive use. They are helpful means to detail a comprehensive identification of ways in which we humans have impacted Earth and can identify empathically with Earth.

f. Blessings are important in conveying God’s grace to all parts of creation and to our efforts to restore and care for creation. See [www.webofcreation.org/Worship/index.htm]

g. Closing and commission: “Go in peace, serve the lord, remember the poor, care for creation.”

2. Lectionary Resources: These are care for creation ideas based on the lectionary readings available for each Sunday of the three-year cycle of the church year.

3. Preaching Care for Creation: There are three sites that provide care for creation reflections for preaching on all the lessons of the three-year lectionary cycle. Here they are:

a. Lutherans Restoring Creation offers exegesis and theological reflections on the weekly lectionary lessons by Dennis Ormseth, Lutheran Pastor and theologian. Go to the clergy subsection at www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org.

b. The Christian Ecology Link is a multi-denominational organization from the United Kingdom for people concerned about the environment. They have provided Ecological Notes on the Common Worship Lectionary by Keith Innes. [www.christian-ecology.org.uk/econotes-index.htm]

c. The Environmental Stewardship Commission of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota (MEEESC), has collected environmental and earth-centered reflections, sermons, and commentaries on the lectionary readings. [www.env-steward.com/lectnry.htm]

d. The Season of Creation. For commentary on the lectionary lessons on the Season of Creation, see *The Season of Creation: A Preachers Commentary* edited by Norman Habel, David Rhoads, and Paul Santmire (Fortress, 2011). See further resources for preaching on the Season of Creation at www.textweek.com.

e. Sermons on Caring for Creation: There are sermon collections on many sites, including <http://www.webofcreation.org/worship/257-sample-sermons>. See also the collection of sermons by many preachers, biblical scholars, and theologians of different denominations in *Earth and Word: Classic Sermons on Saving the Planet* edited by David Rhoads (Continuum, 2007).

B. Celebrate key worship services throughout the church year with a focus on creation.

1. *A Season of Creation*: Celebrate a season of the church year, called a *Season of Creation*. The current church year is based on the life of Jesus (*Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Easter*) and the life of the Holy Spirit (*Pentecost*). Of course, we celebrate God in every aspect of the church year; and yet there is no season in which we focus on God the creator and celebrate the created order. Now there is an optional “*Season of Creation*” available for use by congregations. There are alternative lessons and suggested liturgies for four Sundays (recommended for the four Sundays in September leading up to World Communion Sunday and Saint Francis Day, October 2), including Bible studies, suggested spiritual practices, and “care for creation” actions celebrating various aspects of God’s creation.

For four weeks out of the *Season of Pentecost*, observe this four-week *Season of Creation*. For all the relevant materials, go to www.seasonofcreation.org. If you do not celebrate the full four weeks, choose one or two of the liturgies for use in worship at this time or at other times throughout the year. For more information and to learn the ways that different countries and churches are celebrating the Season of Creation or Creation Time check the resources at www.letallcreationpraise.org and www.textweek.com.

As mentioned above, for commentary on the lectionary lessons on the Season of Creation, see *The Season of Creation: A Preacher’s Commentary* edited by Norman Habel, David Rhoads, and Paul Santmire (Fortress, 2011).

2. *Greening of the Cross*: During the *Season of Easter* or the *Season of Lent*, have a Greening of the Cross service in which worshipers put greenery on a wooden cross to show how Jesus’ death renews all creation.

3. *Holy days*: There are other Sundays and saints’ days that can be occasions to focus on care for creation, such as Rogation Day, St. Francis Day, and Reformation Day calling for a new reformation that encompasses the restoration of creation.

[www.webofcreation.org/Worship/index.htm]

4. *Blessing of the Animals*: At some point in the year, perhaps around St. Francis Day (October 2), have a Blessing of the Animals service. Some congregations do it with the pets of members of the congregation. Others bring in animals from nearby zoos or police horses or other animals to which they may have access. The Blessing of the Animals is an opportunity to hold the service in an outdoor location (on church property or another public area) and to invite the local community to participate. Consider blessing the human animals as well!

[<http://www.webofcreation.org/worship/310-blessing-of-the-animals>]

[www.seasonofcreation.com/liturgies/blessing.htm]

5. *Celebrate Creation in All “Seasons” of the Church Year*: All the seasons lend themselves to care for creation, because God the creator, Christ the redeemer of creation, and the Holy Spirit, the sustainer, is celebrated throughout the year. There are lectionary lessons and themes throughout the church year when it would be appropriate to

devote the entire service around creation themes. As you plan worship for a season, keep this possibility in mind. There are many resources for general services that celebrate creation. See Ben Stewart, *A Watered Garden: Christian Worship and Earth's Ecology* (Fortress, 2011) and Jennifer Phillips, *Preaching Creation throughout the Church Year* (Cowley, 2000).

C. Celebrate key worship services to observe national commemoration days.

1. Earth Day/Week/Month: Observe Earth Day in April, along with special worship services or educational programs throughout the week. Many churches hold adult forums, outdoor worship services, habitat restoration projects, and opportunities for members to commit themselves to Earth-keeping disciplines in their homes and work places. There are worship materials for each Earth Day at the National Council of Churches website, with educational resources and ideas for action from the Eco-Justice Working Group. You will also find there an archive of worship and educational materials from previous years.

[www.nccecojustice.org]

2. Thanksgiving: An opportunity to express gratitude for all creation.

D. Celebrate services special to the congregation.

1. Covenant with Creation: Near the beginning of the school year, perhaps in September, offer a worship service in which community members have an opportunity to sign a “Covenant with Creation” to establish their commitment to do their part in the Greening of the Congregation. Have members make their covenant as an offering. Consider offering the covenant within a brief liturgy to be done during a regular worship service.

[<http://www.webofcreation.org/home-and-work/119-congregational-covenant>]

Litany: [<http://www.webofcreation.org/worship/313-covenant-with-creation-and-ritual->]

2. Planting of trees: Some communities regularly enhance their property, sometimes by commemorating the death of a member of the community with the planting and dedication of a tree in their honor.

[<http://www.webofcreation.org/worship/312-tree-planting-service>]

3. Blessing of Creation-Care Projects: Bless the land where your church is located! Or consider brief rituals of dedication for your community garden, plants in the sanctuary, and the development of a native prairie on the property.

4. Christmas Tree Ceremony. Some congregations have a service of the burning of Christmas trees on Epiphany. Instead, why not have a service of recycling and rebirth as the trees are prepared for composting? Or place a living Christmas tree in the church and then plant it on church property in the spring.

E. Greening of Occasional Services. Do not forget to express care for creation in the occasional services of the church.

1. *Baptism and confirmation:* There are wonderful opportunities to connect the water of baptism to our gratitude for creation and for the “new creation” in Christ. Furthermore, caring for creation is a value we wish to engender in the baptized and their guardians. Adult baptism and confirmation can include instruction about our biblical vocation to serve and preserve the Earth.

2. *Weddings:* In the preparation, service, and reception, the congregation can model care for creation as a way to foster values in the couple being married and for those attending.

3. *Funerals.* There is an active movement now for green burial practices so that the use of resources and the means of burial provide the greatest care for creation. See more at www.greenburialcouncil.org.

F. Appoint the chapel with appropriate banners, greenery, and art that keep before the congregation their Earth-keeping identity and mission.

All of these adornments make excellent gifts from groups in the congregation, as commemoration gifts, and from other donors.

1. *Plants:* Green the worship space with living plants/trees and provide them elsewhere in the church as a sign that the whole creation is the worshiping community. Where possible (e. g. with ceiling to floor windows), highlight the relationship between inside and outside the church building as a sign that all of Earth is the sanctuary in which we worship. Some plants also purify the air!

2. *Bring other life into the church:* Consider placing in the church an aquarium, a cage for hamsters, or other appropriate animals, as a way to show that all of life is the worshiping community.

3. *Banners:* Place banners at the entrance or inside the sanctuary as a reminder of your commitment to creation, such as “Let all Creation Praise God” or “The Whole Earth is full of God’s Glory.”

4. *Art:* Place artwork in the chapel that celebrates God the creator and creation. Stained glass pieces, for example, may be commissioned with this in mind.

5. *Solar-powered light/font:* Consider providing an “eternal light” or running water in the baptismal font that is powered by the natural energy of the sun.

G. *Worship with Creation.* Intentionally carry out practices that show you are worshipping with all creation. Name the plants and animals with which you share your property, your “Earth Community,” as your partners in worship.

a. *Invitation:* Invite them to join you, or invite yourselves to join with them as you worship.

b. Prayers: Include them in your prayers of thanksgiving and intercession.

c. Blessings: Blessing them as you are blessed upon leaving worship.

H. Green your worship practices:

Here are some ideas to make your worship practices more earth-friendly:

- Use beeswax candles instead of oil-based candles.
- Place plants on the altar instead of cut flowers; send them home for planting.
- Use local wine that does not require transportation from a distance.
- Provide organic, whole grain communion bread.
- Use recycled paper for printed materials.
- Purchase furniture with certified wood and non-toxic fabric.
- Reduce/reuse/recycle or eliminate bulletins.
- Place basket to recycle printed materials at the exits.
- Practice intinction or provide reusable glasses (not plastic) for communion.
- Wash worship utensils/communion vessels in eco-safe dish-washing detergent.
- Purchase fair trade palms for Palm Sunday.
- Consider the origin of material used to make paraments.
- Use a live tree(s) for Christmas, then plant it in the church yard.

I. Brief Devotional Worship: Be thoughtful and reflective about including care for creation in prayers, readings, and devotional reflections for church meetings, meals, and special events. Consider the following resources that have collected all kinds of prayers, blessings, hymns, quotation, and Scriptures:

- *Earth Gospel: A Guide to Prayer for God's Creation* by Sam Hamilton-Poore (Upper Room, 2008)
- *Earth Prayers from Around the World*, edited by Elizabeth Roberts (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991);
- *Earth and All the Stars* edited by Anne Hawthorn (Wipf and Stock, 2008).

J. Educate

Learn about the theology of worship and the theology of the liturgy so that you have a deep sense of what is happening when you incorporate care for creation into worship.

1. Theology of worship. Read and study together several resources that explicate a theology of worship and ecology.

- Gordon Lathrop. *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology* (Fortress, 2003)
- Paul Santmire. *Ritualizing Nature: Renewing Christian Liturgy in a Time of Crisis* (Fortress, 2008)
- Ben Stewart. *A Watered Garden: Christian Worship and Earth's Ecology* (Fortress, 2011).
- See the chapter "A Theology of Liturgy on a New Key: Worshiping with Creation," in *The Season of Creation: A Preacher's Commentary*, edited by Norman Habel, David Rhoads, and Paul Santmire.

