



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®

VAUMC Green Church Leaders Guide





Equipping Green Church Leaders

Creating Disciples for All of God's Creation Through The Greening of Our Churches

This leadership guide is designed to help church leaders in the Virginia Annual Conference take the initial steps toward forming a Green Team and work for Creation Justice in their church and the world.

A Green Team is a group of volunteers dedicated to promoting environmental responsibility and sustainability within their local church by educating church members about environmental issues, advocating sustainable practices, and implementing initiatives to reduce the church's environmental impact.

These resources in this guide will help empower Church leaders in work creation care, justice, and transformation:

- Our Calling to Creation Care and Justice
- The Six Steps to Being A Green Church
- How to Form A Green Team
- Guide to Green Church Audit
- Green Church Initiative Covenant
- Resources For The Journey



united methodists of
Virginia
**CREATION
JUSTICE**

Our Calling to Creation Care and Justice

On Finding God in Creation:

"The pure of heart see all things full of God. They see him in the firmament of heaven, in the moon walking in brightness, in the sun when he rejoiceth as a giant to run his course. They see him 'making the clouds his chariots, and walking upon the wings of the wind.' They see him 'preparing rain for the earth,' 'and blessing the increase of it.'"

-John Wesley, Sermon 23, "Sermon on the Mount, III," §1.1, Works 1:513

As people of faith, we are called to care for God's creation—the air, water, land, and all living things. "Going green" is not just a trend but a spiritual responsibility grounded in Scripture and our duty to future generations.

Rooted in Our Faith: Why Creation Care Matters

- Creation is God's Gift: God declared creation "good" (Genesis 1). We honor God by caring for it.
- Stewards, Not Owners: "The earth is the Lord's" (Psalm 24:1). We are caretakers, called to protect it.
- Love of Neighbor: Environmental harm often affects the most vulnerable. Creation care is an act of justice.
- Hope for the Future: Our choices shape the world our children will inherit. Sustainability is an act of hope.



The Six Steps to Being a Green Church

FOLLOW THESE STEPS TOWARD BECOMING A GREEN CHURCH

- 1. Pray and discern:** Start by spending time with Scripture and the Book of Nature to discern how God is calling your church to this ministry
- 2. Register below:** Start by filling out the registration form:
<https://vaumc.org/creationjustice/green-church-initiative/#register>
- 3. Form a congregational Green Team:** see "How to Form A Green Team" steps in this guide.
- 4. Print and adopt the GCI Covenant:** Have your leadership adopt the GCI Covenant; see the form below.
- 5. Evaluate and Act:** Reflect on your church's green performance from the past year, commit to improvement, and present your plan to church leadership for signing.
- 6. Provide an Annual Report:** Submit your actions annually to be considered for the **Green Church** or **Sustaining Green Church** award and gain recognition for your efforts at the Conference level; details available at <https://vaumc.org/creationjustice/green-church-initiative/>



united methodists of
Virginia
**CREATION
JUSTICE**

How to

FORM A GREEN TEAM

1. Gather Your Core Team 🌱

Start with at least two or three committed individuals—Jesus said that’s enough for him to be present!

Identify additional people passionate about creation care and justice, to join the team

Seek out a mix of skills and interests, including advocacy, education, and hands-on sustainability efforts.

Invite someone to commit to praying for the team’s mission and growth.

2. Engage Your Church Leadership 🏛️

Talk to the pastor and church council about forming a Green Team.

Keep leadership informed and encourage them to integrate creation care into sermons, liturgy, and ministry planning. Seek support from trustees and Sunday School leaders.

3. Identify Needs and Opportunities 🔍

Look at the church’s land, building, traditions, and surrounding community.

Identify issues like food insecurity, waste management, or energy efficiency that the team could address.

Consider the assets available: space for gardens, members with expertise, or local environmental challenges to tackle.

4. Start with a Small, Meaningful Project 🌿

Choose an initial project that is achievable and visible to build momentum.

Examples: planting native trees, setting up a recycling program, replacing Styrofoam with reusable dishes.

Celebrate small successes to encourage participation and engagement.

5. Educate and Communicate 📢

Provide Bible studies or book discussions on creation care.

