

# **THE GREEN CHURCH INITIATIVE 3.1**

**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 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 entire life and ministry of a congregation. As a Green Church, we understand that all ministry is connected to the just stewardship of and relationship with God’s creation and recognize that creation care is central to Christian Discipleship and the church’s life. We recognize connections with the inclusion of Worship, Discipleship, Stewardship, Evangelism, and Mission ministry areas in the Green Church Initiative.

### **Prerequisites**

1. Register your congregation with your conference Caretakers of God’s Creation/ United Methodist Creation Justice lead to declaring 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 commit your congregation to begin to take action.
2. Form a Creation Care Ministry Team

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

[Continued on Page 2]

**Green Church Initiative 3.1 revised September 2022**

A UMC/VA Conference Creaton Justice Program

3. Formally adopt the GCI Covenant 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)**

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

**Worship – 140 Points (Green)**

**Discipleship – 50 Points (Green)**

**Stewardship – 240 Points (Platinum)**

**Evangelism – 50 Points (Green)**

**Mission – 100 (Platinum)**

PLEASE NOTE: You *must* accumulate the minimum number of points in *each* category to qualify for certification.

It is essential to understand that you can *only* get points one time in calculating points, even when that item can be used in multiple categories. When the same item is used for various categories, such as a church garden can be a mission project in that it helps feed the hungry or an evangelism tool in that its very presence can attract people to that church. When this occurs, you must choose which category to apply the points to achieve certification.

**Covenant Commitments start on page 4**

**Green Church Initiative 3.1 revised September 2022**

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**Covenant Commitments**

<b>Actions</b>	Total Possible Points	Pre-registra tion 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 particular 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).	10		
a. Pray for God’s creation; include prayers that include 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 church’s music.	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 or drama that celebrates creation using church members or local artists.	10		

**Green Church Initiative 3.1 revised September 2022**

A UMC/VA Conference Creaton Justice Program

i. Include a prayer of confession for your congregation's exploitation, pollution, or neglect of God's creation.	10		
j. Include creation care in a mission moment.	10		
k. Use communion elements locally made and with organic materials, including a 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 particular 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 following 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 only 100% recycled paper for church bulletins, utilizing chlorine-free and SFC-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 worship venues.	10		
A-10. Use collection plates or bowls made locally and using earthen or fibrous materials from congregation members.	10		
A-11. Incorporate a "Season of Creation" into your church's liturgical year. For four weeks 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 United Methodist Women's theme of connecting people's lifestyles in industrialized nations and the consequent hardships that bring to some people in developing countries.	10		

**Green Church Initiative 3.1 revised September 2022**

A UMC/VA Conference Creaton Justice Program

A-13. In celebration of baptism or memorial after a death, plant a tree in honor in 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 and the hungry.)	10		
A-15. Schedule an outside speaker to preach on earth care topics.	10		

**Total Points in Worship Area: 140**

**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 studying 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, or adults with a creation theme 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 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 present a group or groups within the church; optionally, involve neighboring congregations.	10		
B-9. Connect with another church in your area with an active creation care ministry to learn from them some things they are doing (or share what you are doing at your church).	10		
B-10. Create a display, bulletin board, or webpage 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 or each monthly newsletter (either printed or electronic).	10		

**Green Church Initiative 3.1 revised September 2022**

A UMC/VA Conference Creaton Justice Program

B-12. Train your religious educators in the importance of including creation care in all classes and 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		
B-15. Develop and publicize a list of creation care resources on the church website.	10		

**Discipleship: 50 points**

**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.	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 “chlorine-free” and a minimum of 30% recycled fiber content. Display the recycling and chlorine-free logos on the publication. (100% post-consumer waste is the goal.)	10		
D-2. Purchase bathroom tissue, facial tissue, paper towels, and paper napkins made from 100% recycled paper.	10		
D-3. Purchase paper cups/plates/bowls/napkins that are compostable.	10		