2. Educate during worship: Use worship as an opportunity to explain what is happening in worship and why the liturgy may be done in a new way to incorporate care for creation in the entire worship experience.

2. Transformation through Education Action Plan

Commitment: We seek to learn about the biblical, theological, and ecclesial traditions concerning creation, including the biblical mandate from God for us to care for the earth. We will seek also to learn about the present degradations of creation due to human activity, how these degradations are related to human exploitation and oppression, how we as religious people are implicated in these matters, and what we as Christians can do to heal and restore creation for future generations. We will seek to train people to be leaders in the congregation and the community in our cooperative efforts to care for creation.

People: Pastors, lay professionals, director of Christian education, education committee, teachers, vacation church school staff, children, students, youth leader, youth groups, senior groups, adult participants in educational experiences—everyone.

Goal: To incorporate “care for creation” into the educational opportunities of the congregation.

Actions: Here are some actions that may help to carry out these commitments.

A. Learn about many aspects of ecological justice.

1. Learn about our biblical traditions: Traditions that show God’s love for creation, that mandate humans to serve and preserve Earth, and that show the relationship between human injustice and the degradation of nature. There are books available highlighting the Bible’s view of creation. Or, you may want to study a series of biblical passages that talk about the Earth/creation. The most comprehensive site for finding books, curricula for all ages, preaching aids, and a list of relevant Bible quotes is Bible and Ecology.

www.bibleandecology.org.

www.creationcare.org/resources/scripture.php

- ***The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation*** by Richard Bauckham, explores the relationship of humankind to the whole of creation.
- ***The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*** by David G. Horrell.
- ***Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics*** by Hilary Marlow.
- ***Ecology and the Jewish Spirit: Where Nature and the Sacred Meet*** by Ellen Bernstein.
- ***The Green Bible: Understanding the Bible’s Powerful Message for the Earth***
More than 1,000 verses in the Bible address the question of creation care and offer insight as to how humans should think and act as we confront the environmental crisis facing our planet. Essays from church leaders and theologians such as N. T. Wright, Barbara Brown Taylor, Brian McLaren,

Matthew Sleeth, Pope John Paul II, and Wendell Berry are included. Passages are marked in green. With a foreword by Desmond Tutu.

- ***Green Kingdom Come: Jesus and a Sustainable Earth Community*** by Joe Grabill, who ponders the question, “Would Jesus live sustainably?”
- ***Greening Paul: Reading the Apostle in a Time of Ecological Crisis*** by David Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate (Baylor University Press, 2010).
- ***An Inconvenient Text: Is a Green Reading of the Bible Possible?*** by Norman Habel.
- ***God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation*** by Terrence Fretheim.
- ***The Splendor of Creation*** by Ellen Bernstein has garnered critical acclaim for its insightful reading of the Book of Genesis and discussion of contemporary environmental issues.

2. Learn about the environmental state of the world: global warming, ozone depletion, deforestation, desertification, loss of species diversity, proliferation of waste, over-population, and so on. There are many books, videos, and articles available for this purpose, such as general treatments of the environment or the annual *State of the World* put out by the World Watch Institute. Also, consider one of the following.

- *Plan B*, by Lester Brown (ISBN: 0393328317)
- *An Inconvenient Truth*, by Al Gore. (ISBN: 9781594865671)
- *Red Sky in the Morning*, by James Gustave Speth (ISBN: 0300102321)

3. Learn about the dynamics of ecological justice: the relationship between the exploitation of the earth and the most vulnerable—those who are most affected by ecological devastation. Learn about environmental racism, the disproportionate effect of degradation of the environment on people of color. Learn what the ecological problems are in different countries and continents. Ask how your country may contribute to these problems. For more resources, see below under Public Witness.

www.ecojusticecollaborative.org

www.ecojusticenow.org

www.ecojusticeeducation.org

www.newcommunityproject.org

- *Christian Environmental Ethics: A Case-Study Approach*, James Martin-Schramm (Orbis, 2003)
- *Climate Justice* by James Martin-Schramm (Fortress, 2010)
- *Confronting Environmental Racism* and other books by Robert Bullard.

4. Learn your ecological impact on the Earth: Find out your ecological footprint on the Earth by your lifestyle and your actions and determine specifically what you can do to make a difference.

www.footprintnetwork.org

5. Study your denominational social statement on the environment: Every congregation should study their denomination’s environmental social statement. Reflect on the

statement of the ecological problem, the theological analysis, and what is proposed to address the situation. Most denominations have study guides available for their statements. It is important to know the approach to creation-care by your own denomination. Go to the Education section of the Green Congregation Program on the Web of Creation

www.webofcreation.org

6. Study the “Earth Charter”: There are study guides available for use with this statement prepared by representatives of many nations seeking to find a common ethic to address the social, ecological, and international crises and conflicts of our time. Studying this charter is an eye-opening experience.

www.earthcharter.org

7. Study Guides for Congregational action. There are many new study books available for greening your congregations. They can be studied and an action plan can be developed.

We urge you to consider two new resources for congregations to understand better their role in God’s creation and specific actions they can take to care for Earth.

- ***50 Ways to Help Save the Earth: How You and Your Church Can Make a Difference*** is written by Rebecca Barnes-Davies and published by Westminster John Knox Press.
- ***Green Church: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rejoice*** is a resource by Rebekah Simon-Peter, published by Abingdon Press. For other eco-resources, check the Abingdon internet site and go to Green Church Abingdon Press.
- ***Green Christianity: Five Ways to a Sustainable Future*** is a very helpful and readable book by Mark Wallace. He discusses: Find God Everywhere; Read the Bible with Green Eyes; Enjoy the Flesh; Eat Well (Seek Justice); and Live a Vocation; and Case Studies in Spiritual Ecology. This would make an excellent study group book. [Fortress Press]
- ***Together with All Creatures: Caring for God’s Living Earth.*** Another congregational resource is a recent statement by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod prepared by the LCMS in April 2010.
<http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CTCR/TWAC-SC.pdf>
- ***Web of Creation Resources:*** 1). This new *Training Manual for the Green Congregation Program* (2011 Edition), 2). A companion volume *Theological Reflections on Your Congregation Caring for Creation* provides the basis for each of the areas of action in the Green Congregation Program) and 3). the *Environmental Guide for Congregations, Their Buildings and Grounds.*(Includes biblical, theological, ecological, and ethical reflections along with specific actions for your congregation to take in the areas of worship, education, office, coffee hour, dinners, energy use, paper and wood products, water use, cleaning products, food choices, transportation, indoor air quality, nature inside and out, recycling and waste).

These resources lend themselves quite well to adult education classes and study groups.

B. Incorporating eco-justice education in the Christian Education program

1. Offer adult classes: Class could cover an introduction to all the basics: ecology, theology, ethics, biblical resources, green worship, organizational skills, and greening the parish. Make a list of “what every Christian should know about care for creation” and go about incorporating those things into the educational program. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has two resources available.

- ***Earthbound***. Consider also the excellent DVD video series that provides excellent theological foundations for earth care. Each of six sessions provides about twenty five minutes of video with people talking around a particular theme, which is then illustrated with a case study from some sector of the church, such as colleges, camps, and public policy offices. The video production is professional and the segments move quickly. Produced by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, it is accessible to a wide audience and available through Seraphim Productions. The series is available from Seraphim Communications at <http://store.seracomm.com>. A trailer of the series is available at the web page for *Earthbound* on Seraphim’s site.
- ***Mindful Eating as a Spiritual Discipline***. Available on the Web of Creation, this curriculum offers ecological, spiritual, and practical suggestions to engage members in eating in ways that are both healthy and Earth-friendly.
- ***Theological Reflections on Your Congregation Caring for Creation*** by David Rhoads is provides the basis for each of the areas of action in the Green Congregation Program. Available for free download in the manual section of the Green Congregation Program at www.webofcreation.org.
- ***Environmental Guide for Congregations, Their Buildings and Grounds*** by David Rhoads and David Glover includes biblical, theological, ecological, and ethical reflections supporting actions for your congregation and home. Available for free download in the manual section of the Green Congregation Program at www.webofcreation.org.
- ***Evocations of Grace: The Writings of Joseph Sittler on Ecology, Theology, and Ethics***, edited by Peter Bakken and Stephen Bouma-Prediger. Delightful essays that stretch the mind and lead to excellent conversations.

Consider the list in this manual of “What Church Leaders Should Learn about Caring for Creation.” Pick a topic and develop a program to learn about it.

2. Forums and speaker programs. There may be experts available in your area: community organizers, local farmer, scientist, corporation representative, science and technology, victims of ecological disasters, social organizers, theologians and religious activists, people from local groups committed to ecology and religion, naturalists and biologists. Invite a local representative of an environmental organization, such as the Sierra Club. Get information about Community Supported Agriculture. Have a master gardener explain Earth-friendly lawn and garden practices. Learn about local and national laws and policies affecting the environment. Discuss an article on the environment from a national magazine. People could be encouraged to surf the internet and share their findings.

3. Care-for-Creation across the parish curriculum: Encourage all teachers to incorporate care for creation into every class. Establish this as part of the teacher-training program. The confirmation program should also have a component of creation-care.

4. Youth programs: Engage youth in care for creation programs. Draw and build upon what youth are learning in school. Engage in an environmental service project at the church or in the community. Encourage youth to attend summer camp.

- Work with the youth to make an inventory of all the plants and animals on the church property, then publicize this as your Earth community with whom you share this living space. Post pictures on a bulletin board or Web site. Promote these living beings as part of your worshiping community.
- Engage the youth in a project to learn about the economic and ecological benefits of energy saving projects. Then teach the rest of the congregation what you have learned and hold a fund-raising drive to sell home energy products to members of the congregations. For information on this program, see Green Energy Agents at www.greenenergyagents.org. For description of such program in local church, go to www.racinegreencongregations.org.
- For more resources and ideas on youth, go to the education for youth section of the site www.bibleandecology.org.

There are many ideas for youth projects related to the environment. Be creative.

5. Older adult groups: Plan for programs in the gatherings of older adults relating to the environment or your role as a creation-care congregation. Develop intergenerational eco-projects.

6. Vacation Church School: There are now materials available to make nature a focus of summer programs for children. Or develop your own. If you have a community garden at your church, caring for the garden can be an integral part of every vacation church school.

See the new vacation Bible School resource called “RENew” a “Green VBS” from Sparkhouse. See the resources and a blog at www.wearesparkhouse.org.