Host guest speakers, film screenings, or workshops on sustainability and environmental justice.

Use church newsletters, social media, and worship bulletins to keep the congregation informed.

Develop a Green Team logo, T-shirts, or posters to build identity and awareness.

6. Expand and Sustain the Team 🌍

Recruit new members through personal invitations, announcements, and events.

Encourage participation at different levels—some may want to take leadership roles, while others may contribute occasionally. Partner with other churches, community groups, and organizations for support and shared projects.

7. Incorporate Worship, Education, Practice, and Advocacy

Worship: Organize Creation in Christ services, include prayers for creation, and integrate environmental themes into sermons. **Education:** Offer Sunday school lessons, Bible studies, and forums on environmental justice. **Practice:** Implement eco-friendly changes like composting, energy efficiency, and sustainable landscaping. **Advocacy:** Engage with policymakers, write letters, and support initiatives that promote environmental justice.

8. Connect to Larger Movements

Use resources from our United Methodist connections: The United Methodist Creation Justice Movement; your conference staff, especially the Caretakers of God's Creation coordinator, the conference green team, and the conference resilience and response efforts. Find out about potential funding sources, including the UMC Faith Foundation. Join regional or national environmental efforts, such as Interfaith Power & Light and local environmental groups. Encourage team members to become trained advocates or facilitators.

9. Keep the Momentum Going

Schedule regular meetings and report progress to church leadership. Share stories of impact to inspire ongoing involvement. Recognize and celebrate accomplishments, both big and small.

10. Potential Green Team Projects

Worship

Organize a Creation in Christ Sunday service. Include environmental prayers in worship. Plan an outdoor worship service to connect with nature. Develop eco-friendly liturgy and hymns. Host a prayer vigil for environmental justice.

Advocacy

Write letters to policymakers advocating for environmental protection. Participate in local clean-up and conservation projects. Host an Earth Day fair or sustainability expo. Support fair-trade and sustainably sourced church supplies. Encourage congregation members to vote with environmental concerns in mind.

Education

Offer Bible studies on creation care and environmental justice. Invite guest speakers from environmental organizations. Screen films and documentaries on climate issues. Host nature walks or eco-retreats. Organize children's activities focused on creation care.

Practice

Start a community garden or food forest. Install energy-efficient lighting and appliances. Set up a church-wide composting program. Plant native trees and pollinator-friendly plants. Reduce plastic and Styrofoam use at church events.

By following these steps, your Green Team can create a lasting impact, helping your church live out its calling to care for God's creation and serve the community with justice and compassion.

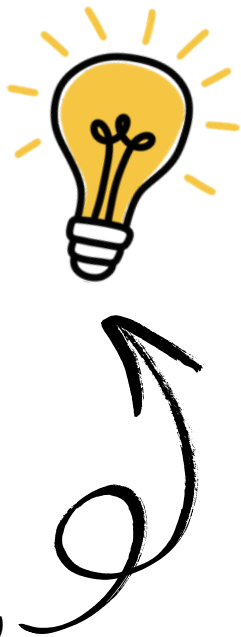


united methodists of
Virginia
**CREATION
JUSTICE**

Guide to

GREEN CHURCH AUDIT

DONE!	WILL CONSIDER	NOT FOR US	WORSHIP
			Include environmental concerns in worship/prayer
			Ask God's forgiveness for doing harm to the environment
			Connect with creation during worship (worship outside)
			Sing hymns or songs celebrating creation
			Save trees by reducing/eliminating paper bulletins
			Use recycled, chlorine-free paper for any printed materials
			Use locally produced communion elements
			EDUCATION
			Study/explore environmental issues in Bible studies
			Include earth themes in Sunday school/children's church
			Hold a forum or film screening on environmental issues
			Include youth in a conservation project
			Encourage children/youth to spend time in nature
			Hold an environmental summer camp for children
			Organize/host an Earth Day event
			BUILDING
			Add insulation to church building (walls/ceiling)
			Choose appropriately sized rooms for activities
			Install a smart/programmable thermostat
			Use energy-saving light bulbs (LED/CFL) (<i>like the one enclosed</i>)
			When replacing appliances, choose energy efficient ones
			Unplug/turn off appliances when not in use
			Check water faucets for drips and leaks
			Install water-saving devices on toilets and taps
			Install an energy-efficient dishwasher & run weekly
			Encourage use of virtual meetings when possible
			Use environmentally friendly cleaning products
			Add a bottle filler to drinking fountains
			Consider adding solar to the roof or building a solar carport
			PROPERTY
			Make minimal use of weed killers and pesticides
			Allow areas of property to grow 'wild' for use by insects, bees, and animals
			Use native plant species that benefit wildlife
			Install bird feeders and bird nest boxes
			Mow leaves instead of raking and discarding them
			Consider using green space for flower/vegetable gardens



