

RECOMMENDATIONS



Action

7. Green Your Congregation

“How will we bring climate and environmental justice concerns into the religious life of our community – into our preaching, prayers, and worship? What spiritual grounding do individuals need in a climate-changed world?”

--The Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas
Missioner for Creation Care, Episcopal Diocese of Western
Massachusetts & Creation Care Advisor, Episcopal Diocese
of Massachusetts

Recommendation: Whether you’re just starting out or well on your way, strive to make your congregation more environmentally sound.

Take Action: If your parish has not begun creation care activities, here are some questions to help you get started:

1. What would engage the congregation the most? You can't do everything—that's part of the paralysis we sometimes experience. So, try one thing that might generate interest as a beginning. It might be water, air, food, day/night lighting, transportation, recycling, composting/gardens, or plastics.
2. Would a guest speaker or preacher provide motivation?
3. Could a consultant meet with the Vestry or other group to jump-start something in particular or help narrow the focus of possibilities?
4. Has there been resistance in the past? What might you do to lessen resistance?
5. Remember, "success" cannot be defined by how many people do or don't participate. If one person makes a positive change in their own environment, learns something new, or recycles their paper, swaps out lightbulbs, or buys a hybrid, that's a win.

Here are some ideas for greening your congregation from the recently retired rector of St. Andrew, Port Angeles, the Rev. Gail Wheatley:

- Make a get-rid-of-Styrofoam plan. Ask/require groups who rent church space to commit to the same as part of the rental agreement.
- Replace paper products, utensils, and drinkware with compostable products. Even if there is not a local facility for large-scale composting, these will decompose faster in the landfill than will anything coated in plastic.
- Donate 2 percent (or some other fraction) of all bequests (free money) to a fund until there is enough to put on solar panels.
- Install one or two charging stations in the parking lot.

- Plant only native species on the grounds. No more rose beds. Invite a Master Gardener, a county Extension Agent, or someone from a native plant nursery to coffee hour to learn more.
- Use LED lights inside and out, including for the parking lot.
- Put dusk-dawn timers on all outside lights.
- Consider [permeable paving](#), such as the parking lot.
- Install [dark sky shields](#) on the parking lot and exterior lights.
- Use carbon offsets for Rector/Vestry travel each year.
- Include a Creation Care donation line-item in every annual budget, even if it's \$100. Take up money for a donation to the [Diocese of Southern Philippines](#), for example, Audubon, or your local [Streamkeepers](#) or [SurfRider Foundation](#).
- Do the work to become a [Greening Congregation](#) (pretty easy) or [Green Faith](#) certified (more involved).
- Become a [backyard sanctuary](#) or a [Good News Garden](#) and get the signs. This works at home or at a parish.
- Have an outdoor service.
- Walk the parish boundary on Rogation Sunday.
- Start a worm bin for food scraps. Bless the soil and distribute bags of compost annually on Rogation Sunday.
- Get [Green Grants](#) to help replace single pane windows, seal outside doors/thresholds, and install ductless heat pumps on timers.
- Help folks recycle by having a place for them to bring recyclables if they would otherwise have to pay to take them in.
- Sing [The Blue Green Hills of Earth](#) a couple of times a year. St. Andrew's added an additional verse to include our local rivers.
- Say yes to [Land Acknowledgment statements](#) and relationships with local tribes. Tribal contact information is located on this [Land Acknowledgment page](#) on the Diocesan website.
- Use higher percentage recycled paper in printers.
- Use brown (unbleached) paper towels in bathrooms.

- Use (and make) beeswax fabric and other reusable non plastic food/storage wraps.
- Have a bike/walk/carpool to church Sunday.
- Participate as a parish in a local beach cleanup. See [WA CoastSavers](#).
- [Adopt a Highway](#) for litter removal near you.
- Do your own thing or partner with other churches/interfaith on [Earth Day](#) (April 22) activities. Bring in a speaker or preacher, plant some trees in a restoration project, or have a local-food potluck. Check with your local or tribal library to see if they are planning events or speakers. Consider an annual [Earth Day Pledge](#) for Stewardship of Creation as a diocesan request.
- Learn about [Earth Hour](#), the last Saturday in March around the world. Next year, on March 25, is the Feast of the Annunciation. Promote energy conservation. Ask your city council to make a proclamation and/or participate as a city.
- Learn about [Land Trusts](#) in your area. Learn about the local indigenous peoples' conservation efforts and historical care of the land and its resources.
- Get information from the diocese on [Holy Hikes](#) and take a group or make up one of your own. We live in paradise—go anywhere and look down as well as up/out!
- See if there are upcoming [star parties](#) near you and join in. Olympic National Park has a resident astronomer in the summer, and pre-COVID there were [nighttime walks](#) and star parties at Hurricane Ridge. Other national parks and state parks near you may have them as well.