



# Sacred Spaces and an Abundant Life Worship Spaces as Stewardship

*The blessings of God are evident all around us,* including in the sacred spaces that make up our houses of worship. These sacred spaces are where we come to be spiritually nurtured, enriched, and recharged. These spaces become a gathering place to meet in fellowship with our neighbors, and are the center of our mission activities.

In response to the blessings that God bestows, we are called to be like the faithful steward Jesus describes in Luke 12: 42-44, caring for who and what God loves and working to further the kingdom of God. For, “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted; even more will be demanded” (Luke 12:48). This is true for our houses of worship. Even as we are blessed as communities of faith with gathering places for our worship and ministry, we have responsibilities to be good stewards of these sacred spaces.

About half of the electricity generated in the United States comes from coal fired power plants.<sup>1</sup> Much of this coal is extracted through mountain-top removal, which harms the surrounding eco-system and nearby human communities. Coal-fired power plants jeopardize the health of children, increasing the risks of developmental difficulties and respiratory illness.<sup>2</sup>

Most congregations can cut energy costs by up to 30 percent through low-cost changes and by investing strategically in efficient equipment, facility upgrades, and maintenance. If each of the 300,000 congregations in the US reduced their energy use by just 10 percent, more than 2 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions would be prevented, the equivalent of taking 400,000 thousand cars off the road, and \$200 million would be saved.<sup>5</sup>

## DEDICATION TO GOD: SACRED SPACES AS MINISTRY

The people of Israel gave free will offerings for the building of the temple, recognizing that all they had already belonged to God (1 Chronicles 29: 11-14). The sanctuary of the congregation—the place we build to worship and glorify God—truly belongs to God. When we choose to maintain and run our religious facilities, our sacred places of worship and ministry, in ways that honor God, we remember that we are but stewards of these sacred spaces that belong to God.

Good stewardship of our sacred spaces—whether they be a small rural church, a camp and conference center, a religious school, an urban ministry run out of rented building, or a large suburban church—involves ecological stewardship, fiscal discipline, and social justice responsibility. Good building stewardship includes, but isn't limited to:

- Energy efficiency and conservation
- Reducing toxic materials and products
- Water conservation
- Land and habitat conservation

**Energy efficiency and conservation.** By reducing energy use, you can reduce air pollution and carbon emissions as well as reduce the church's operating expenses, leaving more funds for mission. Since a majority of U.S. electricity is generated from coal and gas (non-renewable energy sources), energy use not only creates pollution and harms God's Earth, but also harms God's people. Coal mining causes adverse health impacts for workers and communities living near the mine, including lung disorders such as black lung and asthma. Communities surrounding oil refineries suffer from skin irritations and lung disorders such as asthma. Energy conservation is a significant way to be a good steward of Creation, practice good fiscal stewardship, and help vulnerable populations from adverse health impacts.

Simple ways churches can reduce energy:

- Install programmable thermostats
- Weatherize church buildings
- Lower the temperature of your hot water heater
- Replace broken appliances with energy efficient models

*The 300,000 houses of worship in the United States spend more than \$2 billion on energy each year.*

## BRIGHT IDEAS: HELPING YOUR CONGREGATION REDUCE YOUR ENERGY CONSUMPTION BY 10 PERCENT

- Get an energy audit. Religious worship buildings use 2 percent of the total energy consumption for all buildings. An energy audit can show congregations the places in their building where energy is being wasted, helping them to discover the most cost-effective way to reduce their consumption and lower their utility bill.
- Join the NCC Carbon Reduction Campaign to take quantifiable actions to reduce energy use. Learn how to install energy efficient lighting technologies like compact fluorescent lights (CFL), LED exit signs, and occupancy sensors. Compact fluorescent lights use 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs and last about 10,000 hours, close to ten times as long. ENERGY STAR qualified bulbs produce 75 percent less heat, so they're safer to operate and can cut energy costs associated with cooling. Replacing just one incandescent bulb with a CFL will prevent 262 lbs. of carbon dioxide pollution from entering the atmosphere. Replacing 10 incandescent exit signs with LED exit signs will reduce carbon emissions by more than 5,000 lbs. and save over \$700. Occupancy sensors installed in strategic areas can help your church to use energy only when it's needed. The US Environmental Protection Agency estimates that installing occupancy sensors can reduce energy by 30–90 percent in restrooms, 30–80 percent in hallways, 45–80 percent in storage areas, 40–46 percent in classrooms and 13–50 percent in offices.

