

Diocese of Ontario

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP – BEST PRACTICES

Churches are increasingly becoming aware of the need to encourage environmental stewardship both within their own congregation and within the community-at-large. While there are many practical suggestions for how to be a green church, what follows are a few ideas:

- 1. Energy for Lighting:**
Retrofitting current lights with new and improved lighting lowers emissions and saves money. Replacing just one incandescent light bulb with a compact fluorescent light saves the burning of five hundred pounds of coal over the ten year lifetime of that bulb.
- 2. Energy for Heating and Cooling:**
An energy audit for heating may also turn up some feasible ways in which you can conserve in the production of heat and air conditioning. Local and state energy companies are often eager to do free audits and make recommendations.
- 3. Recycling:**
Seek to develop a comprehensive recycling program for the church buildings—plastic, cans, glass, office paper, card board, among others. You may also want to set up a small recycling corner for members to recycle items at church that they might otherwise throw away, such as cell phones, printer cartridges, household batteries, plastic bags, and so on. Post instructions near the receptacles.
- 4. Lawn maintenance:**
Avoid pesticides and herbicides; avoid chemical fertilizer; where feasible, mow with a hand mower that is battery powered or electric mower. Consider planting low maintenance grass; avoid watering, especially during a drought.
- 5. Green Cleaning products:**
Do an inventory of products used in the maintenance of the church. Reduce or eliminate toxic products used in the maintenance and cleaning of the buildings. Environmentally safe products are now available for most cleaning jobs and homemade cleaners such as Baking Soda and Vinegar are a wonderful way to preserve the environment while cutting costs on cleaning products.
- 7. Coffee Hour and Potlucks:**
Offer Fair Trade/shade grown coffee and tea; provide snacks that are healthy; offer organic and/or locally grown food. Make efforts to reduce or eliminate the use of Styrofoam, plastic, and paper products (the ideal solution is a dishwasher). Provide a mug rack. Wash dishes and utensils with eco-friendly dishwashing solutions. Consider cloth napkins.

8. Paper products:

Do an inventory of paper purchases and seek to purchase recycled/ post-consumer waste paper for office use as well as for bathroom and kitchen use. Develop guidelines for the use of office paper by staff and volunteers—to reduce, use fully, and recycle. Make use of paperless electronic means of communication where feasible.

9. Green Your Worship Practices:

Here are some ideas to make your worship practices more earth-friendly:

- Place plants on the altar instead of cut flowers; send them home for planting
- Use recycled paper for printed materials; reduce/reuse/recycle
- Consider projected worship as it has the added benefit of eliminating bulletins
- Place recycling baskets at the exits; provide reusable glasses (not plastic)
- Use beeswax candles instead of oil based candles.

10. Policy/pledge:

Consider drafting a policy or pledge statement, one that would be approved by the whole congregation at an Annual Vestry Meeting, or a special Vestry –

We agree to assess the destructive impact that our activities and the use and maintenance of our property may have upon creation—in such matters as energy use, toxic products, paper use, water use, waste, transportation, among others. We will strive to make choices that lessen our negative impact on the earth and that serve to renew and restore the earth community.