

THE GREEN CHURCH INITIATIVE

OF

THE WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

of The United Methodist Church

The Green Church Initiative

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it...” (Psalm 24:1)

The scriptures are full of references to God’s creation and to humanity’s relationship with it. The Green Church Initiative (GCI) is a covenant congregation program that empowers a local church to live out its faith, given the Biblical mandate to care for and be good stewards of all that God has so lovingly created.

Introductory Information

The categories chosen for this GCI are representative of the total life and ministry of a congregation. We want a Green Church to understand that everything it does in ministry is connected to God’s creation; in other words, caring for creation is so fundamental to who we are as Christians that it must necessarily be infused into every aspect of the life of a congregation; hence the categories of Worship, Discipleship, Stewardship, Evangelism, and Mission.

Prerequisites

1. Register your congregation with the Creation Care Ministry Team of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference (WNCAC) to declare your intent. We ask you to register so the conference will have a record of your participation. We will continue to provide updates to the GCI and additional resources as they become available. Also, we feel that your registration fee will help you to commit your congregation to begin to take action. The registration fee is \$50.00 which is used to administer the Green Church Initiative program in the WNCAC. A registration form is attached to this document.
2. Form a Creation Care Ministry Team. *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*, paragraph 254, provides for the formation of an “Earth Advocacy Committee” in a local church, and creation care ministries have already been legitimized as valid ministries in many local congregations. The formation of such a ministry team is crucial in order to incorporate creation care completely into the overall ministry of a local congregation.
3. Formally adopt the GCI Covenant (attached) by the congregation’s governing body, i.e., Church Council, Administrative Board, etc. and signed by the Council Chair and Pastor. (Form a committee and sign the covenant to document your intent within six months from the point of registration)
4. Provide an annual report of your progress.

Certification Levels (Points required in each discipline)

Category	Green	Gold	Platinum
Worship	100	150	200
Discipleship	50	75	100
Stewardship	50	75	100
Mission	50	75	100
Evangelism	50	75	100
Totals	300	450	600

PLEASE NOTE: You *must* accumulate the minimum number of points in *each* category in order to qualify for certification. If you have already done some of the suggestions, you can receive points for what you have already done (Pre-registration Points). *If you have ideas that are not included in the GCI, you can petition the Conference Creation Care Ministry Team to have your ideas included as well so you can earn points for your own creativity.*

In some instances, the same item is listed in multiple categories because it is pertinent to different aspects of the life of the congregation; for example, a church garden can be a mission project in that it helps to feed the hungry, and it can also be an evangelism tool in that its very presence can attract people to that church. Hence it belongs in more than one category. *However, you can **only** get points one time for such an item, so you can choose the category in which you want to take the points.*

The “Congregational Covenant” form (page 12) asks for the signatures of several leaders of your congregation. The reason why we feel this is important is because we think a creation care ministry will be far more effective with “buy in” from a very diverse group, representative of the total life and ministry of your church. It will show that there is an attitude of caring for God’s creation throughout your church, rather than this just being a list of things to do to earn points.

Covenant Commitments

Actions	Total Possible Points	Pre-registration Points	Points for Intended Actions
---------	-----------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------------