**Reducing toxic materials and products.** As good stewards of our buildings, we want to keep the church safe and healthy for congregants by choosing materials and products—carpet, furniture, soaps, cleaning, and cooking supplies—that do not cause harm to building visitors through chemical exposure. We also want to use products that do not cause harm to workers who create the products or the communities that surround facilities that manufacture these products. Some products such as polyvinyl chloride, better known as PVC, which is used in a wide range of building materials from pipes to wall and floor coverings, is known to be toxic and potentially carcinogenic, causing health problems in workers such as liver and lung cancer and respiratory problems in communities that surround PVC production facilities. By working to keep toxic materials out of our church buildings, we protect the health of those coming to worship in our buildings, love our neighbors as ourselves, and help to preserve God's good Creation.

### ENERGY USE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Electricity production is the largest source of global warming pollution in the US. In fact, 1.64 lbs. of carbon dioxide, a major global warming pollutant, are emitted into the Earth's atmosphere for every kilowatt of electricity used in the US.<sup>4</sup> The impacts of global climate change include species extinction, sea level rise, and increases in famine and disease.

*ENERGY STAR qualified bulbs prevent 450 lbs. of greenhouse gas emissions over their lifetime—the equivalent of keeping more than 200 lbs. of coal from being burned and can save about \$30 or more in electricity costs.<sup>3</sup>*

## **FENCELINE COMMUNITIES AND TOXICS**

**Mossville, Louisiana, is known as the vinyl production capital of the United States. The African American community living around the facilities, which would be described as a fenceline community since it surrounds the industrial facilities, has more than three times the national average for dioxins in their blood and breast milk, and higher than average cancer mortality rates. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency found vinyl chloride levels in the ambient air at levels 100 times the acceptable rates. In 2005, a local group, Mossville Environmental Action Now, brought the first ever environmental human rights legal challenge against the U.S. government in front of the Inter-American Human Rights Court of the Organization of American States. To work for a just and sustainable world, use of products, such as vinyl, not only have to be evaluated for their impact on consumers and users but also for their impact on the communities living near production plants and the workers in those plants.**

To help create a safe and healthy church environment:

- Use reclaimed or sustainable wood products to promote health forestry practices
- Use formaldehyde-free products to ensure better indoor air quality
- Use paints and stains with low or no VOCs (volatile organic compounds) to increase indoor air quality
- For flooring, use recycled materials to help reduce our impact on God's creation or use natural products to limit toxic exposure and ensure better indoor air quality
- Use non-toxic cleaning products such as vinegar and baking soda or industrial green cleaners with the Green Seal label to protect both church workers and congregants from toxic exposures
- Avoid anti-bacterial soaps because they contain triclosan. Triclosan is linked to cancer, allergies, and may create resistance to some antibiotics. It has been found in human breast milk, waterways, and dolphins.
- In the kitchen, avoid dishes made with polycarbonate plastic, such as clear, plastic utensils. Avoid microwaving potluck dishes in plastic since some plastics can leach toxic chemicals. Also, use cast iron or stainless steel pots and pans instead of nonstick pans such as Teflon or Caphalon pans, which contain toxic materials and may contribute to cancer rates in fenceline communities, those communities that surround production facilities.
- Purchase phthalate-free toys for the nursery, since they are linked to type II diabetes, cancer, reproductive harm in boys, and early puberty in girls. Visit [www.healthytoys.org](http://www.healthytoys.org) to find out which toys are safest for the nursery. Purchase unscented or essential oil-based scented soaps and candles to avoid phthalates.
- Avoid synthetic materials (laminates) in countertops and furniture to better indoor air quality and reduce worker health risks.
- Test the building for lead since lead can harm the nervous system and cognitive development, especially in children

**Water and Land conservation.** Throughout the Bible, God's waters and lands play significant roles in helping us understand the nature of God, God's purposes in the world, and our relationship with God. Scripture tell us about God and the relationship God would like us to have with the lands and waters God created.

Water is one of God's most precious gifts and is vital as the life support of God's Earth and its inhabitants. Water pollution from pesticides, fertilizers, and storm water runoff have a negative effect on water quality, and ultimately on both human and ecosystem health.

God commands protection of the land. “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants.

Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land” Leviticus 25: 23-24. We are called to be faithful stewards and good tenants of God’s land. This means using the gift of God’s land in sustainable ways, leaving healthy habitats for the entirety of God’s Creation and future generations.

