

THE GREEN CHURCH INITIATIVE 2.0

OF

**THE VIRGINIA CONFERENCE OF THE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**



The Green Church Initiative

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it...” (Psalm 24:1)

The scriptures are full of references to God’s creation and to humanity’s relationship with it. The Green Church Initiative (GCI) is a covenant congregation program that empowers a local church to live out its faith, given the Biblical mandate to care for and be good stewards of all that God has so lovingly created.

Introductory Information

The categories chosen for this GCI are representative of the total life and ministry of a congregation. We want a Green Church to understand that everything it does in ministry is connected to God’s creation; in other words, caring for creation is so fundamental to who we are as Christians that it must necessarily be infused into every aspect of the life of a congregation; hence the categories of Worship, Discipleship, Stewardship, Evangelism, and Mission.

Prerequisites

1. Register your congregation with Caretakers of God’s Creation to declare your intent. We want you to register so Caretakers will have a record of your participation. We will continue to provide updates to the GCI and more and more resources as they become available. Also, we feel that your registration fee will help you to commit your congregation to begin to take action.

The registration fee is \$50.00; a registration form is attached to this document.

2. Form a Creation Care Ministry Team

The United Methodist Book of Discipline provides for the formation of an “Earth Advocacy Committee” in a local church, and creation care ministries have already been legitimized as valid ministries in many local congregations. The formation of such a ministry team is crucial in order to incorporate creation care completely into the overall ministry of a local congregation.

3. Formally adopt the GCI Covenant (attached) by the congregation’s governing body, i.e. Church Council, Administrative Board, etc. and signed by the Council Chair and Pastor. (Form a committee and sign the covenant to document your intent within six months from the point of registration)
4. Provide an annual report of your progress.

Certification Levels (Points required in each discipline)

Category	Green	Gold	Platinum
Worship	100	150	200
Discipleship	50	75	100
Stewardship	50	75	100
Mission	50	75	100
Evangelism	50	75	100
Totals	300	450	600
Suggested Contribution	\$100	\$75	\$50

PLEASE NOTE: You *must* accumulate the minimum number of points in *each* category in order to qualify for certification. If you have already done some of the suggestions, you can receive points for what you have already done. If you have ideas that are not included in the GCI, you can petition Caretakers to have your ideas included as well so you can earn points for your own creativity.

In some instances, the same item is listed in multiple categories because it is pertinent to different aspects of the life of the congregation; for example, a church garden can be a mission project in that it helps to feed the hungry, and it can also be an evangelism tool in that its very presence can attract people to that church. Hence it belongs in more than one category. However, you can *only* get points one time for such an item, so you can choose the category in which you want to take the points.

The "Suggested Contribution" is an encouragement for your congregation to support Caretakers of God's Creation as part of its creation care ministry. Caretakers is only partially funded by the General Board of Global Ministries and is partially self-funded; therefore, we have to raise approximately 50% of our support ourselves.

The "Congregational Covenant" form (last page) asks for the signatures of several leaders of your congregation. The reason why we feel this is important is because we think a creation care ministry will be far more effective with "buy in" from a very diverse group, representative of the total life and ministry of your church.

Covenant Commitments

Actions	Total Possible Points	Pre-registration Points	Points for Intended Actions
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A. Worship

A-1 At least once each year, devote an entire worship service to the celebration and honoring of God’s creation. This “Earth Sabbath” or “St. Francis Sunday” or “Festival of God’s Creation” includes a special focus on God’s creation with sermons, prayers, music, children and other activities.	Mandatory		
A-2. In addition to the annual Earth Sabbath service, incorporate creation care activities into worship on an ongoing basis (do at least three times per year, before earning credit, for any letter below).			
a. Pray for God’s creation; include prayers that are inclusive of stewardship and praise of God’s creation by both clergy and laity.	10		
b. Select hymns that have creation care and creation praise themes for regular inclusion in the music of the church.	10		
c. Plan a creation-centered anthem or solo.	10		
d. Choose scripture readings that include God’s creation themes.	10		
e. Include creation care themes in children’s messages or similar child-focused activities.	10		
f. Include creation care and stewardship themes in sermons throughout the church year by clergy or laity.	10		
g. Show a video segment that includes creation care.	10		
h. Incorporate liturgical dance and/or drama that celebrates creation using church members and/or local artists.	10		
i. Include a prayer of confession for your congregation’s exploitation, pollution, and/or neglect of God’s creation.	10		
j. Include creation care in a mission moment.	10		
k. Use communion elements that are locally made and with organic materials, including the chalice, bread and wine.	10		
l. Use live flowers and plants on the altar, using native and local materials as a priority. This requirement may include native alternatives to Easter lilies and Christmas poinsettias as well as the weekly altar flowers.	10		
m. Include petition prayers for God’s creation.	10		