Worship

A-1 At least once each year, devote an entire worship service to the celebration and honoring of God’s creation. This “Earth Sabbath” or “St. Francis Sunday” or “Festival of God’s Creation” includes a special focus on God’s creation with sermons, prayers, music, children and other activities.	Required		
Comments:			
A-2. In addition to the annual Earth Sabbath service, incorporate creation care activities into worship on an ongoing basis (<u>do at least three times per year</u> , before earning credit, for any letter below).			
a. Pray for God’s creation; include prayers that are inclusive of stewardship and praise of God’s creation by both clergy and laity.	10		10
b. Select hymns that have creation care and creation praise themes for regular inclusion in the music of the church.	10		10
c. Perform a creation-centered anthem or solo.	10		
d. Choose scripture readings with theme of God’s creation.	10		10
e. Include creation care themes in children’s messages or similar child-focused activities.	10		
f. Include creation care and stewardship themes in sermons throughout the church year by clergy or laity.	10		10
g. Show a video segment that includes creation care.	10		
h. Incorporate liturgical dance and/or drama that celebrates creation using church members and/or local artists.	10		10
i. Include a prayer of confession for your congregation’s exploitation, pollution, and/or neglect of God’s creation.	10		10
j. Include creation care in a mission moment.	10		
k. Use communion elements that are locally made with organic materials, including the chalice, bread and wine.	10		10
l. Use live flowers and plants on the altar, with native/local plants as a priority – including native alternatives to Easter lilies and Christmas poinsettias as well as the weekly altar flowers.	10		10
m. Include petition prayers for God’s creation.	10		
A-3. Conduct a “blessing of the animals” service with the congregation and animals from your community.	10		
A-4. Designate a Rogation Day for the church with a special service blessing the harvest.	10		
A-5. Hold at least one outdoor worship service.	10		10

A-6. Use sustainably grown palm fronds and compost them after use, or incinerate them and use the ashes on the next Ash Wednesday.	10		10
A-7. Conduct a blessing of recycling bins and compost containers to incorporate recycling as a part of worship.	10		10
A-8. Use at least 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper for church bulletins, using Certified Processed Chlorine Free and FSC-certified paper products; display recycling, chlorine free and FSC logos.	10		10
A-9. Create or purchase and display a creation care-themed banner for the sanctuary and other venues where worship services are conducted.	10		10
A-10. Use collection plates or bowls made locally and using earthen or fibrous materials made by congregation members.	10		
A-11. Incorporate a "Season of Creation" into your church's liturgical year. For a four-week period during Ordinary Time, treat God's creation as a liturgical season like Advent, Christmas, Lent, etc. Celebrate Earth, Water, Air and Fire as gifts of God.	10		
A-12. On United Methodist Women's Sunday, use the national UMW priority of Climate Justice, lifting up the hardships that climate change brings to some people in developing nations.	10		10
A-13. As a celebration of a baptism or a memorial after a death, plant a tree in honor or memory of a church member.	10		10
A-14. Include in your Thanksgiving service a litany of thanks for the harvest and the land that produced it (church members might bring food from their gardens or locally grown food to share with each other and the hungry.)	10		10
A-15. Schedule an outside speaker to preach on earth care topics.	10	10	

Discipleship

B-1. Hold a training event on how to garden organically and sustainably.	10		10
B-2. Form a new Sunday school class or small group dedicated to the study of the intersection of faith and creation care.	10		
B-3. Organize a creation-centered Vacation Bible School.	10		10
B-4. Conduct a weekend retreat for children, youth, and/or adults with a creation theme in order to raise awareness of God's creation.	10		10
B-5. Have a special study session (4-6 weeks) on a creation care issue.	10		
B-6. Show a video that lifts up environmental issues.	10		10
B-7. Sponsor a creation care fair in which you invite outside organizations to do displays or booths that will help raise your awareness.	10	10	
B-8. Invite an outside speaker with expertise in faith/creation to do a presentation for a group or groups within the church; optionally, involve neighboring congregations.	10		10
B-9. Visit another church in your area that has an active creation care ministry to learn from them some things they are doing (or to share what you are doing at your church).	10	10	
B-10. Create a display or bulletin board lifting up creation care issues, and describe what your congregation is doing to raise awareness of creation care.	10	10	
B-11. Include a creation care tip in each weekly bulletin and/ or each monthly newsletter (either printed or electronic).	10	10	
B-12. Train your religious educators in the importance of including creation care in all classes and/or small groups. (Inclusivity is the intent here.)	10		
B-13. Take a field trip to a creation-related facility <i>and</i> facilitate a faith-based discussion.	10		10
B-14. Create and publicize a creation care section of books, videos, or DVDs in your church library.	10		

