

PP for Trinity Presbytery--Feb. 8, 2014

I would like to introduce Lee Phippen who is head of our Environmental Stewardship Committee here at Forest Lake Presbyterian, and I am Judy Timmons. We formed this committee in 2005, 9 years ago, after Dr. Bruce Coull from the School of Environmental Science at USC taught a Sunday School class, using an environmental theme.

We soon developed a **mission statement** for our committee. We discovered that in 1984 the General Assembly had declared "Restoring Creation as a central concern of the church that should be incorporated into its life and mission at every level." and we thought that it was important to let others know that our concern about the environment was not just something we had dreamed up on our own but was mandated by the General Assembly of our denomination and also by the Bible.

We have often used Genesis 2:15 as the Biblical basis for what we do.

Because we had strong support from our senior pastor, our associate pastor, and our parish associate, our congregation soon came to realize how important it is for us as Christians to care for our fragile earth and its resources

One of our first projects was a bulletin board to provide environmental information.

In our newsletter, we soon added a section devoted to earth care.

Recycling is a good project to begin with, and we soon started recycling office paper through Sonoco in this blue Herbie Curbie. In our recycling closet we also recycle ink cartridges. The funds generated go for camperships at Fellowship Camp and Conference Center. I encourage you to get in touch with Kevin Cartee for information about participating in this easy way to financially help Trinity Presbytery's campers. Also in the recycling closet we collect cell phones, batteries, and cardboard.

There are also bins for items that our youth group collects and sends to Terracycle, a company that makes new products out of what we save for them. Here Rachel is sorting the items we collected in this blue bin that you see on the table. I am always amazed that Terracycle pays us 2 cents for each foil-lined energy bar wrapper and 2 cents for each of the plastic containers; this income helps support

our Kids' Garden. Since we started sending these items to Terracycle, we have earned \$550 for this garden.

Here are just three of the products that Terracycle makes from materials that are saved from the landfill.

As part of our Education program in 2006 we celebrated our first Earth Sunday with Creation Care as the theme, and each year since we have chosen a different theme that supports our desire to care for God's Creation. During the three weeks leading up to Earth Sunday the youth and children are engaged in Biblical study and activities that relate to that year's topic.

Our Earth Sundays have focused on such topics as animals, water (Here the children are using a watershed model that demonstrates how our bodies of water are polluted by anything harmful we put on the ground or on our roads and parking lots.)

Other topics for Earth Sunday have been beneficial insects like ladybugs and here we are releasing butterflies in the kids' garden. Other years we have studied plants and our environmental footprint. Each Earth Sunday the projects created by the children are displayed for the congregation to visit before and after worship. Environmental educators from area organizations bring interactive displays of interest to all ages. The music and sermon are also on the same subject as the Earth Sunday theme.

On one Earth Sunday we dedicated our Kids' Garden.

Through Keep the Midlands Beautiful we soon adopted a nearby section of Gills Creek for cleanups three times a year.

This an excellent inter-generational activity for a Saturday morning. We clean up along the banks of Gills Creek and also utilize a boat to clean up in the shallow water. It is amazing what people dump in the water and think it will just disappear!

The young people and children compete to be the one to win a prize for the most unusual find. We remove such things as mattresses, furniture, grocery carts, and lots of tires.

We have found it very helpful to interact with local organizations. As one aspect of our outreach to the community, several of our members serve on committees or boards of environmental organizations in the area; such as, Gills Creek Watershed Association, Interfaith Power and Light, and the Green Congregations Committee.

Because our church is located at the top of a hill, we have added a silt fence to the edge of our sandy playground to prevent sand from being washed into the storm drains at the bottom of the hill since this water goes directly into the nearest body of water without being filtered. We glued medallions to the drains warning against dumping anything down them, and we have asked our lawn service to make sure they blow debris away from them.

This is a picture of our ugly dumpster and our AC unit before we planted a three-tiered rain garden.

This rain garden helps prevent soil from washing into these same storm drains.

Planting this was a youth-group project.