7. Create a book/poetry discussion group: Look for books and novels about the environment that would be of interest to a green church. Share environmental/nature poetry. Consider works by Annie Dillard, Barbara Kingsolver, and Bill McKibben, and poetry by Gary Snyder, Wendell Berry, Mary Oliver, among others. Consider works by naturalists such as John Muir and Aldo Leopold.

8. Show films or videos: Congregations can arrange for showings of certain films on the environment. There are also many videos available for viewing and discussion by secular and religious groups. Many popular films deal with these issues: “An Inconvenient Truth,” “Wally,” “Avatar,” among others.

- *Renewal* is a must see film about various projects related to the environment carried out by groups in different faith traditions. A new *Renewal Documentary*

keeps the tradition alive. Consult their website for resources to show this film: www.renewalproject.net. Excellent for a one time showing or an adult education series.

9. Learning/ Support groups: Small groups are one of the best ways to learn about the environment and also change behavior. Consider the educational materials for small groups available from the Northwest Earth Institute (www.nwei.org). They have excellent materials around many topics of ecological living. In addition, a “covenant group” that gives support and accountability for the adoption of Earth-friendly habits and mindsets is the best way to make changes that will endure. Imagine a monthly meeting of friends committed to adopt and practice spiritual disciplines around energy-use, water conservation, a shift to green cleaning products, time with nature, and so on. At each meeting, learn about a practice and adopt it for the month and then return the next month to discuss the struggles and successes you had in making the changes.

10. Workshops. Hold workshops to introduce people to green their lifestyle. Consider a workshop for greening your home or greening your work place or greening your community

C. Educational opportunities for many occasions:

1. Newsletters and bulletins: Make use of parish printed materials to promote creation-care—with articles, relevant scripture quotes, excerpts from books, environmental tips, announcements of events, and reports of environmental actions by the congregation. See the checklist on “Promoting your Identity as a Green Congregation.”

2. Meetings of the Creation Care Committee: These can be open to anyone and include an educational component.

3. Explain ecological actions and innovations: If you organize a vegetarian potluck, explain its importance. If you change from paper to ceramic at coffee hour, be sure to explain the environmental benefits for such a switch.

4. Library resources: Keep relevant environmental books, periodicals, curricular materials, and videos in the church library offerings. Then promote the offerings in bulletins and newsletters. For a secular periodical that has news, practical articles, and resources, subscribe to “E” magazine (www.emagazine.com). For religious periodicals, the newsletter from Earth Ministry is inspirational (go to www.earthministry.org). Here is a list of books to consider:

Recommendation of Books for Church Libraries

- **The Green Bible** (New Revised Standard Version) (Harper One, 2008). English Bible with passages highlighted in green that are related to nature and earth-care.
- **Simple Living, Compassionate Living** by Earth Ministry (Morehouse, 1999) Excellent selection of readings and study guide for use by church groups.

- **Earth Gospel: A Guide to Prayer for God's Creation** by Sam Hamilton-Poore (Upper Room, 2008). Excellent selection of readings and prayers for four weeks of daily devotions.
- **Holy Ground: A Gathering of Voices on Caring for Creation** (Sierra Club, 2008) Inspirational selection of religious writings on Earth-care.
- **Earth and Word: Classic Sermons on Saving the Planet** ed. David Rhoads (Continuum, 2007) Thirty Five outstanding sermons on care for creation by scholars and preachers.
- **Love God, Love Earth** ed. Sally Bingham (2009) Collection of interfaith reflections by people from various denominations and religions.
- **Green Living** (published by E-Magazine) a very practical guide for members to engage in earth-friendly living.
- **50 Ways to Help Save the Earth: How You and Your Church Can Make a Difference** is written by Rebecca Barnes-Davies and published by Westminster John Knox Press.
- **Green Church: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rejoice** is a resource by Rebekah Simon-Peter, published by Abingdon Press.
- **Green Christianity: Five Ways to a Sustainable Future** is a very helpful and readable book by Mark Wallace (Fortress, 2011)
- **Green Congregation Training Manual** by David Rhoads (Web of Creation) Step by step process and resources for congregations to engage in care for creation.
- **Our Father's World: Mobilizing the Church to Save Civilization** by Edward Brown (InterVarsity Press 2008). Challenge to churches from an evangelical to embrace earth-care.

D. Hands-on experiences (action/reflection):

1. Retreats: Where appropriate, hold meetings or retreats in a natural setting and use the opportunity to connect with nature. There may be an opportunity for the governing board or a committee, the youth, families, or other group to have a spiritual retreat at a site that enables the natural world to be an integral part of the retreat experience. Include silent meditation. Invite a naturalist to lead you in a nature-focused exploration of the church property or the neighborhood or an interesting natural site near you. Include a Bible study that connects faith and nature.

2. Field trips: Arrange to visit a site in your area where nature has been degraded, such as a polluted stream or a brown-field. Meet with someone who is working on a restoration project. Visit an agency that works with eco-justice issues. Ask someone to give you an eco-tour of such sites in your area. Discuss your experiences.

3. Community project: Join a group to restore a stream or prairie area, or to clean up a vacant lot for use as a community garden. Then follow it with a discussion and an opportunity to share your experience with the rest of the congregation.

4. Sponsorship: Establish a fund to send members to attend an ecological seminar or conference as a source of inspiration and find ways for them to share with congregation

what they have learned. Send delegates or representatives to workshops on congregational care for creation or eco-spirituality. Provide scholarships for individuals or families to go to church camps for a week or a weekend which is focused on care for creation. Offer a small grant for people to do a restoration project at home or at work.

3. Building and Grounds as Model Action Plan

Policy/pledge: We agree to assess the destructive impact that our activities and the use and maintenance of our property may have upon creation—in such matters as energy use, toxic products, paper use, water use, waste, transportation, among others. We will strive to make choices that lessen our negative impact on Earth and that serve to renew and restore the earth community.

People: Governing board, Property Committee, maintenance staff, purchasing agent, head of the kitchen, all members of the community.

Goal: To reduce the negative ecological imprint of the building and grounds of the congregation in regard to every aspect of the physical area of the congregation and in turn to create an Earth-friendly zone of the congregational property that promotes restoration and sustainability.

Actions: Here are some things you can do to carry out these commitments.

A. Consultation:

Find ways for environmental factors to become an integral part of the maintenance and remodeling projects of the congregation. Request that a Green Team member be represented at some council meetings and property committee meetings that address issues impacting the environment. Meet annually with the maintenance staff to go over various areas to address in the action plan for each year. Develop a respectful and collaborative relationship. Remember: property folks are often working with severe limitations of time and money. They have their own concerns that may trump environmental issues. Public criticism of their efforts can be counterproductive.

B. Do a Comprehensive Environmental Inventory.

This is perhaps the most important thing you can do. This includes an energy audit, but it is much more. It is an ecological audit regarding everything you have and all that you do with an impact on the environment. We have produced a comprehensive manual, *An Environmental Guide for Churches, Their Buildings and Grounds*, available on the Web of Creation site that you can download free and use for this purpose. This is an extensive and thorough guide designed to enable you to do a complete survey of your property and make many important changes. The “Checklist for Buildings and Grounds” at the end of this manual is based on this manual. .

This *Environmental Guide* deals with 12 areas: Energy Use; Paper and Wood Products; Water Use; Cleaning Products; Indoor Air Quality; Recycling and Waste; Coffee Hour, Potlucks, and Other Congregational Events; Worship practices; Educational materials; Office Practices; Food Choices; Nature Inside and Out; and Transportation. The introduction to the *Environmental Guide* offers ways to use the guide. Each section includes relevant biblical verses, an explanation of the ecological problem being

addressed, a description of the relevant human justice issues, a list of congregational actions to take, suggestions for actions to be taken in homes, and additional resources.

Using this guide fully is a major undertaking for your congregation, but nothing is more important than the concrete actions we take to lessen our ecological imprint on Earth and to have buildings and grounds that are healthy for the environment. The *Environmental Guide* can be used in any order and may be broken up for piecemeal assessments. Determine what areas it is feasible for you to address and revisit the guide regularly to assess what new actions can be taken. Consult the *Environmental Guide* in order to learn about many resources and links needed to do your inventory.

C. Here are some specific areas that might be addressed. All of these are covered in greater detail in the *Environmental Guide for Churches, Their Buildings and Grounds*:

1. *Energy for lighting*: Retrofitting current lights with new and improved lighting saves fossil fuels and money. Replacing just one incandescent light bulb with a compact fluorescent light saves the burning of five hundred pounds of coal over the ten year lifetime of that bulb. LED bulbs go even further. Many states and some federal programs offer rebates and incentives for changes that will save energy for lighting. Your first step will be to inquire about the services and incentives offered by your local energy company. Many energy companies have extensive programs designed to lower energy use, especially in support of non-profit organizations—free energy audits, reports about specific actions to take, free energy saving devices (such as faucet aerators), and incentives for products and labor. Make full use of these benefits.

2. *Energy for heating and cooling*: An energy audit for heating may also turn up some feasible ways in which you can conserve in the production of heating and air conditioning. Again, local and state energy companies are often eager to do free audits and make recommendations. Many states and some federal programs offer rebates, incentives, and tax benefits for changes that will save energy on heating and air conditioning. Pay backs will help to offset the initial costs.

3. *Renewable energy*: Get off the non-renewable energy grid altogether. Some congregations have gone to renewable energy. This is especially worth considering if you have a school or day care in your building or other programs that make extensive use of the facility. Some are turning to a geothermal energy source. Others are using solar energy for heating water or for outside lights. Due to advances in technology and the shorter times for payback, all of these options are becoming more attractive. It is worth looking into these options. Again, energy companies or state/federal organizations may offer incentives to assist with the upfront costs. You will be surprised by the incentives and support offered by companies and government agencies that make these options much more affordable than you might think.

4. *Water use*: Limit water use: install aerators on the faucets, put pressure stops on faucets, eliminate automatic flush systems for toilets, repair leaks immediately, and

minimize watering of lawn and gardens. To avoid runoff and conserve, install rain barrels, put in rain gardens, and landscape with low-maintenance lawns and native plants.

5. Recycling: Seek to develop a comprehensive recycling program for the church buildings—plastic, cans, glass, office paper, card board, among others. You may also want to set up a small recycling corner for members to recycle items at church that they might otherwise throw away, such as cell phones, printer cartridges, household batteries, plastic bags, and so on. Post instructions near the receptacles. Encourage members of the congregation to participate actively. Designate certain Sundays for members to bring their recyclables. Once recyclables are collected, your church will need to provide a regular way to dispose of them safely.

6. Paper products: Do an inventory of paper purchases and seek to purchase recycled/post-consumer waste paper for worship and office use as well as for bathroom and kitchen use. Develop guidelines for the use of office paper by staff and volunteers—to reduce, use fully, and recycle. Make use of paperless electronic means of communication where feasible.