Stewardship

Establish a zero-waste goal by [Year]

C-1. Develop a system to recycle paper, plastic, cans, and glass.	Required		
C-2. Recycle electronic waste, including compact fluorescent light bulbs, computers, cell phones, etc.	10		
C-3. Publicize local opportunities to dispose of toxic chemical waste properly. Coordinate with your local waste management authority or local government.	10		10
C-4. Compost food scraps and other compostable items in a bin.	10		10
C-5. Conduct a trash audit. Learn what you could be recycling and how to reduce what you send to the landfill. Recruit a volunteer committee to monitor the waste for a set period of time and identify the recurrent materials that are going to the trash bin.	10		
C-6. Use reusable/washable plates, cups, glasses, and utensils for all church dinners, fellowship times, coffee ministry, etc. Or, use compostable dinnerware; no Styrofoam or plastic.	10		10
C-7. Use cloth or recycled paper napkins at all church meals.	10		10
C-8. Use cloth tablecloths, rather than plastic, for all church functions.	10		10
C-9. Organize an annual green sale or “junk” swap.	10		
C-10. Save “disposable” table/event decorations and reuse or share with other churches/organizations.	10		10

Stewardship – Paper

D-1. For church publications, use paper labeled “Certified Processed Chlorine Free” and minimum 30% post-consumer waste recycled fiber content. Display the recycling, and chlorine-free logos on the publication. (100% post-consumer waste is goal.)	10		10
D-2. Purchase bathroom tissue, facial tissue, paper towels, and paper napkins made from minimum 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper that is also Certified Processed Chlorine Free. Bamboo alternatives are now available, as well.	10		10
D-3. Purchase paper cups/plates/bowls/napkins that are compostable.	10		10
D-4. Reduce the amount of office paper your church consumes by at least 10% per year . Do an audit of paper use on a weekly basis and explore ways to reduce usage. Engage youth and other groups in the church in making this happen.	10		
D-5. Produce electronic newsletters instead of, or in addition to, paper copies.	10	10	
D-6. Minimize the use of the Sunday morning bulletins; show the order of worship electronically.	10	10	
D-7. Set office printers and copiers to default to duplex printing.	10		
D-8. Print on the back of one-sided “waste” paper.	10		10
D-9. Make scratch pads from paper printed only on one side.	10		10
D-10. Provide training for staff and laity on how to conserve paper.	10		
D-11. Stop junk mail. Identify junk mail that is regularly received, and ask to be taken off the list.	10		10

Stewardship - Energy

E-1. Carry out an electric energy audit for your facility. Reduce electric energy usage by at least 10%.	20		10
E-2. Buy “green power” for your church, where available. Most electric utilities now offer consumers the opportunity to purchase “green power” certificates. Contact your utility to learn the details.	10		10
E-3. Generate your own renewable energy to account for at least 3% of your electricity usage. If renovating or conducting new construction, consider the installation of photovoltaic solar panels. Check with your utility about possible incentives.	10		
E-4. If you plan to expand, remodel, or build a new church facility, become LEED-certified. Contact the local Green Building Council or seek architects, builders or engineers who are LEED-certified for more information.	10		
E-5. Implement “walk, bike, bus or car-pool to church” Sundays at least four times per year. Get youth involved in organizing this activity.	10		10
E-6. Document that at least 10% of your members have reduced their home energy consumption by at least 10% over the previous year.	10		
E-7. Install motion-sensing switches for indoor lighting and provide training for your sexton and/or others who are responsible for turning heat, A/C, and lights on and off on how they can contribute to saving energy.	10		10
E-8. Install a bicycle rack.	10		10
E-9. Replace at least 80% of incandescent lighting with LEDs with the goal of replacing all incandescent lighting. Install LED exit signs.	10		10
E-10. Register your congregation with Energy Star’s Portfolio Manager to benchmark your energy data and track your progress. http://www.energystar.gov/buildings/owners and managers/congregations	10		
E-11. Install solar water heater(s) for church buildings.	10		