GREEN CHURCH AUDIT

continued

DONE!	WILL CONSIDER	NOT FOR US	
			Compost yard waste & use as fertilizer
			Install a rain barrel and use it to water flowers
			Install a rain garden/wetland where water naturally pools
			Install EV chargers (solar-powered if possible)
			CONSUMABLES
			Purchase Fairtrade or locally made products when possible
			Purchase food from farmers' markets or other local suppliers
			Have recycling containers available with instructions
			Purchase recycled, unbleached and/or chlorine-free paper products (copy paper, paper towels, napkins, coffee filters)
			Consider using real plates and silverware instead of paper or plastic
			Ban Styrofoam cups and plates from church events
			Use real coffee cups that are donated or thrifted
			Consider composting food waste to keep it out of landfills
			Use compostable trash liners (<i>like the one enclosed</i>)
			LIFESTYLE
			Publish green tips/ideas on the church website, newsletter, & social media
			Promote home energy audits and carbon footprint tracking
			Encourage recycling and waste reduction at home
			Encourage walking, cycling, public transport, and car-pooling to church
			Encourage parishioners to join a CSA or use a local farmers market
			Partner with a local conservation non-profit to pick up litter
			Organize a seed exchange in your church or community
			ADVOCACY
			Organize an offering of letters to policy makers, urging them to take meaningful action for the environment
			Hold a community prayer vigil for environmental justice
			Become involved in UWF's Just Energy 4 All campaign
			Encourage your congregants to give up plastic for Lent
			GENERAL
			Establish a 'green team' that can help guide efforts to green your church
			Adopt a written environmentally preferable (or green) purchasing policy
			Encourage groups that use church property to care for the earth as well



united methodists of
Virginia
**CREATION
JUSTICE**

Green Church Initiative

Covenant

VAUMC Green Church 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. To respond to God's calling 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 all of God's creation and calls us to participate in God's mission.

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

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

Church name: _____

District: _____

Address, City, State, Zip

Church leadership members, please sign your acceptance of this covenant below:

Pastor: _____

Trustees Chair: _____

Church Council or Administrative Board Chair _____

Mission or Green Church Committee Chair _____

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

Brain Christoffersen
VA Conference Creation Justice
4120 Weeping Willow Ct.
Chantilly, VA 20151
Or email to: vaumc-creation-justice-team@googlegroups.com



Additional Resources for your Green Church Journey

Denominational & Regional Connections

- UMC Creation Justice Movement: Offers worship guides, bulletin snippets, liturgical ideas, and networking across the broader United Methodist connection.
- Global Ministries EarthKeepers: Provides training for UMC clergy and lay leaders to launch creation care projects and community initiatives.

Interfaith & Ecumenical Partners

- Creation Justice Ministries: Provides Earth Day Sunday guides, eco-theological Bible studies, and national legislative advocacy action alerts.
- Interfaith Power & Light (IPL): Assists congregations with energy audits, renewable energy transitions, and the national "Cool Congregations" challenge.
- Blessed Tomorrow / One Home One Future: Offers tools, climate leadership training, and congregational resources tailored for faith communities.

Practical Tools & Eco-Stewardship

- Homegrown National Park: A biodiversity project encouraging churches and homeowners to plant native species and remove invasive plants.
- EPA Energy Star for Congregations: Free tools, energy-benchmarking workbooks, and guidance to lower utility costs and building emissions.
- Fair Trade Certified: Sourcing guide for fair-trade, ethically produced coffee, tea, and communion elements for church events.