7. Green Cleaning products: Do a comprehensive inventory of products used in the maintenance of the church. Reduce or eliminate toxic products used in the maintenance of the buildings. Environmentally safe products are now available for most cleaning jobs at competitive prices.

8. Green Your Worship Practices. Here are some ideas to make your worship practices more Earth-friendly: use beeswax candles instead of oil-based candles; place plants on the altar instead of cut flowers; send them home for planting; use local wine that does not require transportation from a distance; provide organic, whole grain communion bread; use recycled paper for printed materials; reduce/reuse/recycle or eliminate bulletins; place recycling baskets at the exits; practice intinction, common cup, or provide reusable glasses (not plastic) for communion; wash communion vessels in eco-friendly dishwashing detergent; purchase fair trade palms for Palm Sunday; consider the origin of material used to make paraments.

9. Coffee Hour and Potlucks: Offer Fair Trade coffee and tea; provide snacks that are healthy; offer organic and/or locally grown food. Make efforts to reduce or eliminate the use of Styrofoam, plastic, and paper products. Provide a mug rack. Wash dishes and utensils with eco-friendly dishwashing liquid. Purchase an Energy Star dishwasher. Consider cloth napkins and tablecloths. Avoid food waste and compost leftover food. Eliminate soda machines.

10. Lawn maintenance: Avoid pesticides and herbicides; avoid chemical fertilizer; where feasible mow with a hand mower or one that is battery powered; consider planting low maintenance grass; avoid watering, especially during a drought. There are many resources now available to create and maintain healthy and attractive lawns in Earth-friendly ways.

11. Make the most of your property: Assess the possibilities for land use. Consider having a community garden with produce given to local food pantries. Return a section of your land to prairie with native plants. Plant an orchard or a tree sanctuary. Put out benches for meditation. Create a labyrinth.

D. Conservation practices: In addition to providing efficient, energy-saving devices and appliances, take opportunities to foster conservation among the use that members make of the building: recycling bulletins after services, turning off lights when leaving a room, not letting the water run unnecessarily, not putting recyclable items in trash bins, and so on. Go around the building and post friendly signs to remind members to do these practices

E. Institutionalize It: If some new initiatives begin as a voluntary effort, seek to institutionalize the effort as quickly as possible, so that it becomes part of the regular work of the staff. Volunteers come and go and have periods when they cannot do the work. Make it a permanent part of the life of the congregation. Write it into the job description of an employee or a committee of the church or the standard procedures of event planning.

F. Monthly Emphasis. Set up a calendar to organize a monthly emphasis to care for God's creation. Choose relevant concerns: water month, energy month, transportation month, forest month, and so on (see <http://www.webofcreation.org/congregational-theme-months>). Correlate the months with the natural seasons and/or the seasons of the church year: green Christmas preparations for Advent, lighting energy for Epiphany, heat energy in winter, transportation for a summer month, green gardening for spring, and so on. For each month, use the resources in the *Environmental Guide* to educate people about the problem, name actions they may take at church and at home to alleviate the problem and to restore creation, and invite people to covenant to do such actions. Then use newsletters, bulletin announcements, personal testimony at worship, bulletin boards, e-mails, and means to encourage people to participate.

G. Promote what you do!

Be sure to announce actions to the congregation. Use each environmentally-friendly practice that is adopted as a means to educate people generally to the importance of greening your institution. If the parish building and grounds function as laboratory and model for members and visitors, then you need to display the efforts being made. Remember also that the comings and goings of members of a congregation as well as member turnover make it necessary to re-announce actions and efforts each year.

4. Discipleship at Home and Work Action Plan

Policy: We encourage members of all ages, economic levels, ethnic groups, or walks of life to care for creation at home and at work knowing that our habits and practices can make a significant contribution. We seek to foster a closer relationship with nature so that we can live simply and walk lightly upon the earth.

People: Pastors, lay professional leaders, governing body, heads of committees, all as models for the whole community. All will seek to embrace a vocation that will allow their lives to witness to the commitment to justice and care for Earth.

Goals: To make a personal commitment to embrace disciplines that respect the earth community, that seek to restore creation from human degradation, and that enable us to relate closely with nature.

Actions: Here are some ideas to carry out these commitments:

A. Learn about your world.

1. Learn about the ecological state of the world. We get information in such scattershot ways through the popular media of television, newspapers, and magazine articles. Look for books and sites on the environment that give a comprehensive picture of the issues. Unless clean air is an issue, it will be difficult to see in what ways we contribute to it by our lifestyle. Nor can we see what things we might do to contribute to its Earth-restoration. The same is true with clean water, garbage, toxins in the land, food security, and so on. If we do not see the size of the problems, we will not grasp the size or nature of the actions we need to take to address them.

2. Foundations to Care for Creation. Learn about the biblical and theological resources for us to deal with this. Consider the statement of your denomination on ecology and faith. Read about the biblical foundations for Earth care. Understand the nature of the ethical choices we as a culture need to make to address ecological degradations at personal and systemic levels. For resources, see www.bibleandecology.org.

B. Change your lifestyle:

1. Reflect on your lifestyle. Take time to think about your lifestyle—the choices you make or the commitments you have or the habits you practice or the things you own. Try to determine in what ways they contribute to the degradation of nature and in what ways they contribute to the sustainability of nature. Consider changing your values and priorities and commitments in the direction of a relationship with nature that expresses love and reverence for other people and care for all of nature. Consider viewing the video or reading the book, *Affluenza* by John De Graaf.

2. Adopt a change of lifestyle to “simple living.” We need green technological changes. And we need to adopt them into our lifestyle. However, we cannot depend on technological changes to make all the difference. We must adapt our lifestyles to a radical Earth-friendly posture. There are many resources available for this—either as personal guides or as group study.

3. Purchase green. There are many books that help you to purchase products that are friendly to the environment. See the buying guides and catalogs available on these websites:

Alternatives for Simple Living [www.simpleliving.org]
Union of Concerned Scientists [www.ucsusa.org]
The Whole Earth Magazine [www.wholeearthmag.com]
Seventh Generation [www.seventhgeneration.com]

4. Make a Covenant with Creation: Develop a personal “Covenant with Creation” that lists a variety of actions you will take to lessen your footprint on the Earth.

[<http://www.webofcreation.org/home-and-work/119-congregational-covenant>]

C. Transform your home and work into Earth-friendly places.

1. Understand the environmental connections of your living space. Our homes are directly connected to every dimension of the environmental crises and the ecological concerns that we face. Just think about what comes into our homes and what goes out of our homes.

- Electricity lines come into our homes from coal-burning plants.
- Water pipes bring increasingly limited fresh water from filtration plants
- Gas pipes bring in natural gas from distant places
- Sewage lines take water and waste out to sewage processing plants.
- Chimneys release carbon dioxide from the furnace into the atmosphere
- Food in the refrigerator has traveled by truck from great distances
- Food has been raised using pesticides and chemical fertilizer
- Meat we eat may be raised at the top of the food chain
- Paper and Wood for furniture depletes the forests
- Garbage trucks take garbage to land fills, perhaps including also toxic waste.
- Cars in the driveway burn gasoline and use oil and emit pollutants into the air
- Lawn mowers and other machinery emit pollutants into the air
- Air-conditioning emits chlorofluorocarbons that erode the ozone layer
- Pesticides and herbicides used on the lawn get into the air and water and soil
- Leather chairs and shoes can be traced to cattle ranches in California or Brazil
- Cleaning products—from laundry detergent to window washing fluid with toxic substances—that pollute the air and water.
- And the list could go on.

The point is that the choices we make every day in our homes and on our property directly affect global warming, ozone deterioration, air pollution, water pollution, depletion of fresh water reserves, waste accumulation, toxic seepage, the loss of rain forest, and a host of other consequences that affect the quality and now the survival of life on earth. What if we addressed every one of these items in our homes so as to reduce

our ecological imprint on the environment. The point is that we can make a difference with each and every choice we make to walk more lightly upon the earth.

2. Do an environmental assessment of your home. Use the material available in the *Comprehensive Environmental Guide for Churches, Their Buildings and Grounds*. This guide has information for the congregation as well as suggestions for implementation at home and work. Use this material to assess every aspect of your life at home—house, yard, habits and practices of you and/or your family. Over a period of time, work to make your space into a “Green Zone”—an Earth-friendly space and a witness to others. Join with others to take some vision-time to imagine what a green home might look like!

Or take a room and assess everything that makes a negative environmental impact. For example, look at your kitchen in terms of appliances, refrigerator settings and maintenance, paper use, food choices, detergents, cleaning products, certified wood for tables and chairs, natural lighting, fluorescent lighting, water-use practices, means to disconnect small appliances when not in use, comprehensive recycling, food conservation, composting of food wastes, and so on. Then go room by room in your house and make the changes necessary to make a difference. Create an “extreme ecological makeover” of your living space!

3. Reduce, recycle, reuse. Seek to reduce your trash to a minimum. Take a look through your garbage once a month and see what materials might have been avoided, what materials might have been reused, and what materials might have been recycled. Put containers for recycling at key places in your home to remind you and make it easy to recycle. Seek to avoid food scraps by buying and serving only what you will eat and then cleaning the plate! Compost leftover food.

4. Reconsider eating patterns and food choices: Buy locally rather than purchasing food that traveled halfway across the globe. Eat organic and eliminate pesticides and herbicides in your diet. Purchase fair trade products that ensure the value of resources and the people who survive off the land. There are extensive resources on the Web of Creation to learn about and adopt patterns of eating that care for God’s creation. See lifestyle section of the Green Congregation Program at www.webofcreation.org. See the *Environmental Guide* for further resources.

[<http://www.webofcreation.org/building-and-grounds>]

[www.simpleliving.org]

5. Green your lawn and garden: Find ways to make your yard eco-friendly. There are organic ways to grow a lawn without pesticides or herbicides. Plant low maintenance grass. Use an electric or battery-driven mower, or better yet a hand mower. Put trees in strategic places to lower heating/cooling costs in your home. Make your property a sanctuary for animals. Turn part of your yard into a natural prairie with native species of grass and wild flowers. Find resources online or in print to make your lawn and garden healthy and attractive—and Earth-friendly.

6. Green your Christmas: There are many thoughtful suggestions for gifts and wrapping, for decoration and celebration, for being generous to your family and generous to others.

Consider having a live tree that can thereafter be planted in your yard or at the church or in a suppressed area of the city. See the workbook on an alternative Christmas that is provided by “Alternatives for Simple Living.” Green all your holidays.