Stewardship - Water

F-1. Reduce the area of turf at your church by at least 20% by replanting it with native plants, gardens, etc. to attract wildlife and reduce storm water runoff.	10		10
F-2. Replace your roof with a “green” roof. (Consider a green roof for new construction or major renovation.)	20		
F-3. Reduce your annual water consumption by at least 10%.	10		
F-4. Serve no bottled water at any church function.	10		10
F-5. Plant a rain garden(s) to reduce storm water runoff, retain water for groundwater recharge, and natural filtering of surface pollutants.	10		10

Stewardship – Toxic and Hazardous Materials

G-1. Purchase and use only non-toxic, environmentally friendly cleaning products. Engage your church sexton, janitors or others involved with selection and use of cleaning materials.	10		10
G-2. Use no chemical herbicides, pesticides or chemical fertilizers in your landscaping.	10		10
G-3. Use only “green” (non-toxic) sanitizing products, especially in the children’s department, to clean carpet, paint, adhesives, toys, playground equipment, etc.	10		10

Stewardship - Food

H-1. Use locally-produced food for church meals whenever possible and feature the growers.	10		10
H-2. Provide vegetarian and/or vegan options at church meals. Have all-vegetarian pot luck dinners and other meal events. Publicize widely and give awards for the best vegetarian meals.	10		10
H-3. Host a farmers’ market. Consider conducting in cooperation with neighboring congregations or non-profit organizations.	10		10
H-4. Grow your own organic vegetables in a church garden. Create a garden space for your church and organize a volunteer committee to oversee the planting, care and harvesting of the garden. Decide who will receive the food that is produced.	10	10 (Dup)	
H-5. Act as a drop-off site for a local, organic, minority-owned CSA (Community/Church-Supported Agriculture).	10		10
H-6. Reduce food waste from church events by taking leftover food to a local facility feeding the homeless.	10		10

Stewardship - Other

I-1. Successfully encourage your stewardship committee to begin to include stewardship of God’s creation, as well as stewardship of financial and other resources, as part of its programs. Make the connection between financial and environmental stewardship.	10		10
I-2. Include on your creation care ministry team the person responsible for purchasing supplies at your church, or train all staff and those using the building in eco-friendly practices.	10		10
I-3. Purchase recycled printer and recycled copier toner cartridges, or refill your cartridges, if appropriate.	10		10
I-4. Establish a church policy to purchase supplies having reduced packaging.	10		
I-5. Do a light pollution audit of the external part of the church building and other property. Reduce or eliminate night sky light pollution sources. More information on night sky pollution may be obtained from The International Dark Sky Association.	10		

Evangelism

J-1. Give each guest a “green” gift (examples: LED bulb, reusable shopping bag or water bottle, etc.) publicizing Creation Care.	10		10
J-2. Use rain barrels to collect and distribute rain water.	10	10	
J-3. Install waterless urinals and/or dual flush toilets.	10		
J-4. Plant an organic vegetable garden and/or edible landscaping on church property. (See H-4 above.)	10	10(Dup)	
J-5. Install solar panels or a wind turbine which provide alternative power to your church and which are clearly visible from nearby highways.	20		
J-6. Host and publicize a weekly farmer’s market in your parking lot.	10		10
J-7. Invite secular non-profit environmental community groups to meet in your church and send a representative, if appropriate.	10		
J-8. Offer classes and other study opportunities that provide people in the community a way to connect faith and the environment.	10		10
J-9. Become a recycling drop-off point for e-waste (techno-trash).	10		
J-10. Invite a secular environmental expert to do a presentation to which the community is also invited.	10		10
J-11. Document that at least one family or individual has joined your church because you have demonstrated a concern for God’s creation.	10		10
J-12. Publicize your efforts to care for God’s creation on Facebook, your congregation’s Web site, the Western North Carolina Conference UMC or other denominational website, your local newspaper or other media.	10		10
J-13. Qualify to become a Certified Wildlife Area.	10		
J-14. Commit your church as a drop-off site for a local, organic, minority-owned community-supported agriculture (CSA) cooperative, and publicize its availability in the community.	10		
J-15. Host a blog on your church website to discuss matters of faith and creation.	10		10

