Checklist for Green Congregations: Building, Grounds, and Practices

Correlated with pages in

“Environmental Guide for Congregations, Their Buildings and Grounds”

See under “manuals” at www.webofcreation.org.

Section 1. Worship (6-15)

1. _____Living flowers or plants on the altar to be kept or planted later outside.

2. _____Living plants or trees in the sanctuary to purify air and to be “worshipers”!

3. _____Beeswax candles rather than (oil-based) paraffin wax candles.

4. _____Local wine for communion

5. _____Practice intinction or have re-usable glasses (not plastic) for communion.

6. _____Wash communion vessels/ glasses with eco-safe dish-washing detergent.

7. _____Provide communion bread of whole grain, organic and locally grown.

8. _____Purchase fair trade palm fronds for Palm Sunday.

9. _____Limit or eliminate use of paper for bulletins. Re-use where possible.

10. _____Place basket near exit for recycling worship materials.

11. _____Use post-consumer waste/ recycled paper for bulletins.

12. _____Consider the origin of the paraments made for worship.

13. _____Use outside light where feasible.

14. _____Use outside air and fans instead of air conditioner where feasible.

15. _____Use live Christmas tree and then plant on church property.

16. _____Green decorations for holidays.

17. _____Worship outside in nature.

18. _____Safe disposal of batteries from wireless microphones.
Section 1: Office (6-15)

1. _____Use post-consumer/ recycled paper
2. _____Paper-use guidelines to limit use and for efficient use/ reuse.
3. _____Recycle paper, ink cartridges.
4. _____Proper disposal of batteries, computers, printers, copiers.
5. _____Limit mailings/ use e-mail.
6. _____Unplug computers/ printers/ coffee makers/ microwaves when not in use.
7. _____Use fair trade coffee, tea, chocolate.
8. _____Healthy snacks.
9. _____Purchase Energy Star appliances when replacing equipment.
10. _____Cut down on junk mail. Notify senders.
11. _____Bring plants into office for beauty and to purify air.
12. _____Use refilled/ recycled ink and toner cartridges when feasible.
13. _____Limit number of copies for use by groups.
14. _____Use white or pastel color paper. Bright colors do not recycle.

Section 1: Education (6-15)

1. _____Art projects: avoid craft foam products and wax (oil-based) crayons.
2. _____Use recycled paper.
3. _____Provide recycling bins in classrooms.
4. _____Limit photocopies of material.

Section 2: Coffee hour, receptions, and congregational meals (16-22)

1. _____Eliminate Styrofoam, plastic cups, and disposable paper and plastic products.
2. _____Provide mug rack.
3. Encourage people to bring their own plates, cups, and utensils to meals.

4. Provide/collect ceramic plates and cups, glasses, and stainless-steel utensils.

5. Purchase efficient Energy Star dish washer and other appliances.

6. Use eco-safe dish-washing detergents and cleansers.

7. Provide healthy/organic/locally grown food items for snacks and meals.

8. Minimize waste from food or paper/plastic products.

9. If you cannot eliminate waste, use biodegradable plastic options now available.

10. Use Fair-Trade coffee, tea, chocolate, etc.


12. Consider cloth napkins/towels with member using laundry facilities at home.

13. Establish guidelines for the congregation and for outside groups using facility.

14. For dishwashing and laundering, establish a church team, rotate use, or take a collection each time to pay a person who especially needs the money.

15. Avoid running water unnecessarily.

16. Turn out lights when not needed.

17. Unplug stove, microwave, and coffee maker when not in use.

18. Use post-consumer paper products for napkins and towels.

19. Get rid of soda machines/Use refrigerator and honor system.

Section 3: Energy usage: Electricity (24-40)

1. Get off the grid with renewable energy: photovoltaic panels or wind mills.

2. Replace all incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs. Exit lights.

3. Retrofit fluorescent lighting and replace bulbs with the most efficient available.

4. Use electric timers on some indoor and outdoor lights. Use motion sensitive lights.

5. Avoid (high energy) halogen lights.

6. Use photovoltaic panels for exterior lighting or church sign.
Section 3: Energy Usage: Heat (24-40)

1. _____ Get off the grid with renewable energy: geothermal, wind, solar (hot water).
2. _____ Inspect, adjust, and clean all heating and air conditioning systems.
3. _____ Remove obstacles from vents and registers.
4. _____ Moderate heat throughout building to times and areas of use.
5. _____ Use ceiling fans for cooling.
6. _____ Raise thermostat for cooling in summer. Lower it in winter.
7. _____ Fix leaking faucets.
8. _____ Insulate hot water pipes and water heater. Use tank-less water heater.
9. _____ Purchase high-efficiency, Energy Star water heater and dish washer.
10. _____ Seal air leaks in door, windows, and gaps in the building envelope.
11. _____ Insulate walls and ceilings.
12. _____ Purchase energy-efficient windows.
13. _____ Use dishwasher only when full.
14. _____ Limit meetings to certain nights/ times for energy consumption.
15. _____ Foster practices among members to turn out lights when not in use.

Section 4: Paper and wood products (42-49)

1. _____ Set guidelines for paper use for office, worship, and education.
2. _____ Use recycled, chlorine-free office paper and envelopes for all uses.
3. _____ Or provide certified paper (Forest Stewardship Council).
4. _____ Use recycled paper for products in kitchen and bathrooms.
5. _____ Reduce paper use in office, worship and education.
6. _____ Provide handy paper recycling bins in various rooms.
7. _____ Reduce junk mail. Request senders to eliminate or ask for single catalogues.