[www.simpleliving.org]

7. Observe an Energy Sabbath. Each year, on a Saturday evening in March, the world observes *Earth Hour*. This is a time when everyone is to “turn out the lights” as a symbolic gesture promoting our need to conserve energy and lower our carbon footprint. Actually, it is a practice we can observe throughout the year. The experience makes us realize how much we unnecessarily leave our electricity on throughout our homes, businesses, companies, and government buildings and grounds. On a regular basis, observe your own Earth Hour or an *Energy Sabbath*—when, for an hour or a morning or evening or even a full day, you simply turn everything off and enjoy reflective solitude or spend time in conversation with others or take the opportunity to relish nature.

8. Make it a family thing. We are doing all this for the next generations. Be sure to share with your children what you do for God’s creation and why you do it. Make a family covenant to carry out specified Earth-friendly practices at home and away. Place reminders around the home to support these actions. Enjoy nature together. Reinforce what your children are learning at school about the environment. Go together to local parks, nature centers, and natural museums. Engage in activities that teach about the environment. Relate it all to your faith and discipleship. Pray for God’s earth at table grace and other daily prayers. Hold relevant family devotions. Consider using *I Love God’s Green Earth: Devotions for Kids Who Want to Take Care of God’s Creation*, by Michael and Caroline Carroll.

9. Take your commitment to work: Whatever your work, opportunities abound to make your place of work and your activities more earth-friendly. Make use of the guidelines you used at home to apply to your work. There are manuals to green offices, workbooks for corporations, guidelines for factories and small businesses, and abundant resources online. This is part of the vocation of a Christian—to express justice toward humans and care for creation in every aspect of our life.

[See the book, *The Smart Office* by Amy Townsend]

10. Get friendly eco-tips and act on them. Most of us need reminders! There are calendars and daily journals that offer eco-tips for daily living. Use these as suggestions and daily reminders of what you can do. Work through them to change your lifestyle. See *The Green year: 365 Small Things You Can Do to Make a Difference*, by Jodi Helmer or purchase the “Every Day is Earth Day Calendar.”

11. Stewardship is our purpose in life. Remember the biblical mandate for humans “to serve and to preserve” Earth. We are called to see ourselves as having a vocation to be stewards of God’s creation. Take responsibility as agents of God to care for your home, your property, your neighborhood and community, your larger world.

12. Make every action and decision part of your spiritual discipline. We have no difficulty seeing care for one another as part of our spiritual discipline. Why not see love for and care of God's creation as part of our religious vocation and our spiritual discipline? Do these daily actions and make these daily decisions mindfully and thoughtfully as people who seek to love creation as God does.

D. Provide support for individual commitment as the congregation.

1. Create an atmosphere of commitment: Seek opportunities in congregational life to make a profound personal commitment to care about the earth, to make decisions and to take actions that are earth-friendly, and to refrain from actions that are earth-harmful. Be creative and intentional about finding individual and communal ways to strengthen and reinforce those commitments in various aspects of the Christian life.

2. Form support groups/ commitment groups/ interest groups: Support for environmental practices and disciplines can serve as a focus for small groups that serve to support the commitment to lead earth-friendly lives. Each session, participants could discuss a different area of commitment to earth-care, practice that commitment for the week or month, and then return to discuss the results and give encouragement. Groups that meet around a meal could learn about food and practice ecological disciplines related to eating. Perhaps the groups could meet during a season of the church year, so as, for example, to be part of a Lenten discipline. See the materials from ENACT, a group set up in some cities in Wisconsin to develop neighborhood groups to enact ecological practices in their homes and work.

[www.enactwi.org]

3. Group Study: Foster the formation of groups around an educational course on Simple Living or the Ecology of Food. Consider these educational materials for small groups:

Northwest Earth Institute [www.nwei.org]

Earth Ministry's *Simple Living, Compassionate Living* [www.earthministry.org]

Alternatives for Simple Living [www.simpleliving.org]

4. Take cooperative congregational actions: Choose congregational actions that make personal commitments easier—sell compact fluorescent light bulbs as a fundraiser; do cooperative buying of recycling bins for the home; provide a recycling center where people can bring hard to recycle items such as plastic bags, household batteries, and printer cartridges; sell fair trade coffee and other fair trade products; distribute devotional material. Put environmental tips in the bulletin and newsletter.

5. Hold an eco-fair. Find out what needs people have in their quest to be green and hold an eco-fair at church to make these products and resources readily available.

6. Ritualize your Covenant with Creation: Provide members with a “Covenant with Creation” that lists a variety of actions to be taken by the members of your congregation. Make this covenant part of a worship service with a brief liturgy within the service and to

give it as an offering. Participants check the practices they agree to follow. They give one copy in the offering and keep another to post in their apartments/homes.

[<http://www.webofcreation.org/home-and-work/119-congregational-covenant>]

Litany for Covenant:

[<http://www.webofcreation.org/worship/313-covenant-with-creation-and-ritual->]

7. Creation-Care Training: You can hold brief training sessions for members as a means to encourage people to develop Earth-friendly habits and choices in their personal lives: simple living, food choices, recycling instructions, paper guidelines, energy conservation, devotional practices, and connections with nature. Perhaps these training sessions could be coordinated with the items in the Covenant with Creation or with the *Environmental Guide*. This can be done in a Sunday morning forum, Saturday workshop (perhaps with many churches), or some other venue.

8. Witnessing/Sharing: Make use of meetings of the Green Team, worship services, and other gatherings to allow members to make announcements and to share with others their personal environmental practices and disciplines.

E. Get in touch with nature.

1. Kindle your love of nature: If we are to care for creation, we need to cultivate our relationship with nature. Know that Earth is full of God's glory. Just as you may see God in the faces of others, so also see God in the presence of other living things. Let all creation praise God. The Bible says that the seas are to "roar" and the trees "clap their hands" and the fields "exult." Next time you worship, think of Earth around you as the sanctuary in which you are worshiping and imagine yourself part of an earth community that is praising God by their existence. De-center yourself and other humans by thinking of your property or your neighborhood as a piece of earth you share with other living things. How can you get to know the trees and bushes and flowers and animals to see yourself as part of Earth community? A good source is Anthony Westin, *Back to Earth*.

2. Look to nature as a source of renewal and healing: See the following resources:

- *Eco-Therapy*, by Howard Clinebell shows how nature is a source of healing.
- *The Last Child in the Woods* names the loss of a connection with nature as "nature deficit disorder."
- *Reconnecting with Nature: Finding Wellness by Restoring Your Bond with the Earth*, by Michael Cohen
- *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* by Joanna Macy.

3. Devotional materials: There are devotional materials available for Earth-keeping. When you pray, consider including prayers for geographical regions or eco-systems that are at risk, endangered species, and environmental degradations that most affect the poor. Consider using these books:

- *Earth Gospel: A Guide to Prayer for God's Creation* by Sam Hamilton Poore
- *Earth Prayers from around the World*, edited by Elizabeth Roberts.

- *Earth and All Stars” Reconnecting with Nature through Hymns, Stories, Poems, and Prayers from the World’s Great Religions and Cultures* edited by Anne Rowthorn.
- *Stewardship of Creation: 30 Days with Nature* at [www.webofcreation.org/Worship/devotions/CreationCare.pdf]

F. Support the community environmental actions

1. Join an environmental group. There are many environmental groups that need your support and participation. National groups such as the Sierra Club have local chapters that are active at local, regional, and national levels of commitment. Find out the local environmental organizations in your area and promote these among members.

2. Local opportunities for action: Arrange for members of the community to participate in public efforts to restore a habitat, clean up a beach, rally for clean air, protest a polluter, do write-in campaigns for environmental legislation, and so on.

3. Carbon Offsets: You may want to consider some responsible and effective programs to which you might contribute as a means to offset your use of carbon-based fuels at home and in travel, for example, by planting trees or other actions that absorb carbon and help to purify the air.

4. Green contributions and investments. There are many local and national organizations, some faith-based and others secular, that are certainly worthy of support. Consider membership or regular contributions to such organizations. Also, there are many green mutual funds and green investment opportunities that harbinger the future of an ecological age. Invest now!

5. Change the systems. Vote for green candidates and advocate for Earth-friendly policies and laws. We can make all the personal changes we want and fail to address the large systemic forces that drive our degradation of Earth. Involvement in social changes should be integral to our personal lifestyle. Make it part of your discipleship to be informed about local, regional, and national issues and to be engaged in the actions and processes for social transformation to a sustainable society. For more information, see the next section of the action plan under Public Witness and Community Action.

5. Public Witness/ Community Action Action Plan

Policy: We seek to change the systems that foster the degradation of creation and to rectify the injustices that result from it. And we seek to alert our members to environmental legislation that protects creation and to encourage their active participation in the development of public policy. We encourage members to participate in community projects and civic activities that foster environmental health. We seek to let our care for creation be known to others.

People: pastors and lay professionals, social ministry committees, directors of publicity, evangelism committees, all members.

Goals: To promote eco-justice and care for creation beyond the walls of the church through hands-on involvement, legislative and policy advocacy, publicity, conferences, websites, and publications.

Actions: Here are some suggested actions to take to fulfill these commitments:

A. Ecological justice in local, regional, national, and global issues

1. Learn about the ecological issues: Use classes, forums, and newsletters to educate people about ecological justice issues at all levels. Engage speakers, panels, workshops, and readings to promote knowledge of environmental concerns. Seek to expose members to the social justice issues involved in environmental degradation. Do these on a regular basis to keep the concerns before the community. It is very important to understand that our personal and congregation efforts will have minimal impact if we do not also address the systemic issues—policies and laws, economic factors, cultural values, and social behaviors—that promote or severely limit advances that will serve to make our world sustainable for future generations.

2. Learn about the legislative issues and public policies. Familiarize people with environmental legislation and policies at the various levels of government. Teach people the mechanisms and procedures to participate in the governmental process and exercise influence. If your denomination has a public policy office or regional offices, work with them to become educated about the issues. Invite them to give a workshop about strategies to be active citizens in the public process.

3. Learn about ecological justice. The people who are most vulnerable in a society are those most at risk from environmental degradation: the poor, the elderly, the sick, the disabled, among other groups. They are affected most, and they have the least resources to cope. Environmental racism places people of color at risk by decisions made by the dominant cultures that have great impact on the health and quality of life of suppressed

groups. In global ecological dynamics, underdeveloped countries are the most vulnerable to environmental destruction. It is critical to understand these issues in order to make wise and ethical decisions in the public realm.