Changes in water, land, and air quality have helped marginalize habitat areas and sprawl has fragmented important living space for plants and non-human animals, contributing to the decline in biological diversity. Projects such as restoring habitat on church grounds or controlling storm water runoff can help improve the ecosystem and watershed health, helping to protect God’s Creation and providing healthy and spiritually renewing space for God’s people.

Churches can help ensure that God’s waters and lands remain clean, healthy, and abundant by:

- Reduce or eliminate pesticides and synthetic fertilizers from church grounds to decrease water pollution and maintain healthy soil.
- Control storm water runoff through features such as rain gardens and rain barrels to decrease water pollution into local waterways
- Run automatic dishwashers only with full load to conserve water
- Reduce landscape water use by using plants that are suited to natural rainfall and if needed, water the grounds in the evening to avoid rapid evaporation.
- Fix leaking toilets and sinks. A leaking toilet can waste 45,000 gallons of water in six months, wasting the congregation money
- Install water-saving toilets and low-flow faucets and shower heads to save money

For more information on how to protect God’s land and water including educational and worship resources, visit [www.nccecojustice.org](http://www.nccecojustice.org).

### *Congregational Success Story:*

#### **PAVING THE WAY WITH COST EFFECTIVE PROJECTS**

**Good Shepherd Church and School, an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregation in Plainview, New York, with about 200 members, answered the call to be good stewards of God’s Creation and is saving money in the process. They initially concentrated on cost effective projects installing efficient lighting, programmable thermostats, and insulation.**

**The results are impressive:**

- **Total Dollars invested: \$20,000**
- **Annual costs avoided: \$18,000**
- **Payback period: 1.1 years**
- **Reduced Energy Consumption: 25%**
- **Lbs. of carbon eliminated: 26,200 lbs**

**Now, they are keeping the momentum going by focusing on bigger projects with the goal of reducing their energy consumption by 50 percent.**

*Landscaping the church grounds to include more trees can help reduce heating and cooling bills. When planted strategically, deciduous trees can shade a building in the summer and allow the sun’s heat to warm the building in the winter. In addition, using plants adapted to the local climate can reduce the cost of watering and fertilizers and pesticides.*

# SERMON STARTERS

## FAITH IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

(Psalm 23; Acts 9:36-43)

There are many ways we worship the Lord. In the story from Acts, we see faith in the Lord put on display not only in the prayer of Peter but in the faith of the women who sent for him. It is a lived faith that believes in the healing power of God. Psalm 23 is similar—a song of praise to the Lord who stands with us no matter what our circumstance. No matter how dark that valley may seem.

We hear about the destruction of our environment. Our pursuit of energy sources has led to the devastation of God's mountains and streams, and also brought harm to impoverished communities. The rate of species extinction continues to rise. And the impacts of climate change bring damage to both God's Creation and God's People. But the beauty that comes through this story and this Psalm is a reminder to trust in the healing power and steadfastness of God, and to act upon it.

And act we can. The spaces in which we worship are to be reflective of the faith we claim. If we claim faith in the healing power of the Lord, we ought to use the space in which we worship God accordingly. It means creating and living in that space in a way that is in right relationship with all of God's Creation—being energy efficient, using water and land wisely and prudently, and making sure the products we use in that space care for all of God's Creation. Managing our sacred spaces in this way is part of living out our faith, and it's a faith that brings healing to the world around us, and brings others into relationship with God—much as Peter's faith brought healing and new life to Tabitha, and people to faith.

## WORKS AND WORSHIP IN THE TEMPLE

(John 10:22-30, Revelation 7:9-17)

Christ proclaimed that his works were done in God's name. Yet, how often do we separate the works of our hands from the space in which we present God with our worship. We worship and praise God on Sunday as a part of our faith, but often neglect to see the worship aspects of the other works we perform. This is a division that does not glorify God in the fullest.

Jesus is speaking with elders in the Temple, who do not recognize his works. They were having a festival at the Temple in Jerusalem—but they couldn't see the works of God being performed right in front of them. They were too focused on the ritual of that place. In Revelation it is in that very space that the greatest fruit of works will be borne—when there will no longer be hunger or thirst or scorching sun.

Both these passages put on display the connection of our works with the places in which we worship. They are to be places where our works bear fruit, and can be recognized. They are to be sacred spaces—reflective of the works to which we are called. Do we have the heart of the Lamb at the center of our sacred spaces? In the materials used within it, the power which flows from it, on the land that surrounds it? Are working for an end to hunger, poverty, and the scorching sun with the way we use our sacred spaces?

