

Caring for God's Creation Living Our Faith Stopping Climate Change



Orientation & Guidance

The Commitment

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is called to create a more just world for all. Part of this is caring for God's creation. **Toward this end, we commit to working together to stop contributing to climate change pollution by 2030, and begin cleaning up the pollution of the past by 2035.** This is a big challenge, but it's really a personal and local challenge for each of us and our own churches. Healthy food, wise energy use, protecting nature, reducing waste, and stopping pollution all help create healthier families, care for the least among us and around the world, and leave a thriving world for future generations. Christians are called to not only support these efforts but to lead in our communities. **Everything we do makes a difference.**

The Church

While this guide is focused on the work of care for our neighbor and the planet, it is intended to accompany the robust historical work of the church in the world addressing the spiritual maladies of isolation, greed, poverty, oppression, overconsumption, violence, and fear.

The Guide

The Disciples Green Chalice Program, in partnership with Blessed Tomorrow, offer you this guide to help you live into your commitment and make a difference in your church, community, and the world. It's easier than you might think. The benefits of cleaner air and water, thriving nature, and saving money begin the moment you begin reducing pollution and waste.

Gratitude

The technologies of the Industrial Revolution, including the use of fossil fuels, have improved the lives of many. Generations benefited from this technological creativity. This kind of creativity is called for now as we see that a fossil fuel-burning planet is not sustainable. While we are grateful to the past, it is time to lead, with God's help, into a future that uses newer technology.

Overcoming Limitations

In making our commitment to eliminate carbon pollution and go climate positive in the coming years, we recognize that we will not be able to eliminate all our uses of fossil fuels, and that some of our congregations and parishioners are more dependent than others on fossil fuels or income from fossil fuels. This does not mean we cannot achieve our goals. Over the years, as we and the world shift toward a positive energy future, we will need to offset what we cannot conserve or switch to renewable, and support our sisters and brothers as they do the same.

We will also seek just consideration for those whose lives and income are dependent on oil field and coal mining income and careers, and support job retraining programs and the rebuilding of communities to make the transition from fossil fuels as seamless as possible. We will address these challenges in the process of fulfilling our commitment.

What You Need to Know

1 Creation Care & Stewardship

Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, refers to the entire cosmos as God's sacred creation and calls followers of Christ to love our neighbors and to care for creation (Gen. 1:28, Gen. 2:15, Jn. 1:3, Mk. 12:30-31). We strive for thriving, prosperous lives while at the same time ensuring that we do not despoil God's creation – that we leave it in as good, or better, shape as we entered it.

2 Climate Change

Climate change is the change in temperature and chemistry of our planet in unprecedented ways caused primarily by the vast amounts of fossil fuels we are burning. This puts toxic chemicals into the atmosphere and oceans, threatening God's creation.

3 Climate Justice

We recognize that climate change is an ethical, economic and social issue rather than just an environmental issue. Those in our communities and around the world who can least afford to absorb the impacts – the disadvantaged, poor, our children and future generations - bear the heaviest burden of the problem caused by our fossil fuel use. The church is called to address selfishness, greed, and fear that is at the root of spiritual illness.

4 Climate Change Solutions

We have solutions to climate change – primarily stop the burning of toxic chemicals like petroleum and gas for our energy, transportation and heat. The challenge is that we've built our society around fossil fuels, and we need to shift to wise energy use and new energy sources.

5 Carbon Neutral by 2030

As individuals, congregations, and ministries we will reduce our carbon output with our goal to become carbon neutral by 2030 – in 13 years. This means no net climate pollution from our buildings, transportation, and events. We will do this by conservation, substituting renewable energy for fossil fuels, and by restoring nature – like planting trees – which helps take carbon out of the atmosphere.

6 Carbon Positive by 2035

Even as we achieve climate neutrality, we'll still be using some fossil fuels, but far less. We'll compensate for this by generating more clean energy that we use, and restoring nature in ways that take even more carbon pollution out of the atmosphere. By going beyond our own usage, we will end up being a positive influence on the planet, and help heal nature.

7 Green Chalice Program

Green Chalice encourages and assists congregations to live their faith by caring for creation. This program supports and recognizes congregations for being good stewards of God's creation and provides resources to walk gently on the earth.

8 Blessed Tomorrow Program

Blessed Tomorrow is by people of faith, for people of faith, offering ideas, tools, and language that are familiar, compelling, and effective in addressing climate change. It provides resources that put us on a path to a positive future while maintaining the distinct voice of our faith traditions.

What You Need to Do (and how to get started!)

Getting Started

A person, team, or the whole congregation can volunteer to make and implement a simple plan that moves your church toward a new energy future that stops pollution and saves money. You can find some important resources on the back of this guide.

Conserve Energy

61% of energy in the U.S. goes to waste. The easiest and most important thing you can do is save energy and save money by using less. These steps will save you money.

- **Lights:** Replace all incandescent bulbs with LED lights and cut lighting costs by 90%
- **Insulate:** Windows, doors, water heaters, (walls and ceilings). Save half your HVAC costs.
- **Transportation:** Buy and encourage use of electric or hybrid cars. Carpool and support active transportation (biking and walking) with bike racks.
- **Recycle:** It saves energy and conserves other resources like trees and water.

Clean Energy

Energy from solar and wind are becoming mainstream across America. Costs are coming way down and options are becoming easier. Once you've saved energy and gone energy efficient, meet all your remaining needs with clean, renewable energy.

- **Make:** You can meet all your congregation's energy needs with solar power and battery storage. Costs vary, but in the end, you'll save money and create a sanctuary that cannot be disrupted by the grid. Go solar! Geothermal and wind may also be options.
- **Buy:** In many places you can buy clean energy for just a bit more than dirty energy. Check with your local utility or green group. Even if you rent or otherwise can't implement solar, there are community shared solar options that especially benefit low income communities.
- **Offset:** If you can't buy clean power from your local grid, substitute. Buy renewable energy credits to cover your energy usage.

Beyond Energy

- **Nature:** Plant trees, create natural areas at your congregation and in your community.
- **Events:** Recycle and compost. Eliminate all waste. Go net zero.
- **Food:** Grow food on your property, eat locally, eat less meat products.

Going Climate Positive

Burning toxic fossil fuels is the biggest problem we face, but solutions go beyond energy use. There are many other things you can do to create a healthy community.

Engage Your Congregation and Community

1 Engage your Congregation

Create a Green Team. Incorporate creation care into your worship through prayers, liturgy, sermons, hymns. Highlight benefits of your Green Team activities (eg utility bill savings) in your newsletter. Put creation care on your church home page.

2 Engage your Community

Host a community presentation to inspire others. Participate in a community shared solar program. Create a community garden/host a community dinner. Collaborate with other ecumenical partners and faith traditions to share information and best practices.

3 Engage Society

Let your elected officials know you want policies that expand your clean energy choices. Write letters, op eds, engage in social media.

Other Resources

Green Chalice Ministry, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	www.greenchalice.org
Blessed Tomorrow	www.blessedtomorrow.org
Interfaith Power & Light	www.interfaithpowerandlight.org
US EPA Energy Star Congregation Guide	www.energystar.gov
Green for All	www.greenforall.org
Energy Offsets	https://carbonfund.org
Community Carbon Trees	www.communitycarbontrees.org
Green Your Grounds	www.nwf.org/garden-for-wildlife.aspx
Disciples Home Missions Green Events	http://bit.ly/2liCeBc

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