Here are some key resources that explore ecological justice dynamics:

- www.weact.org. Visit this website for resources from communities of color addressing concerns about climate change and other ecological matters.
- www.ncecojustice.org. Many programs for congregations and communities.
- www.ejnet.org. A list of reports and statements on many matters of concern for environmental justice.
- www.ejrc.cau.edu. Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University.
- <http://meldi.snre.umich.edu/> Multicultural Environmental Leadership Development at the University of Michigan.
- <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/hazard/dsw/ej.htm>; For Renewed Effort on Environmental Justice, EPA to Assess Impacts of Waste Rule on Disadvantaged Communities.
- www.ecojusticenow.org. A site directed by Dieter Hessel, a long time advocate of the Presbyterian Church.
- www.newcommunityproject.org. A resource provided by members of the Brethern Church.
- www.ecojusticeeducation.org. Lots of information here.

Consider the following books:

- Robert Bullard, Editor. *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2005)
- James Martin-Schramm, *Climate Justice* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010)
- James Martin-Schramm, *Christian Environmental Ethics: A Case-Study Approach* (Orbis, 2003)

B. Legislative and Policy Advocacy

1. Action alerts: Provide a mechanism whereby members can sign up to receive e-mail action alerts regarding environmental and ecological justice issues with a suggested letter and the appropriate legislators to contact. These can also be promoted through the congregation website or newsletter, or by sign-up sheets in the narthex. If your denomination has an political advocacy office in Washington, ask them to send action alerts to your congregations and to those members wishing to receive them.

2. Petitions: Where appropriate, circulate petitions that support legislative actions and policies friendly to the Earth. Provide a letter writing table during coffee hour for people to take the opportunity to urge legislative action.

3. Local actions: There may be local issues that arise in the community or city in which your congregation is located. Members can get hands-on experience with community organizers dedicated to resist an action by the government or a corporation that degrades the environment or that poses a threat to human health and well-being, and at the same time to support those local actions that promote a healthy environment.

4. Eco-friendly Voting: There are many ways in which the congregation can provide information on the environmental records of candidates for public office and about pros and cons of referenda being voted on by the public. The League of Conservation Voters (at the national and local levels) is especially helpful in providing information on eco-justice issues and concerns that may assist members of Green Congregations in their voting decisions.

League of Conservation Voters [www.lcv.org]

B. Promote care for creation in your community/city.

1. Green Congregations Shared Program. Create an ecumenical, interfaith cooperative group of congregations to spread creation care among the faith groups in your community. A group of congregations dedicated to greening can meet regularly to share what each congregation has done, have an educational component, and do joint projects. Together, they can also initiate projects that green the city in which your congregations are located. The Green Congregation Program has developed such a group in Racine, Wisconsin with faith groups representing Methodists, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Unitarian Universalists, and Buddhists. To see how this works, check out www.racinegreencongregations.org.

2. Green Your City: You can do projects that enhance the environmental quality of life in your city. You may spearhead efforts for your city to become a Tree City with the Arbor Foundation or a Bird City. More comprehensively, you may initiate or support efforts to green the city as a whole—energy, transportation, land use, green cleaning products, green buildings—perhaps by promoting one of the programs currently available to take these steps, such as The Natural Step or Transitions US. There are lots of resources on the internet to develop a plan for the greening of your city.

3. Publicity: Promote your commitment to care for creation through parish brochures, a section on the congregational website, and articles and reports in the parish newsletter. Put items of interest in the local newspaper. It will help to have a name and identity that generate interest, conversation, and perhaps duplicates your commitment to green your congregation. Put items of interest in the local newspaper.

4. Public events: Hold conferences and sponsor speakers who draw local pastors, members of other congregations, and members of the larger community in which the congregation is located. If you have an annual lecture or renewal or theological conference at your congregation, consider making care for creation the focus. Public workshops might focus on political issues or greening the congregation or making your home Earth-friendly or greening businesses. Hold an eco-fair for the community during earth Month. Partner with other environmental organizations in planning such a workshop.

5. Multiply your impact: Consider partnering with one or more other churches in the process of greening. Or adopt another church as a way to assist them in initiating the greening process.

C. Network and cooperate:

1. Partner with other groups. Locate the environmental organizations in your area, either national ones or local community organizing groups. Network with them, engage them as speakers, cooperate with them to provide hands-on experience for parish members, and arrange to partner with them in sponsoring a speaker or conference.

2. Fair Trade products and Community Supported Agriculture. Purchase fair trade products where they are available such as products that are produced under good ecological conditions, that come with a commitment to give fair wages, and that seek to reduce the role of “middle-men.” Also, as a congregation, manage food needs as church or religious school with “Community Supported Agriculture”—so as to minimize transportation and to support local farmers, especially those growing organic food.

- List of Farmers’ Market by state:
[www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/map.htm]
- Community Supported Agriculture info:
[<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa/>]

3. Offer support. Let other organizations know what you are doing and ask how you might participate in *their* mission.

4. Recognize outstanding efforts. Cooperate with other environmental organizations to give public honor to those folks in your community or your congregation who show special commitment and efforts on behalf of the Earth.

D. Green the Investment Portfolio.

1. Invest in the future of Earth community. Urge the endowment committee to invest your congregational endowment and other funds in social justice funds that include environmentally sound corporations and companies that serve the environment as their business. Many mutual funds and agencies now specialize in environmentally oriented investments.

PART III. ADVANCED TRAINING

ONE: REVIVING YOUR EFFORTS

What do you do when you have had a green team for several years and you hit some problems: you hit a plateau; interest fades; you face resistance; or you have run out of energy or ideas? Here are some reflections to help jumpstart your efforts again.

This is a common occurrence. It is not unusual for there to be rhythms in the work of a group seeking to renew a community or a congregation in significant ways. Community organizers often confront this problem. Do not be discouraged by it. See it as a constructive opportunity.

No magic formula. The situations described above are quite common. There is no instant formula that will solve the problem, because every situation is different. You need to assess your situation and see what needs to be done to move forward.

Re-organize your care-for-creation team. Solidify the group working on greening the congregation. If there are only a few, that is fine. If you can expand the group at this time, that would bring in some new energy. Connect with people who already have different environmental interests, such as gardening or justice or nature. See if you can get a commitment to meet regularly, say every month, so that you can make some action plans and have accountability with follow-through.

Have an assessment meeting. Get the team together for a meeting designed to evaluate where you are. List what you have done. Identify problems. Put your finger on reasons why the efforts to green the congregation may have stalled. See if you can identify some strategies to address these reasons and to move forward.

Go back to the roots. Know that it is our vocation as religious people to care for creation. Find some resources—biblical, worship, theological, and inspirational—that will help you as individuals and as a group to reconnect to God’s love for creation. Seek inspiration that will strengthen your own commitment and renew you for this work. Perhaps a meeting or retreat for the group that is completely oriented to reclaiming your spiritual roots will be important. Get back in touch with the personal reasons for your commitment to care for creation. Share “Why I Care” stories with each other. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you greater clarity about what your congregation is being called to do and to become. Pray for the power to re-invigorate both your vision and your energy for this work.

Avoid guilt. It is no help to feel guilty about what has not been accomplished or what has not succeeded. Guilt is not a helpful or a sustaining motivation for action. The idea is to be free to begin anew. Assessing your situation honestly is a good thing, but blaming yourself or others will not help you move forward. If you have failed in some way, allow

God to forgive you and then forgive one another. In the future, be realistic with yourselves and others about what you can and cannot do.

Address the problem of being overwhelmed. It may be that you are so overwhelmed by ecological problems and environmental crises that you have become disheartened and wonder if anything you/we do will make a difference. It is important to talk about this openly. Admit what you are feeling, and name the reasons why you are feeling this way. Acknowledge that the things we do might not make the difference we hope they would. Sometimes we are motivated by the hopeful outcome of what we are doing. But we are also called to be faithful regardless of results: to love creation for its own sake in response to God's grace, just as we may love our family and just as we are called to love our neighbors. Remember that changes come in an organic way: we keep sowing seeds and we entrust the outcome to God.

Address discouragement about your congregation. It may be difficult to do the work of caring for creation if your congregation is in decline in terms of members or of finances. You may have had to cut back on pastoral staff. You may be in an interim situation between times of full-time pastoral leadership. Other concerns may occupy the attention of the congregation. This can be an opportunity to be creative. Continue to work at engaging the congregation in Earth-care. We do not stop caring for the sick or giving to the hungry even when under great stress. In whatever ways we can, we should also continue caring for creation.

You may be burned out. The goal of the green team is to stimulate other groups and committees in the church to embrace creation care, so that eventually everyone assumes ownership for this work in their own arenas of responsibility. However, sometimes the green team ends up doing all the environmental projects. Then you may get tired from so much work and so little support from others. Stop taking it upon yourselves. Strategize ways to engage the worship committee or the social justice committee or the Bible study group to integrate care for creation in what they do.

Recapture the vision. The purpose of your efforts is to bring care for creation into the full life and mission of your congregation. The goal is that care-for-creation should become not an add-on or the interest of just a few but the mission and vocation of the whole community. One way to do this is to go back and re-read through this *Training Manual for Congregations*. Sometimes people consult the manual at first and then never go back to it. Or some team members may not have read it all. This might be a good time to make the manual available to all, to ask folks to read it all the way through, and then meet to consider next steps. The point is not to overwhelm people with more projects but to recapture the overall vision and be inspired by it.

Reconsider the needs. We learn every day about human degradation of the environment and of threats to nature and people. Find ways to highlight how the well-being of humans and the natural world are closely interconnected. Talk about these threats to God's creation at a local, regional, and global level. Clarify why it is so important that those of us who have resources act urgently on behalf of the vulnerable people in the world and the vulnerable ecosystems of the world. Ecological justice demands it. Connect your work to a specific need or threat and make that connection explicit for your group and for others in the congregation.

Go around the roadblocks. Sometimes there is resistance in the congregation to certain actions, say for example getting rid of Styrofoam cups at coffee time. If you hit a

roadblock, move to other actions. Sometimes the energy of the congregation is taken up in something else. Then find ways to relate care for creation to the issue at hand or keep the creation-care vocation before the congregation as means to lay the groundwork for a time when the congregation can give more attention to this. Sometimes there is opposition or a lack of interest by some. Then work with those who are interested. The idea is this: If a roadblock is up, find a different route. And be open to ways in which the Spirit may nudge you into a better direction.

Maintain relationships with those who differ. Be open and listen to others who may disagree with what you are doing in the congregation as a green team. Do not be defensive. Honor other points of view and seek to understand them. About yourself, be confessional about your commitments and give witness to your own perspective. At the same time, do not let others prevent you from expressing and acting upon your faith as part of the congregation. Continue to be open and continue to be transparent about your religious reasons for caring for creation.