A-3. Conduct a blessing of the animals with the congregation and animals from your community.	10		
A-4. Designate a Rogation Day for the church with a special service blessing the harvest.	10		
A-5. Schedule at least one outdoor worship service.	10		
A-6. Use sustainably grown palm fronds and compost them after use, or incinerate them and use the ashes on the next Ash Wednesday.	10		
A-7. Conduct a blessing of recycling bins and compost containers to incorporate recycling as a part of worship.	10		
A-8. Use at least 30% post consumer waste recycled paper for church bulletins, utilizing Certified Processed Chlorine Free and FSC-certified paper products; display recycling, chlorine free and FSC logos.	10		
A-9. Create or purchase and display a creation care-themed banner for the sanctuary and other venues where worship services are conducted.	10		
A-10. Use collection plates or bowls made locally and using earthen or fibrous materials made by congregation members.	10		
A-11. Incorporate a "Season of Creation" into your church's liturgical year. For a four-week period during Ordinary Time, treat God's creation as a liturgical season like Advent, Christmas, Lent, etc. Celebrate Earth, Water, Air and Fire as gifts of God.	10		
A-12. On United Methodist Women's Sunday, use the Women's Division theme of the connection between the lifestyles of people in industrialized nations and the consequent hardships that brings to some people in developing nations.	10		
A-13. As a celebration of a baptism or a memorial after a death, plant a tree in honor or memory of a church member.	10		
A-14. Include in your Thanksgiving service a litany of thanks for the harvest and the land that produced it (church members might bring food from their gardens or locally grown food to share with each other and the hungry.)	10		
A-15. Schedule an outside speaker to preach on earth care topics.	10		

B. Discipleship

B-1. Hold a training event on how to garden organically.	10		
B-2. Form a new Sunday school class or small group dedicated to the study of the intersection of faith and creation care.	10		
B-3. Organize a creation-centered Vacation Bible School.	10		
B-4. Conduct a weekend retreat for children, youth, and/or adults with a creation theme in order to raise awareness of God's creation.	10		
B-5. Have a special study session (4-6 weeks) on a creation care issue.	10		
B-6. Show a video that lifts up environmental issues.	10		
B-7. Sponsor a creation care fair in which you invite outside organizations to do displays or booths that will help raise your awareness.	10		
B-8. Invite an outside speaker with expertise in faith/creation to do a presentation for a group or groups within the church; optionally, involve neighboring congregations.	10		
B-9. Visit another church in your area that has an active creation care ministry to learn from them some things they are doing (or to share what you are doing at your church).	10		
B-10. Create a display or bulletin board lifting up creation care issues, and describe what your congregation is doing to raise awareness of creation care.	10		
B-11. Include a creation care tip in each weekly bulletin and/ or each monthly newsletter (either printed or electronic).	10		
B-12. Train your religious educators in the importance of including creation care in all classes and/or small groups. (Inclusivity is the intent here.)	10		
B-13. Take a field trip to a creation-related facility <i>and</i> facilitate a faith-based discussion.	10		
B-14. Create and publicize a creation care section of books, videos, or DVDs in your church library.	10		

C. Stewardship

Establish a zero waste goal by [Year]

C-1. Develop a system to recycle paper, plastic, cans, and glass.	Mandatory		
C-2. Recycle electronic waste, including compact fluorescent light bulbs, computers, cell phones, etc.	10		
C-3. Publicize local opportunities to dispose of toxic chemical waste properly. Coordinate with your local waste management authority or local government.	10		
C-4. Compost food scraps and other compostable items in a bin.	10		

D. Stewardship – Paper

D-1. For church publications, use paper labeled “Certified Processed Chlorine Free” and minimum 30% post consumer waste recycled fiber content. Display the recycling, and chlorine-free logos on the publication. (100% post consumer waste is goal.)	10		
D-2. Purchase bathroom tissue, facial tissue, paper towels, and paper napkins made from minimum 30% post consumer waste recycled paper that is also Certified Processed Chlorine Free.	10		
D-3. Purchase paper cups/plates/bowls/napkins that are compostable.	10		
D-4. Reduce the amount of office paper your church consumes by at least 10% per year. Do an audit of paper use on a weekly basis and explore ways to reduce usage. Engage youth and other groups in the church in making this happen.	10		
D-5. Produce electronic newsletters instead of, or in addition to, paper copies.	10		
D-6. Minimize the use of the Sunday morning bulletin; show the order of worship electronically.	10		
D-7. In the office, set printers and copiers to default to duplex printing.	10		
D-8. Print on the back of one-sided “waste” paper.	10		
D-9. Make paper that has been printed only on one side into scrap pads for use in the church.	10		
D-10. Provide training for staff and laity on how to conserve paper.	10		
D-11. Stop junk mail. Identify junk mail that is regularly received, and ask to be taken off the list.	10		