8. _____ Purchase products—furniture/flooring/altars using only certified wood.

9. _____ Plant trees on church property, at homes/businesses of members, in community.

**Section 5: Water use (50-63)**

**Kitchen**

1. _____ Repair leaky faucets.

2. _____ Do not let faucet run while doing other tasks.

3. _____ Use dishwasher only when full.

4. _____ Do not contaminate water. Use only eco-friendly dishwashing detergent.

5. _____ Limit use of garbage disposals. Compost food waste.

6. _____ Install low-flow (aerator) faucets and dish sprays.

7. _____ Insulate hot water pipes.

**Bathrooms**

1. _____ Replace automatic flush systems with sensor, use-based flush system.

2. _____ Use hand-motion sensors on faucets.

3. _____ Repair leaky faucets and toilets.

4. _____ Install low-flush toilets or composting toilets.

5. _____ Install low-flow (aerator) faucets.

6. _____ Insulate hot water pipes.

**Fountain**

1. _____ Eliminate constantly running drinking fountains.

2. _____ Repair leaking fountains.

**Outdoor church property**

1. _____ Landscape with native grass and plants that require little or no water.
2. _____Turn a church lot into prairie.

3. _____Put in rain gardens to absorb runoff.

4. _____Landscape to absorb runoff. Avoid bare areas.

5. _____Use mulching mower.

6. _____Mulch trees, shrubs, flowers, and gardens.

7. _____Eliminate/minimize pesticides, herbicides, and toxic fertilizer.

8. _____Limit watering lawn. Water at dusk or dawn. Do not water during droughts.

9. _____Use a rain barrel to collect for watering.

10. _____Use down spouts to distribute water for watering plants and absorption.

11. _____Install a roof-top garden.

12. _____Install a grey water system for watering lawn and plants.

13. _____Plant trees.

Parking areas

1. _____Install permeable surface for parking or walking area.

2. _____Limit size of paved surfaces or eliminate with gravel and wood chips.

3. _____Provide spaces in the parking area for trees and ground absorption.

Section 6: Green cleaning products (65-70)

1. _____Use eco-safe cleansers for restrooms, kitchen, dining areas, and other surfaces.

2. _____Use eco-safe detergents/soaps/cleaners for dishes, hands, windows, communion vessels.

3. _____Use eco-safe cleaners/shampoos for carpets, tile floors, hardwoods floors.

4. _____Use eco-safe waxing products for floors.

5. _____Use eco-safe products for cleaning church vehicles.

6. _____Use eco-safe detergents for washing cloth napkins, towels, and paraments.
Section 7: Food choices (71-80)

1. _____Provide healthy food for snacks and meals.
2. _____Purchase organic, locally grown food.
3. _____Purchase Fair Trade products where feasible.
4. _____Have a vegetarian potluck. Educate about the environmental impact of meat.
5. _____Sponsor a world hunger meal with beans and rice or other solidarity food.
6. _____Become a drop off point for Community Supported Agriculture. Encourage members to participate.
7. _____Plant a community garden to share with local food banks.

Section 8: Transportation (71-80)

1. _____Install bike racks. Encourage walking to church.
2. _____Give information about public transportation.
3. _____Organize car pooling for church events.
4. _____Purchase/ use a van to transport people to church.
5. _____Reward pastors and other church workers for using high-mileage cars.
6. _____Designate car-free Sundays or months for worship.
7. _____Each month have someone check/correct tire pressure of cars in the parking lot.

Section 9: Indoor air quality (89-94)

1. _____Test for asbestos, lead, formaldehyde, radon.
2. _____Address issues of mold, mildew, bacteria, and dust mites.
3. _____Avoid volatile organic compounds from certain cleaning products, furnishings, fabrics, carpets, and paints.
4. _____Provide open windows for air circulation.
5. _____Put selected plants indoors to serve as air purifiers.
Section 10: Nature inside and out (95-98)

1. Plants inside: entrance, near windows, at the altar, around the baptismal font, in the office, in the narthex and other gathering spaces.

2. Bring other life into the church: an aquarium, hamsters, birds.

3. Create an indoor herb garden.

4. Create an outdoor worship space or place of prayer.

5. Create a tree sanctuary or memorial garden with benches.

6. Be creative about the planting of trees, shrubbery, ivies, and flowers.

7. On an open lot, create a prairie or a small preserve or an orchard.

8. Use memorial funds and gifts to dedicate trees and natural spaces.

Section 11: Recycling and waste (99-110)

1. Find out the recycling system in your area for all items. Aim for 100% recycling.


3. Consider reuse as option one.

4. Recycle office paper (after use of both sides). Recycle newsprint and other paper.

5. Recycle glass, plastic, steel cans, and aluminum cans.

6. Consider a convenient recycling center in the church for cell phones, printer cartridges, household batteries, eye glasses, plastic bags, and gym shoes.

7. Use biodegradable plastic bags for garbage.

8. Compost food and yard waste.

9. Have property committee or youth periodically assess church waste stream.

10. Provide recycling information to members for home use (including toxic disposal).