Consolidate what you have done. Sometimes communities will do things and then stop doing them after a while. Perhaps you have celebrated the Season of Creation in worship for several years and then for some reason stopped. See if you can reinstitute changes you have made and do what you can to make them long-term or a permanent part of congregational life—built into your mission statement or description of a committee or on the congregational calendar of events.

Celebrate what you have done. It is helpful to remind yourselves and the congregation what you have done already as a way of solidifying the identity of the congregation as a Green Congregation. Put these things in the bulletin or announce them. If there is a measurable success, such as monetary savings or a reduction of the carbon footprint or the amount of food that went from you community garden to a local food bank, this information should be made known.

Have persistence. Persistence is a sign of a long-term commitment. Care for creation is not a fad. It is an integral part of our human/religious vocation for life. Keep at it. One person, two or three, or more, can make an enormous difference, if you keep going. Be contagious. Explain to others what you are doing and why it is important for the congregation to embrace creation-care.

Know how important this work is. Remember that you are doing work that is critical for the life of the congregation and for the sustainable life of God's creation. The church exists for the sake of the world. So we are seeking to be part of a larger movement—an expression of God's grace and mercy in a world filled with suffering and struggle.

Know that you are not alone. Know that there are so many other congregations engaged in caring for creation. Make contact with them. Make use of the networking opportunities with others. Check out resources of your denomination or tradition. Find out what other denominations are doing. Follow the websites of the many faith-based groups working on the environment, perhaps in your geographical area, who can share your efforts. Find like-minded people and groups outside your congregation with whom to partner in your work.

Do what gives you energy. When you choose programs or projects, decide in terms of what will be fun and meaningful for you and the congregation. Some projects drain energy, while others seem to generate it. Either choose actions that are life-giving or find ways to carry out the projects in life-giving ways.

Do for others/with others. Look around the community and notice the people or areas that would benefit from an eco-justice commitment. You might plant trees in a stressed area of the city. You might join in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program to help support farmers in your region. You might help to restore a habitat or to advocate for improved air quality. You may protest toxic causes of ill health in an urban area. You will garner energy in being oriented to the ecological needs of others. Establish solidarity with those affected by these issues. Join your efforts *with* those you seek to benefit.

Capture the joy. God delights in creation; and God delights in you when you enjoy creation in faithful ways. Theologians have argued that delight in creation is the only appropriate basis for our human use of the life of the world. The whole Earth is filled with God's glory. Poet Gerard Manley Hopkins refers to this as "the dearest freshness deep down things." And poet Wendell Berry celebrates "the fund of grace out of which we all live." We are called to love creation. And we are called to know how much God loves us through creation. May we be grasped by this love and rejoice in it!

TWO. GOING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Many green teams work hard to bring care-for-creation into the life of a congregation and are ready to go to the next level—but they are not sure what to do or how to do it.

Because every situation is different, one cannot give advice that will work in all cases. Therefore, what follows is a series of reflections and suggestions about how to move forward. Pick and choose which ones might be helpful for you in your context.

Discerning the thresholds. In community organizing, one begins small, where one can, in ways that are do-able. However, after you have done some things, you often hit a threshold that enables you to do some things you could not do at the start. So you move it up a notch. Then you do some more things, at which point there may be wider support or there may be a new foundation on which to continue building. So you ask: Now that we have reached this threshold, what can we do next? How can we go to the next level? You have reached some thresholds. Now consider: What is possible to do now that you could not have done before. Discernment of such things is a gift. Use it!

Reclaim the *identity* goal. The congregational goal of greening your parish is to incorporate care for creation thoroughly into the identity and work of the entire congregation. Does everyone know that “we are a congregation that cares for creation?” Assess in what ways you have done that—worship, education, office, property, member lifestyle, and so on. Celebrate these achievements in the congregation as a whole. In this way, you will help to bring others along to the next level. Then assess in what ways the basic congregational identity goal has not yet been met. Identify those areas and begin to reflect on next steps.

Reclaim the *mission* goal. The congregational goal of greening your parish is to incorporate care for creation thoroughly into the mission of the entire congregation. The church exists for the sake of the world. Does the community around you see that “you are a congregation that cares for creation”? Therefore, you can ask: In what ways have the actions of our congregation served efforts to spread Earth-care into our community and into the world at large? Assess in what ways you have done that. Celebrate these in the congregation as a whole. Then assess in what ways this goal has not yet been met. Identify those areas and begin to reflect on next steps.

Deepen your Christian Commitment. Find ways to affirm the biblical, theological, ethical, and spiritual roots for ecological actions and attitudes. It is very important to take action and to promote just and sustainable public policies. At the same time, it is vital to realize that it sometimes takes an “epiphany”—a conversion of both heart and mind—to empower people to change or to see more clearly what changes could be made. We need to re-imagine the world as a place of sustainable living. We need to find a holy passion in our commitment to nature and to ecological justice. The Holy Spirit can work anew in worship, in the educational program, in experiences with nature, in prayer, and in opportunities for personal testimony.

Institutionalize every advance. If you have not done so, seek to make sure that the gains you have made become part of the regular life of the congregation. Is the green team part of the church structure? Is creation-care part of the mission statement of the congregation? Do the task descriptions of the church council and the standing committees include responsibilities related to Earth-care? Are the staff members—office manager or maintenance person—on board to continue the patterns of commitment? Are you set to celebrate the Season of Creation every year? Institutionalizing these will support your next steps.

Fill the holes. In what ways has creation care not yet become part of the full life of the congregation? Consider each of the standing committees or task groups of the church. Where might you expand the influence of the green team? Is creation-care an integral part of the conversation and decision-making of the church council? Is it evident in the food and practices of the coffee hour and the church dinners? Is the youth group involved? Is it integral to the children's education? Is there a women's group, a men's group, or a senior group that is not involved? In what ways would a visitor to your congregation be able to recognize readily your commitment to Earth-care? In what ways would they not? These questions may lead you to expand your work.

Broaden the commitment. Is every individual in your congregation involved in Earth-care at some level, even if it is at a minimal level of simply having a place to recycle bulletins after worship? Identify which people are not yet involved and invite them into a conversation about how they see creation care as being important for the congregation—and their part in it.

Try a new approach. Consider using one of the seven strategies described in the manual to engage the whole congregation in Earth-care: action based on brainstorming; action based on learning; action based on needs; action based on opportunities; action based on congregational assets; action based on consensus; or action based on joining forces with other congregations or groups in the community.

Practice sustainability. Keep in mind that sustainability is like a stool with three legs: Does it promote *ecological sustainability*? Does it foster *economic sustainability*, especially for the poor? Does it foster *social sustainability*, that is, does it build community? Add now a fourth leg to the stool: Does it promote *religious sustainability* in depth of understanding and commitment? As you go to the next level, in relation to every action and project, ask in what ways *the project itself* as well as *how it is accomplished* might serve all four legs of sustainability.

Teachable moments. When you engage in an act of care-for-creation, explain to the congregation: 1. Why we are doing it both from a faith perspective and from an ecological perspective. 2. How we are doing it to promote sustainability. 3. What we hope the outcomes will be. These explanations promote good communication and strengthen the identity of the congregation as a green congregation. They will also help to deepen the faith connection and commitment to this work. And the teaching will serve as a model to those who learn from the combination of action and explanation.

Keep care-for-creation before the attention of the congregation. Social change agents say that if you wish to get the attention of a group, use seven different media: bulletins, newsletters, bulletin boards, e-mail, personal contact, posters, church signs, announcements/testimonies in worship, and so on. Be imaginative. There are resources developed to go into weekly bulletins or newsletters: eco-tips from the green team;

excerpts from social statements; quotations from writers and poets. The youth may be able to assist with bulletin boards and posters.

Re-read the Green Congregation Manual. Have your committee read the entire manual. This has a wealth of information and ideas for you to (re-)consider. Note that the role of the green team is to be a catalyst to the rest of the congregation, so that everyone takes ownership. Consider the ideas suggested in each area: worship, education, building and grounds, personal discipleship at home and work, and public ministry/ political advocacy. Perhaps you could draw up a chart of actions in the five areas taken to date. Re-visiting your beginnings and your accomplishments may re-ignite the vision and stimulate you to be generative—to think of actions not mentioned in the manual.

Choose a big impact project. Small actions by a lot of people can have a widespread effect. They often lay the groundwork for bigger things. Consider now doing a project with a large impact—either in terms of congregational involvement or in terms of outcome on behalf of Earth. These types of projects can occur in many areas of congregational life. You can also choose one that people can see as they pass by the church, such as a windmill, a solar panel, or a community garden.

Be imaginative and visionary: The author of *Revelation* gives a stirring vision of the New Jerusalem (chapter 21) as a way to draw his audience into actions designed to bring that vision to reality in the present. Imagine what your congregation would be like if you were thoroughly and completely to incorporate creation-care into your identity, life, and mission. Think about all areas of church life as well as the building and grounds. What would make your congregation distinctive and different? What would visitors see and experience? Write up that image. Now use your imagination to tackle efforts that will make that vision happen NOW.

Transform worship. The goal is to incorporate care for creation into every worship service. In what ways have you not done that yet? Think about all the parts of a worship service and consider what planning needs to be done to make creation care and creation celebration a natural and integral dimension of worship. There are resources in the congregational manual below and on the Web of Creation Web site for doing this (see also the Web site on worship at www.letallcreationpraise.org). Explain to the worshiping community the Earth-care importance of your current traditions and practices. Consider instructing the congregation on why you are doing something each time you innovate. Does the pastor make creation concerns a part of preaching? Have you discovered how the church year relates to the cycles of nature and how the themes of the church seasons can be connected with nature and ecological justice? If you do not yet celebrate the four weeks of the Season of Creation, consider doing so now (www.seasonofcreation.com).

Worship in nature as the sanctuary. What might you do to enable your congregation to think of all creation as your larger worshiping community and to consider nature to be the sanctuary? Take worship outside in the church yard. Meet some Sundays in striking natural settings near your church. Make the most of windows in the sanctuary to see the continuity between inside and outside. Bring nature inside—plants, trees, flowering plants, ivy on the inside walls, perhaps even an aquarium or gerbil cage. See your congregation as part of Earth community: name all the plants and animals with whom you share your property and consider them to be your worshipping partners.

Celebrate special days. Do you celebrate the Season of Creation? Earth Day Sunday? A blessing of the Animals? Rogation Day? Thanksgiving? A greening-of-the-cross service?

Find ways to celebrate Earth regularly in the church year. There are resources online for each of these.

Small and big in worship. Can you do a lot of small practices in worship that add up to a significant impact: touch the baptismal water; connect water to pollution and shortage; invoke all creation to worship each week; always have a petition on behalf of an endangered species; Pray for a human community threatened by global warming; include a confession of ecological sins; receive an Earth blessing. Or do something dramatic: put out a bushel of wheat and a large bowl of grapes to connect to Eucharist; provide an eternal light powered by the sun; put trees in the sanctuary; place an aquarium in the worship space; show slides of nature with music as a prelude; and on and on. Use imagination to shape and to shake people into a new awareness.