When people enter our sacred spaces, do they see reflected the works of Christ, which calls people to faith? Do they see works that tell of salvation and that brings about the vision of Revelation?

**Leader:** Let us pray.

Creator God, you have called these people to be stewards of this household of faith and of your entire Creation which you have entrusted to our care and keeping. Send your Holy Spirit to them that they may faithfully serve among us. Help them to be diligent in their duties that your church may prosper in the mission you place before it. May their example prove worthy for all of us to follow as we are united in Christ's ministry.

**All:** Amen

## SUGGESTED HYMNS

*Breathe on me Breath of God* (Edwin Hatch, 1886)

*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* (Isaac Watts)

*God the Spirit, Guide and Guardian* (to be sung following a commissioning service)

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

**The National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program develops Earth Day Sunday materials each year to help congregations celebrate and care for God's Creation. For more information about the Program, to make a donation, or for additional Earth Day resources, visit [www.nccecojustice.org](http://www.nccecojustice.org) or email [info@ncecojustice.org](mailto:info@ncecojustice.org). For more information on how your congregation can practice stewardship of God's Earth visit [www.nccecojustice.org](http://www.nccecojustice.org) or contact [info@ncecojustice.org](mailto:info@ncecojustice.org)**

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## CALL TO WORSHIP

**Leader:** Essence beyond essence, framer of the world, I set you Lord, before my face and I lift up my soul to you.

**People:** I worship you on my knees and humble myself under your mighty hand. (Adapted from Lancelot Andrews (1555-1626) Earth Gospel 82)

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious God, who made the covenant with our ancestors, we gather here today as a rebellious people. We want to act out your intentions for us, but we keep getting mixed up by all the glitter of the world around us. You tell us to honor Creation, and we use other people and animals and plant life only to meet our wants. You offer daily bread to every living creature, and we steal that bread from our brothers and sisters in the name of greed. You promise us new life, and we shrink back from it in fear. Heal us, God, least we destroy ourselves. We need your presence among us. Amen. (adapted from the U.N. Environmental Sabbath, Earth Gospel 120)

## ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Forgiven and set free by the risen Christ, may his life flow through your body, mind, and spirit so that you may be an agent of life, life abundant, here in this place, now in this day. (adapted from the U.N. Environmental Sabbath, Earth Gospel 120)

## SENDING FORTH

May the good Lord show you how to be frugal, till all are fed; how to weep, till all can laugh; how to be meek, till all can stand in pride; how to mourn, till all are comforted; how to be restless, till all live in peace; how to claim less, till all find justice. Then you will be blessed indeed and the Earth itself will be blessed through you. —Peter W. Millar (adapted for Earth Gospel 44)

## COMMISSIONING SERVICE FOR CONGREGATIONAL CREATION CARE MINISTRIES

*(This service should be preceded by a description detailing the mission of the group or activity being commissioned.)*

**Leader:** Standing before you today are those who have answered the call to be faithful stewards of God's Creation. They are committed to furthering the ministry of our congregation in our community and the world. (Addressing the individuals) Having prayerfully considered the duties and responsibilities of your ministry do you promise to exercise your ministry diligently and faithfully, showing God's love for the whole Creation and working to further the kingdom of God?

**Individuals:** I do

**Leader:** *Addressing Congregation:* Members of the body of Christ, you have heard the promises of our brothers and sisters who have answered God's call to service. Do you promise to support them in their ministry, giving freely of the gifts God has blessed you with?

**People:** We do

## TIPS FOR STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

- *Identify and get to know the decision-makers.* Get the support of your pastor and other church leaders so as to encourage other members of the congregation to become engaged.
- *Educate the congregation and decision-makers.*

Explain that stewardship is fundamental to the existing mission of the Church. This is not a new task to be taken on, but an overarching theme in the life of the Church. Make the connection between stewardship of Creation and fiscal stewardship. Provide resources and offer to lead a workshop or teach a Sunday school class on the subject.

- *Start a creation care group.* Recruit others within your congregation who have the skills and interest to lend a hand. There should be at least 3 or 5 people to work together on eco-justice concerns; do not try to do things by yourself. Reach out to existing groups within the congregation—building/grounds, choir, mission, justice, and education groups. Invite everyone from the congregation to join.
- *Start with a small, manageable project.* Choose a project that everyone can do together—something that is relatively easy, tangible, and visible. Once you have a successful effort in which everyone participated, your next steps will be much more energized.
- *Celebrate Success.* Ask God's blessing on all that you do, and offer praise for all of your congregation's accomplishments. Celebrate each successful project you accomplish, no matter how small the feat. Appreciation and celebration are key to maintaining commitment and energy.

