

## A Guide to Starting a Church Earth Care Team

*Presbyterians for Earth Care*

### How to Start and Sustain an Earth Care Team at Your Church

Below are five goals to help you start an Earth Care Team and keep it going at your church. Think of these goals as a guide, not something that needs to be followed verbatim. Complete each goal before going on to the next. The items in parentheses are suggestions to help you come up with your own ideas.

**GOAL 1.** Form a Congregational Earth Care Team. *This is a pre-meeting step for a few people to decide on what the team's purpose should be and to recruit others.*

- a. Talk with people in the church who might be interested in developing a core group with you.  
*(Identify and contact people who are on committees that involve facilities/property, mission/outreach, worship/music, adult/youth/children's education.)*
- b. Discuss with the church's clergy and staff to get their support.
- c. Get your core group together (2-3 people is all you need) and brainstorm possible directions/ideas for the church's Earth Care Team.
- d. Draft a description of the team and a mission statement to take to a larger group.
- e. Set a convenient date, time and location for your first Earth Care Team meeting  
*(at church after worship, at a potluck dinner, ZOOM or conference call).*
- f. Reach out to others including clergy, session and property committee members to attend your first meeting.  
*(contact by phone or in-person; request an article in the church newsletter and/or bulletin; email an invitation to people you have identified as interested; record a short video to announce in virtual church during a minute for mission)*

**GOAL 2.** Meet as a Congregational Earth Care Team. *Most likely, you will not accomplish all these tasks in your first meeting but try not to skip the administrative tasks. Describing your purpose, developing a mission statement, setting a goal(s), and deciding on a name will help you communicate with others and recruit them to join your team.*

- a. Start with a welcome, opening or prayer, and introductions.  
*(ask why people came; ask which environmental issue they care about)*
- b. Describe the purpose of your church's Earth Care Team  
*(to integrate creation care into the church's Christian witness and ministry)*
- c. Develop a short mission statement  
*(to inspire church members of all ages to respond to the Bible's call to appreciate, respect and responsibly care for God's gift of creation; to equip church members with information and resources to preserve God's Creation; to promote responsible caring for God's Creation in all aspects of church life including worship, education, facilities, and outreach)*

- d. Set an annual goal or goals for your Earth Care Team  
*(focus on a congregation/community relevant issue - water pollution, food deserts; provide education for children and adults on issues related to earth care and environmental justice; advocate for public policies; write an overture that will help to restore and/or protect God's creation; ask the Session to sign the Earth Care Pledge; start the Earth Care Congregations certification process)*
- e. Think of a name for your team  
*(Stewardship of Creation Committee; "Church Name" Environmental Group; Eco-Justice Team)*
- f. Brainstorm possible projects and choose your first project.  
It should be one that can be quickly and inexpensively completed to build confidence and create momentum in your team.  
*(See Schedule Activities and Events below).*
- g. Discuss possible partnerships  
*(ecumenical groups; local non-profits; state Interfaith Power and Light chapter; Society of St. Andrew Gleaning Network; National Wildlife Federation)*
- h. Decide how you will communicate with one another between meetings  
*(email; phone; social media)*
- i. Establish communication with church members  
*(church newsletter; minute for mission; announcements at gatherings; and flyer/one-pager/handout)*
- j. Identify perceived needs  
*(note-taker; leadership training; budget)*
- k. Set a date, time and location to meet again and establish a regular schedule of meetings  
*(monthly; quarterly; 5 times/year)*
- l. Report back to your church staff/clergy

GOAL 3. Schedule Activities and Events. *When deciding on an activity or event, be sure to identify and delegate tasks so that one person isn't responsible for doing everything. Not only does this lessen the load but it involves members so there is more support for what you are doing.*

- a. Consider the interests and energy level of your team, the level of your church's acceptance of the issue, and the support you can expect from the clergy and staff
- b. Partner with a secular organization to lighten the load and bring in people outside the church  
*(Sierra Club; Audubon Society).*
- c. Connect with other churches and host an ecumenical event
- d. Consult the church calendar when deciding on events/activities for the year so you aren't competing with another event/activity. Space your events/activities so that you have time to plan and publicize them.
- e. Use these ideas to think about what would work for your church:
  - Teach a class or find a speaker to talk about the Biblical basis for earth care and how Presbyterians are called to care for God's Creation.

- Organize an Earth Care Sunday with a special worship service and/or education for children, youth and adults
- Invite speakers, hold panel discussions, lead a book study, show films, hold a training event or spiritual retreat
- Offer an Earth Care Fellowship with lunch, music and speakers
- Arrange regular or occasional outings to go camping, hiking, canoeing, fishing, kayaking, bird watching, wildflower walking, etc.
- Conduct a tour of environmentally sensitive areas or visit a recycling or composting facility
- Conduct an energy audit of your church buildings (check with your local Interfaith Power and Light chapter)
- Guide your church and its members to divest from fossil fuels
- Tackle environmental racism in your community or another social justice issue and identify a connection with caring for God's creation

GOAL 4. Evaluate your efforts. *Periodically reviewing your successes and challenges helps to identify your strengths and weaknesses and make plans to do better.*

- a. Once a year, reflect on how your Team has carried out its plan in the church
- b. Decide what worked and what didn't
- c. Discuss if things could have been done better or differently
  - Are you meeting often enough or too often?
  - Do you have enough members to accomplish what you are trying to do?
- d. If your team has not completed its goals, decide whether to continue or do something else
- e. Set some goals for the coming year
- f. Share your evaluation and new goals with your clergy/staff and ask for their feedback.

GOAL 5. Publicize your accomplishments. *Mostly everyone likes to occasionally be recognized for their good works but that can't happen if people don't know what you have done.*

- a. Report back to your clergy/staff
- b. Write up an accomplishment (with photo) and ask your church to publish in their newsletter
- c. Make a short video to announce during virtual worship or at a church event
- d. Ask to make a presentation to your session
- e. If newsworthy, share with your presbytery and local media
- f. Prepare an annual report to be shared with your congregation

## Resources

How to Start a Green Team at Your Church from the Episcopal Ecological Network

<http://revivingcreation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/How-to-Start-a-Green-Team-at-Your-Church1.pdf>

Green Team Tips from UCC [https://www.ucc.org/green\\_team\\_tips](https://www.ucc.org/green_team_tips)

How to Form a Green Team at Church from Georgia IPL

<https://reflections.yale.edu/article/crucified-creation-green-faith-rising/how-form-green-team-church>

Starting a Green Team from Ohio IPL <https://ohiopl.org/programs/going-green-starting-kit/>

Earth Care Congregations: A Guide to Greening Presbyterian Churches from PC(USA)

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/earth-care-congregations-guide-greening-presbyteri/>

Worship Services, Devotionals, Scriptures, Hymns, and Prayers about Earth Care from

Presbyterians for Earth Care <https://presbyearthcare.org/devotional-and-worship-aids/>