Educate for the ecological age. There are DVD series on Earth-care, films to watch, books to discuss, and sites to visit. Look for the links section on the Web of Creation and surf the web for the many organizations that promote Earth-care. Find out about your denominational resources and themes for creation-care. Draw on experts in ecology from local colleges or government agencies to demonstrate ecological problems and possibilities. Schedule outdoor retreats or nature excursions. Use resources for Vacation Church School that develop a connection to creation.

Try unorthodox methods of education. Do what needs to be done to dramatize polluted soil, food shortages, loss of species, unlimited trash, carbon glut, and the need for renewable energy, among other ecological concerns. Put amazing and disarming ecological facts around the church. Put up a windmill. Set up a rain garden. Plant an orchard. In these ways, as Wendell Berry says, you will “practice resurrection.”

Reframe the roots of faith for an environmental age. Find ways to educate the whole congregation about the biblical and theological roots of care for creation—creation, sin, redemption, justification, Holy Spirit—reinterpreted for an ecological age. Connect faith to ecology in graphic ways. Post around the church insightful quotations from theologians and ethicists around the church. Put excerpts of biblical passages about creation into newsletters. Use every occasion to do some care-for-creation practice/action and then comment in terms of faith convictions.

Center care for creation in our lives. How can we get past the idea that caring for creation is not just an add-on to the Christian life or limited to the interest of a few? How can we promote the idea that loving creation is as foundational as loving our neighbor? How can we make Earth-keeping central to our vocation as being keepers of our sisters and brothers? Imagine new ways to increase awareness of this concern and to address these questions. Pose questions like the ones in this paragraph to spur group reflection and discussion. Remember to be prayerful in seeking deeper answers to these challenges.

Reduce your carbon footprint. This is the most important thing you can do for Earth, its eco-systems, and all earth community. Tools are readily available for you to measure your footprint and then investigate every avenue to reduce it. Set a goal for yourself as a congregation and measure the economic and ecological payoffs. Announce these. Then challenge every member to do the same in their homes. Engage everyone in this endeavor. At the same time, join efforts to change the larger economic, social, and political systems that must be transformed if we are to address this problem adequately.

Monthly Emphases. Chose an ecological issue and then promote action and reflection at church and home: water, energy, transportation, food, and so on (see

<http://www.webofcreation.org/congregational-theme-months>). Work it by the month or by the quarter or by the seasons of the church year. For each emphasis, explain the ecological concern, show the eco-justice consequences, root the concern in the Bible and theology, take actions at church, commit to certain practices at home, and witness to each other about what you have done.

Do a comprehensive *environmental audit*. This does not mean just an energy audit. Make the rounds of your building and grounds and evaluate everything you do as a congregation that has an impact on the environment: purchases, recycling, water use, electricity, heat, paper use, cleaning products, food at coffee hour and church dinners, and so on. Go over the checklist for “Congregations Their Buildings and Grounds.” Use the manual *Environmental Guide for Congregations, Their Buildings and Grounds*. Both are available on the website. Be as comprehensive as possible. Do an “extreme makeover” for the environment!

Use your land in imaginative ways. Try to think about the uses of your land for the benefit of Earth. See your property as an Earth Community, a space that you share with many living things. Name and learn the plants and animals on your property. Include pictures of them in the church directory as part of your Earth Community. Include their names in the invocation to worship and in prayer petitions. Make a community garden or plant an orchard. Plant large flower beds for beauty. Plant some rain gardens. Put up a lot of trees. Create a peace garden or set up a labyrinth. Put large property in a land trust. Restore a native habitat, such as a prairie, as a way to restore your environment to a healthier state. Make your property a striking statement of your commitment for Earth to thrive.

Strengthen the commitment of members at home. You may have done a lot in the congregation, but how much difference have you made in the personal lives of members? What can you do to engage the commitment of people in their homes? What about a light bulb challenge to the congregation as a whole to see how many CFLs can be added to members’ homes and how many carbon emissions can be reduced by your actions? Can you make choices to eat local and purchase food that is raised organically and humanely? Can you reduce your intake of meat as a way to reduce the carbon footprint made in the course of raising animals for food?

Make a Covenant with Creation. At a worship service, invite people to fill out their personal covenant with creation and dedicate it as part of their offering to God and their spiritual discipline. Examples of such covenants are available online at the Web of Creation website, along with a brief dedication ritual. Such a covenant gives members an opportunity to make a commitment to reduce energy use, use green cleaning products, change eating habits, lessen transportation emissions, and so on. If you have already invited people to make such a covenant, be sure to repeat it annually, perhaps on Earth Day Sunday or in the fall at the time of the Blessing of the Animals. Or contact people personally and invite them to do this.

Hold workshops. Train members to green their homes in a comprehensive way. Use the extensive “Covenant with Creation” checklist to identify what each household has done and can still do. Get information to share on eco-friendly products and services in your area. Give suggestions for how members can green their work places. There are online sites and printed resources for making an office into an Earth-friendly place. Hold a

workshop on public policy issues in your area and equip and empower people for getting involved. Invite other churches to join your workshops. Get folks involved!

Public Ministry. Reach out into the neighborhood and community with your commitment to exist for the sake of the world. If your congregation is part of a vulnerable community in the city, identify ways in which the environment contributes to injustice and ill health in your community. Explore ways in which these concerns can be addressed. If you are in a middle class or affluent neighborhood, find out about the poor and suppressed areas of the city. How can you collaborate with these neighborhoods to resist harmful conditions and destructive policies and to work together to increase health, get rid of toxins in the air or in brown fields, and take actions that increase economic, ecological, and social sustainability?

Join with other congregations. Look around at other congregations in your denomination and in other denominations and join together in this common endeavor. Plan for the green teams of many churches to meet two or three times a year for reports to each other and an educational program to assist your efforts. This kind of sharing generates a lot of energy and excitement as people can see what others are doing. The interaction enables you also to do some collaborative projects together: sponsor a joint worship service on Earth Day, lower costs with joint purchases of energy-saving equipment, or tend a community garden together.

Spread your greening to the community. Work with city officials and other environmental organizations in your area to green your community. There are programs, such as Transitions US, the Natural Step, among others, that cities are embracing as a way to bring all aspects of city life into the environmental age: transportation, energy use, use of green cleaning products for government and schools, restoration of habitats, recycling programs, green city events, and so on. Churches can spearhead many of these movements in local communities.

Sponsor events for the community. Here is an opportunity to share what you have learned. Plan and publicize an event for the community that raises awareness and offers resources for faith communities to embrace care-for-creation: hold an ecumenical, interfaith worship service; sponsor a city-wide eco-fair; show a DVD that highlights religious care for creation, such as *Renewal*, with a discussion to follow; set up an evening event with a guest lecturer on some aspect of the environment; and hold workshops on greening your congregation or learning about public policy. Sponsor such events jointly with other like-minded organizations.

Forge partnerships between a thriving congregation and a congregation at risk. Sharing resources and people power to assist vulnerable congregations can be a way to double your efforts: weatherize, reduce energy costs, provide a loan for a new boiler, advocate together for clean air and water, plant trees for beauty and cleaner air, among other things. A study and survey of what people need and want in their environment can help to clarify what can be done.

Advocate for Earth-care public policies. We need to change not only personal and congregational behavior; we also need to change the public systems that allow and enable Earth-destructive practices. Collaborate with a local advocacy group around environmental issues. Learn about the laws and policies at the national and global levels that foster care for creation. Educate people on these matters. Instruct people on how to make their support known to legislators. Sign people up to receive action alerts and to

respond to them. Work with your church advocacy leadership and public policy offices to obtain guidance and direction for your efforts. Encourage and train members to be active “citizens for Earth.”

Each one teach one. Take what you have learned, find another congregation that desires to develop a green congregation, and be partners and mentors in their endeavor. This is one of the best ways to strengthen your own efforts while assisting someone else. In the end, you have a partner.

Be a flagship congregation. Show others what a congregation looks like that loves God, loves the neighbor, and cares for creation. Put it on your outdoor board, post it on the website, announce it in the newspaper, and live it every week. This will do a great deal to inspire others to embrace the same identity and mission.

Do not be overwhelmed. This is a lot of information. No doubt you have thought of other things in relation to your situation. Choose from these ideas. Choose what will take you to the next level. Do not choose more than is realistic to accomplish. Choose what people are excited about. Choose something that is needed. Choose what will generate energy rather than deplete it. Do it with a sense of freedom and joy. Look to the roots of your faith as means to sustain you in this work. You can only do what you can do. So plant the seeds and trust God for a harvest.

Fall in love with creation. Find ways for you and your congregation to discover anew the love of God for all creation. God has created all things for their own sake, not for what they can do for humans. God is in all things “working for good.” We can be restored not only by our relationship with nature, but also by our relationship with God in nature. By loving nature and by caring for it and about it, we align ourselves with God’s deep and abiding love for all things. Because we encounter in nature a God of love who cares for the most vulnerable, we will be empowered to do the same.

CONCLUSION

There are many more ideas and actions in this manual for any single congregation to adopt. It is written not for one congregation but for many congregations. It is written for a movement. Therefore, it has been necessary for you to pick and choose what will work for you and what will make the greatest difference. We hope you keep going back to the manual and the website to see what else can serve to take your efforts to a broader extent and a deeper level. We hope that your efforts are indeed resulting in a parish renewal of your identity and mission as a community.

There is no guarantee that the actions we take to green our congregations and our lives will add up to the enormous changes we so long for and the size of the difference we hope to make. Nevertheless, we will be contributing our part to the new world we need to create if we are to have a sustainable world to pass on to our children, our grandchildren, and our great grandchildren.

In any case, we change our lives and embrace our love for creation not because we know for sure that it will work, but because we know it is the right thing to do. We are motivated not by fear or guilt, although these play their part. And we are not undone by the despair we often feel. Rather, we are motivated and sustained by the love of God for creation, motivated by the grace of God that underlies and is embedded in all of life—with the confidence that God is working for good in all things.

And in the course of working to restoring creation, we are also renewing our lives, our congregations, and our communities. We are awakening a larger sense of personal and communal vocation and purpose in life as keepers of the Earth. We are finding deeper strains of the God's Spirit and more profound meaning for our own spirits. We are strengthening the bonds of love, not only among human selves but also in kinship with the rest of nature.

May God bless all your efforts so that your joyful labor for Earth may result in abundant life for you and for all of life you seek to bless.