Initiating an Earth Care Team

Barbara Overton
Presbytery of Tropical Florida
Riviera Presbyterian Church
Hello! My name is Barbara

- Live in Miami, Florida
- Attorney for a Hospitality Company
- Supporter/Volunteer for Coral Restoration
- Advocate reduction of use of single use plastics
- Avid Plogger
Riviera Presbyterian Church

- Earth Care Congregation since 2011
- Environmental Education Activities
- Beach Clean Ups
- Engaged and informed environmentalists
- Member of Presbyterians for Earth Care
Presbytery of Tropical Florida

6 Counties
42 Churches
Over 200 miles long
South Florida: Ground Zero for Environmental Matters

- 3 National Parks and Miles of Coastline
- Red Tide
- Sunny Day Flooding
- Blue-Green Algae
- Degradation of Coral Reef
- Water Quality
- Sea Level Rise
- Loss of Wildlife Habitat
- Climate Change
REALLY?
JUST ONE?
TWO QUESTIONS

1. How to get more churches engaged in environmental stewardship

2. How to bring the secular and religious communities together to address environmental issues
Presbyterians for Earth Care Conference
Building A Toolkit for Climate Action

- PCUSA Website Resources and Blogs
- Presbyterians for Earth Care Resources
- Other Environmental Faith Action Groups
- Liturgy and worship resources
- General Assembly Resources
Starting the Conversation

- Get Alignment with Leadership
- Develop Relationships with Interested Parties
- Use different ways of communicating
- Overcome Objections
- Celebrate small victories
Communication Techniques

- In person conversations
- Networking
- Newsletters
- Social Media if you have it (we don’t)
- Google Survey
Google Survey

Which of these activities is your Church currently doing or considering?
Yes   Working on It   Thinking about It   No

- We are certified as an Earth Care Congregation
- We usually use Fair Trade Coffee at the Church
- We make Fair Trade Coffee available to members for purchase
- We always or mostly use reusable plates, cups and cutlery
- We have installed one or more energy saving item at our Church (like LED lights or efficient appliances)
We have installed solar panels at the Church
We include Earth Care in our worship
We include Earth Care in our education
We have native landscaping on our grounds
We advocate for Earth Care issues in our community
What did we learn?

Of the 5 Churches we have responses from

- 2 Churches are considering becoming Earth Care Congregations
- No one is working on installing solar panels
- But all have done energy saving work
- Most have Earth Care in Worship and Education
- Most use native landscaping
- Mixed results on use of Fair Trade Coffee and elimination of disposables
Survey Comments

- We need to be the noisy prophetic voice and help people understand the urgency of the situation we are in and provide ways people can participate in being the solution.

- Our goal is to incorporate practices such as reusable items for fellowship. We are in the process of upgrading our sanctuary windows to low e impact windows.

- Use the Presbytery Newsletter, the Presbytery meetings, and shared resources to educate people. Organize churches to be advocates for change and a voice on issues.

- Provide grants to incorporate some of the costly initiatives such as led lighting.

- Provide suggestions on what congregations could do; Frequent presentations from the Earth Care "team"
Overcoming Objections

Our church is too (broke, busy, small, elderly, etc.) to do Earth Care

There are more important issues for us to tackle
Celebrate Small Victories
Set Goals
Be Ambitious
Keep Working
We want to have a robust team by this time next year along with our 4 new Earth Care Congregations.

There are many short and longer term goals we are looking at - from expanding our team, to helping create more Earth Care Congregations, to reducing use of single use plastics at Presbytery meetings, to advocating for Earth Care Activities.

We need to be the voice of the Presbytery for Earth Care matters - especially as overtures start to be made for General Assembly.

If you have a friend in South Florida who would like to join our team, please email me! barbarariv@gmail.com
THANK YOU