For more ideas on how to develop church ministries that embrace environmental stewardship, visit [www.nccecojustice.org](http://www.nccecojustice.org). Resources are available on “greening” buildings, using sustainable food for church meals, toxics, and energy efficiency. To learn more about congregational success stories, visit: <http://nccecojustice.org/stories/>

*There are a wide variety of safe cleaning products out there, including lemon juice, olive oil, salt, baking soda, washing soda, citrus, vinegar, borax and cornstarch that are safe alternatives to traditional cleaning products. They also have the added benefit of being less expensive to use. For more information on green cleaning products, visit: [nccecojustice.org/health/](http://nccecojustice.org/health/)*

Hunger is ever present not only in communities across the globe, but in our own local communities. Churches are often in a unique position to give hope to the world through innovative ministries. Organic food gardening on church grounds to feed the hungry can show that the Church is concerned not only with the needy but God's Creation. A growing number of congregations are taking a proactive approach to local and regional hunger concerns by creating food-producing gardens or even small farms on their church grounds. Growing food on church land is not only a fun congregational activity it is also a cost-effective way to provide for the hungry. For more information, visit <http://nccecojustice.org/food/>

## **BEING GOOD TENANTS: USING THE GIFT OF GOD'S LAND IN SUSTAINABLE WAYS**

**Bishop's Ranch retreat and conference center and Episcopal camp in California decided to plan their retreat space so that their use of God's land and water was sustainable. According to Executive Director, Sean Swift, "We need to minimize the impact of the building on our immediate environment and on fossil fuel consumption, as well as maximize the asset that is our natural setting." They constructed an energy efficient community center that makes use of a solar powered heating and cooling system. The walls are built of rice straw bales that provide insulation. Additional insulation was made from recycled cotton denim and the roof is insulated with recycled cellulose. Plaster made from the red clay earth on the building site was used on the interior walls, while natural lime plasters the exterior walls. Outside, the brick paving used allows rain to percolate through, reducing run-off. Parking areas are constructed of recycled plastic mesh covered with sand and grass to reduce runoff and filter pollution. The builders hope that the conference center will, like God's wilderness that surrounds it, inspire and delight all who come to find rest and renewal.**

## **ADULT STUDY DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES**

### **Growth from Small Beginnings**

When we say the Lord's Prayer, we pray "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven." What do you think God's kingdom would look like on Earth? What is God's will for the Earth? Read Luke 13:18-21. The kingdom of heaven is ushered in through small beginnings. What do these parables say about our ability to help God's kingdom flourish today? What are the small beginnings God is calling us as a congregation to take to help God's kingdom flourish in Creation. Could things as tiny as light bulbs or weather strips be the yeast your congregation needs to help your ministry flourish?

### **The Tabernacle**

Carefully read Exodus 35: 20 -29. The materials used to build the tabernacle all came from recycled donations from the Israelites. Precious metals were not mined, but melted down from donated jewelry. Acacia forests were not clear cut, rather "everyone who possessed acacia wood of any use in the work brought it" (verse 24). How does this story speak to the way we build or renovate our houses of worship today? How can we incorporate this biblical ethic of reuse into our everyday lives?

Now read Exodus 36: 1-7. Does this seem like a possible scenario within your congregation? Why or Why not? Why are we hesitant to freely offer back to God what God has generously blessed us with, and how can we foster a spirit of generosity within our own hearts? What is the work God has commanded your congregation to do to Care for Creation and love your neighbors human and non-human alike? What gifts do you have to offer to ensure this work is done?

### **Youth Activity: Scavenger Hunt**

(This activity can also be used with adults) Have the group break up into teams of at least two and go on a scavenger hunt throughout the church facility to look for the following items:

- Compact fluorescent light bulb
- Incandescent light bulb
- Programmable thermostat
- Motion sensors for lights
- Nonstick pan
- Plastic light switches
- Soap, lotion, or detergent with the word "fragrance" (a likely source of phthalates, which cause early puberty in girls, damage to male reproductive organs, cancers, obesity, and infertility)
- Low-flow faucets or shower heads

After 15-20 minutes reconvene the group and have them discuss what they found. Which items were examples of good stewardship? Which items are harmful to God's Earth or God's people? Read Jeremiah 1:4-10 to the group. Remind the group that God called Jeremiah as a young man to lead God's people into repentance after they defiled the land God gave them (Jeremiah 2:7). Ask the group: In what ways do you feel called to lead the members of your congregation? How can you help your congregation answer God's call to stewardship?