In addition to helping to hold the soil, the rain garden has also made the area around our dumpster more attractive.

We have found working with other congregations is so important and rewarding! In 2010 we partnered with five other congregations along the N. Trenholm Rd. corridor to build the first green Habitat house in the Midlands. The first part of the house was constructed in our parking lot, and then it was moved to its permanent location for completion. The carpet in this green Habitat house is made of recycled materials, low VOC paint was used, and there are energy efficient appliances and lots of insulation to make the home more energy efficient.

When building green it is important not to waste materials, so leftovers were used to construct dog houses that were donated to an animal shelter.

Here the house is being prepared for its move to its permanent location. Committee members, who represented the six congregations, four Christian and two Jewish, found it to be a very spiritual experience to work across faith and denominational lines to build a green house for a deserving family and to encourage others to build green.

A few years before building this green Habitat house, we looked at how we could make our own church facility more energy efficient and applied for a free energy audit through the SC Energy Office. Since then we have implemented many of the suggestions from this audit.

A minor change was to install motion detector switches in the rest rooms to cut the lights on when someone enters the room. We have also changed bulbs for more energy- efficient lighting, made doors fit tighter, added insulation, and taken other steps what were suggested by the audit. Beginning this July, the SC Energy Office will again be offering energy audits through a new technical assistance program. I encourage you to contact them to talk about scheduling an audit for your church.

You may have questions about where an Environmental Stewardship Committee or a Green Team would fit in the organizational structure of your congregation. Our committee is a subcommittee of the Service and Benevolence Ministry since much of what we do helps the community. We have found it helpful to have members of our Environmental Stewardship Committee also serve on other ministries of the church that pertain to what we are interested in, such as properties, education, and fellowship.

Here are our phone numbers and e-mail addresses in case you want help in implementing an environmental stewardship program in your congregation.

[This is additional info. that made our presentation too long, so it was omitted.]

We have 8 (4 x 8) foot raised beds that are outlined with Trex composite boards. Since Trex is made of wood chips and recycled plastic, these frames will not rot. The children learn about organic gardening and Biblical principles as they participate in preparation of the soil, planting, weeding, and harvesting the produce, all of which is donated to Harvest Hope Food Bank, to provide fresh produce to supplement their canned goods. Our garden has a drip irrigation system to conserve water and a rain barrel that supplements the use of city water and uses beneficial plants to supplement insect control. We also compost leaves and vegetable and fruit scraps from meals served in Fellowship Hall. With the addition of a solar bird bath fountain it became our second Certified Habitat Garden.

The potato bin is a favorite project for the children. Each child decorated a section of a 2 x 4 board. Then an adult helper nailed them together to form a bin in which potatoes were planted in layers of rich soil inside the bin. To harvest the potatoes, one side of the bin is removed, and the potatoes just tumble out. The boards are reassembled for next year's planting.

In addition, we often invite speakers who discuss environmental issues in our Sunday school classes and Wed. night gatherings. The congregation is encouraged to use alternate means of transportation (carpooling is the easiest in this hilly location) and to bring donations to Harvest Hope and for recycling projects. Environmentally friendly refreshments are served. And we serve fair trade coffee all year long, not just on Earth Sunday.

To help our congregation develop its environmental awareness, one of the first things we did was to plant a Wildlife Habitat garden that you may have noticed when you entered from our parking lot. In a few minutes Margaret Harris will give information about how to start one and we recommend this as an initial project

Since gardening is such a good way to involve the congregation, especially children, in 2009 we planted our first crops in the Kids' Garden, an organic vegetable garden under the direction of Rev. Karen Webster who will tell you more about this type of gardening in a few minutes.

In 2006 we also originated and hosted a “Green Gathering”—the beginning of an interfaith coalition of environmental stewardship. We invited area churches and

synagogues and had 60 in attendance for a program of speakers, group interaction, and displays in our parlor. We thought that having 60 attend indicated how many people already had an interest in involving their congregations in environmental stewardship. Many local congregations have now established their own environmental stewardship programs