E. Stewardship - Energy

E-1. Carry out an electric energy audit for your facility. Reduce electric energy usage by at least 10%.	20		
E-2. Buy "green power" for your church, where available. Most electric utilities now offer consumers the opportunity to purchase "green power" certificates. Contact your utility to learn the details.	10		
E-3. Generate your own renewable energy to account for at least 3% of your electricity usage. If renovating or conducting new construction, consider the installation of photovoltaic solar panels.	10		
E-4. If you plan to expand, remodel, or build a new church facility, become LEED-certified. Contact the local Green Building Council or seek architects, builders or engineers who are LEED-certified for more information.	10		
E-5. Implement "walk, bike, bus or car-pool to church" Sundays at least four times per year. Get youth involved in organizing this activity.	10		
E-6. Document that at least 10% of your members have reduced their home energy consumption by at least 10% over the previous year.	10		
E-7. Install motion-sensing switches for indoor lighting and provide training for your sexton and/or others who are responsible for turning heat, A/C, and lights on and off on how they can contribute to saving energy.	10		
E-8. Install a bicycle rack.	10		
E-9. Replace at least 80% of incandescent lighting with compact fluorescent or LED lighting with the goal of replacing all incandescent lighting. Install LED exit signs.	10		

F. Stewardship - Trash

F-1. Conduct a trash audit. Learn what you could be recycling and how to reduce what you send to the landfill. Recruit a volunteer committee to monitor the waste for a set period of time and identify the recurrent materials that are going to the trash bin.	10		
F-2. Use china plates and cups, metal utensils, and glass tumblers at church dinners and fellowship times. Alternatively, use compostable dinnerware.	10		
F-3. Use cloth or recycled paper napkins at all church meals.	10		
F-4. Organize an annual green sale.	10		

G. Stewardship - Water

G-1. Reduce the area of turf at your church by at least 20% by replanting it with native plants, gardens, etc. to attract wildlife and reduce storm water runoff. Bayscape church property.	10		
G-2. Replace your roof with a “green” roof. (Consider a green roof for new construction or major renovation.)			
G-3. Reduce your annual water consumption by at least 10%.	10		
G-4. Serve no bottled water at any church function.	10		
G-5. Plant a rain garden(s). This is to reduce storm water runoff and retain water for groundwater recharge and natural filtering of surface pollutants.	10		

H. Stewardship – Toxic and Hazardous Materials

H-1. Purchase and use only non-toxic, environmentally friendly cleaning products. Engage your church sexton, janitors or others involved with selection and use of cleaning materials.	10		
H-2. Use no chemical herbicides, pesticides or chemical fertilizers in your landscaping.	10		
H-3. Use only “green” (non-toxic) cleaning products, especially in the children’s department, to clean carpet, paint, adhesives, toys, playground equipment, etc.	10		

I. Stewardship - Food

I-1. Use locally-produced food for church meals whenever possible.	10		
I-2. Provide vegetarian options at church meals. Have all-vegetarian pot luck dinners and other meal events. Publicize widely and give awards for the best vegetarian meals.	10		
I-3. Host a farmers’ market. Consider conducting in cooperation with neighboring congregations or non-profit organizations.	10		
I-4. Grow your own vegetables in a church garden. Create a garden space for your church and organize a volunteer committee to oversee the planting, care and harvesting of the garden. Decide who will receive the food that is produced.	10		
I-5. Act as a drop-off site for CSA (Community/Church-Supported Agriculture).	10		

J. Stewardship - Other

J-1. Encourage your stewardship committee to begin to include stewardship of God's creation, as well as stewardship of financial and other resources, as part of its programs. Make the connection between financial and environmental stewardship.	10		
J-2. Include on your creation care ministry team the person responsible for purchasing supplies at your church, or train all staff and those using the building in eco-friendly practices.	10		
J-3. Purchase recycled printer and recycled copier toner cartridges, or refill your cartridges, if appropriate.	10		
J-4. Establish a church policy to purchase supplies having reduced packaging.	10		