**Green Church Initiative 3.1 revised September 2022**

A UMC/VA Conference Creaton Justice Program

D-4. Reduce the amount of office paper your church consumes by at least 10% per year. Do an audit of report used weekly 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	Link to options	
E-3. Generate your 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	Use as info	
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 LEED engineers certified for more information.	10		

**Green Church Initiative 3.1 revised September 2022**

A UMC/VA Conference Creaton Justice Program

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		10
E-6. Provide documentation 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 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% incandescent lighting with compact fluorescent or LED lighting, intending to replace all incandescent lighting.	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 and identify the recurrent materials 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. (link to D-3)	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 turf area at your church by at least 20% by replanting it with native plants, gardens, etc., to attract wildlife and reduce stormwater runoff—Bay scape church property.	10		
G-2. Replace your roof with a “green” roof. (Consider a green roof for new construction or major renovation.)	10		

**Green Church Initiative 3.1 revised September 2022**

A UMC/VA Conference Creaton Justice Program

G-3. Reduce your annual water consumption by at least 10%.	10	Use Portfolio Manager	
G-4. Serve no bottled water at any church function.	10		
G-5. Plant a rain garden(s) to reduce stormwater 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 the 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 vegetables in a church garden. Create a garden space for your church and organize a volunteer committee to oversee the garden’s planting, care, and harvesting. Decide who will receive the food production.	10		
I-5. Act as a drop-off site for CSA (Community/Church-Supported Agriculture).	10		

**Green Church Initiative 3.1 revised September 2022**

A UMC/VA Conference Creaton Justice Program

**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 economic 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		

**Stewardship: 240 points**

**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 barrels to collect and distribute rainwater.	10		
K-3. Install waterless urinals and 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 that provides alternative power to your church and visible from nearby highways.	20		
K-6. Host and publicize a weekly farmer’s market in your parking lot.	10		

**Green Church Initiative 3.1 revised September 2022**

A UMC/VA Conference Creaton Justice Program

K-7. Invite secular non-profit environmental community groups to meet in your church.	10		
K-8. Offer classes and other study opportunities that allow people in the community 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 community presentation.	10		
K-11. Provide documentation 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, another 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 local community-supported agriculture (CSA) cooperative, and publicize its availability in the community.	10		

**Evangelism: 50 points**

**L. Missions**

L-1. Give energy-saving devices to the low-income houses (insulation, programmable thermostats, CFLs, LED's, etc.), and install them.	10		
L-2. Plant a church garden to support 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 church mission trips for the year and offset them.	10		

**Green Church Initiative 3.1 revised September 2022**

A UMC/VA Conference Creaton Justice Program

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. Utilize the United Methodist Women’s 13 Steps to Sustainability when planning events for your church. See <a href="https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/sustainability/guidelines">https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/sustainability/guidelines</a>	10		
L-12. Participate in United Methodist Women’s Just Energy for All 101 webinar series	10		
L-13. Provide annual financial support to Caretakers of God’s Creation.	10		
L-14. Enter into a covenant relationship with a United Methodist missionary assigned to your area.	10		
L-15. Partner with other area organizations to work together to care for creation.	10		
L-16. Participate with the Society of St. Andrew in a gleaning project.	10		
L-17. Participate in an international General Board of Global Missions project that includes caring for God’s creation.	10		
L-18. Provide scholarships for elementary-age children to attend a summer camp. Encourage the local congregation to send kids to summer camp.	10		
L-19. 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		

**Missions: 100 point**

# 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. 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 the entirety of God’s creation, and God 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.

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:

Brain Christoffersen  
VA Conference Creation Justice  
4120 Weeping Willow Ct.  
Chantilly, VA 20151

(Note: If you or your church desires assistance in meeting these goals or needs help getting started, etc., For questions please call Brian Christoffersen, Chair of the Virginia Conference Creation Justice Ministry Team, 703-606-2665, [redceltic2010@gmail.com](mailto:redceltic2010@gmail.com) . A great resource to help you get started is the *Greening Congregations Handbook*, available for you to order from [www.earthministry.org](http://www.earthministry.org).)