### To Learn More

- EIA Religious Worship: [www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cbecs/pba99/worship/worship.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cbecs/pba99/worship/worship.html) and table E1 <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cbecs/contents.html>
- EPA Energy Star for Congregations: [www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=small\\_business.sb\\_congregations](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=small_business.sb_congregations)
- Learn about financial incentives to help your congregation fund energy efficiency and green building projects: [nccecojustice.org/greenchurch/grbfunding.php](http://nccecojustice.org/greenchurch/grbfunding.php)
- Discover more ideas for greening your church: [nccecojustice.org/greenchurch/grbuildingblocks.php](http://nccecojustice.org/greenchurch/grbuildingblocks.php)
- Download resources to help your congregation learn more about energy efficiency, greening your sacred space, water conservation sustainable agriculture and land use and the connections between stewardship of God's Creation, social justice and financial stewardship: [nccecojustice.org/resources/](http://nccecojustice.org/resources/)
- Take an environmental footprint quiz at <http://sustainability.publicradio.org/consumerconsequences/>

<sup>1</sup>Energy Information Administration. Coal Demand. 2008. July 9, 2009. [www.eia.doe.gov/ncic/infosheets/coaldemand.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/ncic/infosheets/coaldemand.html)

<sup>2</sup>State of the Air Report. 2007. American Lung Association. July 9, 2009. [lungaction.org/reports/sota07\\_full.html](http://lungaction.org/reports/sota07_full.html) and ToxFAQ's for Mercury. 1999. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. July 9, 2009. <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts46.html>

<sup>3</sup>Williams, Susan and McNary, Bill. ENERGY STAR Change a Light, Change the World 2007 Campaign Facts and Assumptions Sheet. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy 2007.

<sup>4</sup>NCC Eco-Justice Program Carbon Reduction Campaign. 2008. [nccecojustice.org/carbonreduction/crc\\_congregations.php](http://nccecojustice.org/carbonreduction/crc_congregations.php)

<sup>5</sup>Congregations: An Overview of Energy Use and Energy Efficiency Opportunities. July 9, 2009. [www.energystar.gov/congregations](http://www.energystar.gov/congregations)

**FISCAL STEWARDSHIP AS A PART OF CREATION CARE**  
**At Lawrence Avenue United Methodist Church (UMC) in Charlotte, Michigan, a desire to improve the churches fiscal and ecological stewardship formed the perfect marriage. According to Rev. Karen Wheat, Lawrence Avenue UMC was inspired to reduce their carbon footprint after two very passionate groups within the congregation came together to share ideas and resources. One group had a strong desire to be better stewards of God's creation and another was passionate about being wise stewards of the church's financial resources. This partnership led to the congregation's first project, replacing all non-stain glass windows with energy efficient windows. The church reduced more than 9,064 lbs. of carbon by replacing 25 incandescent light bulbs with compact florescent bulbs, installing 5 LED exit signs, adding weather-strip-ping to all exterior and interior doors, insulating steam pipes, and installing a timer on the restroom lights. By reducing energy use, the congregation was also able to reduce energy expenses. Rev. Wheat's advice to congregations interested in reducing their own carbon footprint is to "Get the money people and the environment people together and let them see how this can be a win/win situation for both of them."**

“As a Committed Community:

...we will seek to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in our life. We will advocate the environmental tithes, and we will take other measures that work to limit consumption and reduce wastes. We will, in our budgeting and investment of church funds, demonstrate our care for creation. We will undertake environmental audits and follow through with checkups to ensure our continued commitment.”

Caring for Creation:  
Vision, Hope, and Justice  
Social Statement, adopted 1993

Additional resources on how to care for creation is at [www.elca.org/caringforcreation](http://www.elca.org/caringforcreation) and visit [www.elca.org/environment](http://www.elca.org/environment) to discover more about environmental education and the advocacy ministries of the ELCA.



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God's work. Our hands.

## CELEBRATING SUCCESS

On Earth Day Sunday, celebrate the success you have achieved no matter how large or small. For example, if your first step is to form a Creation care committee, commission the committee during the Earth Day Sunday worship service. If you start a community garden, bless the garden and celebrate your success by hosting a congregation wide meal serving some of the fruits from the garden. If your congregation decides to reduce energy consumption by installing efficient lighting technologies, on Earth Day Sunday bless the new lights. Once you begin to see results, celebrate the energy and financial savings with a minute for mission or announcement during the worship service.

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