K. Evangelism

K-1. Give each guest a “green” gift (examples: CFL bulb, LED bulb, re-usable shopping bag, etc.) publicizing Caretakers of God’s Creation.	10		
K-2. Use rain barrels to collect and distribute rain water.	10		
K-3. Install waterless urinals and/or dual flush toilets.	10		
K-4. Plant a vegetable garden on church property. (See I-4 above.)	10		
K-5. Install solar panels or a wind turbine which provide alternative power to your church and which are clearly visible from nearby highways.	20		
K-6. Host and publicize a weekly farmer’s market in your parking lot.	10		
K-7. Invite secular non-profit environmental community groups to meet in your church.	10		
K-8. Offer classes and other study opportunities that provide people in the community a way to connect faith and the environment.	10		
K-9. Become a recycling drop-off point for e-waste (techno-trash).	10		
K-10. Invite a secular environmental expert to do a presentation to which the community is also invited.	10		
K-11. Document that at least one family or individual has joined your church because you have demonstrated a concern for God’s creation.	10		
K-12. Publicize your efforts to care for God’s creation on Facebook, your congregation’s Web site, the Virginia United Methodist Conference or other denominational website, your local newspaper or other media.	10		
K-13. Qualify to become a Certified Wildlife Area.	10		
K-14. Commit your church to become a drop-off site for a local community-supported agriculture (CSA) cooperative, and publicize its availability in the community.	10		
K-15. Host a blog on your church website to discuss matters of faith and creation.	10		

L. Mission

L-1. Give energy-saving devices to the poor (insulation, programmable thermostats, CFL's, etc.), and <i>install</i> them.	10		
L-2. Plant a church garden, with the produce going to a local food bank or those in need.	10		
L-3. Organize a local Community Supported Agriculture program to provide good, local, organic food for those in need.	10		
L-4. If your church houses a free medical clinic or facilities for the homeless, give away local or organic food to patients/guests, along with education about healthy food choices.	10		
L-5. Calculate the carbon footprint of your Volunteer in Mission trips for the year and offset them.	10		
L-6. Train your mission volunteers on environmental issues specific to the places to which they will be going.	10		
L-7. Provide at least two direct service opportunities per year for your congregation to be in service to God's creation.	10		
L-8. Advocate for local, state and national policies that will reflect better care for the planet.	10		
L-9. Use fair-traded and shade-grown organic coffee, tea and chocolate.	10		
L-10. Sell fair-traded coffee, chocolate, cocoa, tea, etc.	10		
L-11. Encourage United Methodist Women to study "Sisters on the Planet," with its associated Biblical study guide. This study makes the connection between our lifestyles and the hardships faced by many women in less-developed nations trying to provide food for their children.	10		
L-12. Provide annual financial support to Caretakers of God's Creation.	10		
L-13. Enter into a covenant relationship with a United Methodist missionary assigned to your area.	10		
L-14. Partner with other area organizations to work together to care for creation.	10		
L-15. Participate with the Society of St. Andrew in a gleaning project.	10		
L-16. Participate in an international General Board of Global Ministries project that includes caring for God's creation.	10		
L-17. Provide scholarships for elementary age children to attend a summer camp. Encourage local congregation to send kids to summer camp.	10		
L-18. Partner with a local Native American tribe to do a project that benefits God's creation.	10		
L-19. Volunteer a group in your church to monitor a local stream.	10		

The Green Church Initiative Congregational Covenant

"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for God has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers." Psalm 24: 1-2

The scriptures overwhelmingly affirm the responsibility of every Christian to care for God's creation. We are called to participate not only in the redemption of individuals and all of humanity, but in the healing of creation itself; therefore, ministries that encourage care for God's creation are significant to the mission of this congregation. God is at work bringing justice to the entirety of God's creation and God calls us to participate in God's mission.

In order to respond to God's call and to live out our faith as responsible stewards of God's creation, we hereby covenant to adopt The Green Church Initiative and will in good faith complete the requirements of the GCI as soon as possible.

The Creation Care Ministry Team of our congregation will review the covenant annually to assess the previous year's work and to consider other ways in which we can participate in God's redemption of creation.

Name of Church

Address, City, State, Zip

Pastor

Trustees Chair

Church Council or Administrative Board Chair

Mission Committee Chair

Please keep a copy and return the original of this form to:

Rev. J. Pat Watkins
VA Conference Caretakers of God's Creation
4030 Elizabeth Lane
Fairfax VA 22032-1448

(Note: If you or your church desires assistance in meeting these goals or needs help getting started, etc, please call Pat Watkins, Chair of the Virginia Conference Caretakers of God's Creation Ministry Team, 804-357-7098, CaretakersOfCreation@me.com. A *great* resource to help you get started is the *Greening Congregations Handbook*, available for you to order from www.earthministry.org.)