Mission

K-1. Give energy-saving devices to the poor (insulation, programmable thermostats, LEDs, etc.), and <i>install</i> them. Weatherize homes of low-income people.	10		
K-2. Plant an organic church garden, with the produce going to a local food bank or those in need.	10	10(Dup)	
K-3. Organize a local Community Supported Agriculture program to provide good, local, organic food for those in need.	10		10
K-4. If your church houses a free medical clinic or facilities for the homeless, give away local or organic food to patients/guests, along with education about healthy food choices.	10		
K-5. Calculate the carbon footprint of your Volunteer in Mission trips for the year and offset them.	10		
K-6. Train your mission volunteers on environmental issues specific to the places to which they will be going.	10		
K-7. Provide at least two direct service opportunities per year for your congregation to be in service to God's creation.	10	10	
K-8. Advocate for local, state and national policies that will reflect better care for the planet.	10	10	10
K-9. Use fair-traded and shade-grown organic coffee, tea and chocolate, e.g., UMCOR's Coffee Project/Equal Exchange.	10		
K-10. Sell fair-traded coffee, chocolate, cocoa, tea, etc.	10		
K-11. Successfully encourage The United Methodist Women at your church to study Climate Justice, the 2016/2017 Mission U study.	10	10	
K-12. Provide annual financial support to a faith-based creation care organization, like UMCOR's.	10		10
K-13. Enter into a covenant relationship with a United Methodist missionary assigned to creation care work.	10		
K-14. Partner with other area organizations to work together to care for creation.	10		10
K-15. Participate with the Society of St. Andrew in a gleaning project.	10		
K-16. Participate in an international General Board of Global Ministries project that includes caring for God's creation.	10		10
K-17. Provide scholarships for elementary age children to attend a summer camp. Encourage local congregation to send kids to summer camp.	10		
K-18. Partner with a local Native American tribe to do a project that benefits God's creation.	10		
K-19. Volunteer a group in your church to monitor a local stream.	10		10
K-20. Organize and lead a creation-focused mission trip, such as planting trees, building artificial oyster-shell reefs, cleaning out invasive species, etc.	10		10
K-21. Contact marginalized communities who are suffering the effects of climate change, environmental degradation and/or racism, pollution from waste and corporate facilities, and engage on ways to correct/mitigate.	20		10

The Green Church Initiative

Congregational Covenant

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for God has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.” Psalm 24: 1-2

The scriptures overwhelmingly affirm the responsibility of every Christian to care for God’s creation. We are called to participate not only in the redemption of individuals and all of humanity, but in the healing of creation itself; therefore, ministries that encourage care for God’s creation are significant to the mission of this congregation. God is at work bringing justice to the entirety of God’s creation and God calls us to participate in God’s mission.

In order to respond to God’s call and to live out our faith as responsible stewards of God’s creation, we hereby covenant to adopt The Green Church Initiative and will in good faith complete the requirements of the GCI as soon as possible.

The Creation Care Ministry Team of our congregation will review the covenant annually to assess the previous year’s work and to consider other ways in which we can participate in God’s redemption of creation.

Name of Church

Address, City, State, Zip

Pastor Signature

Creation Care Ministry Team Chair Signature

Trustees Chair Signature

Mission Committee Chair Signature

Church Council or Administrative Board Chair Signature

Please **keep a copy and return the completed original of this form to:**

Kim Richmond
4429 Timberfield Dr.
Pfafftown, NC 27040

Please **send your check for \$50.00 made out to “WNCCUMC” with “creation care” in the memo line to:**

WNCCUMC
P.O. Box 2757
Huntersville, NC 28070
ATTN: Carol Bateman

Explanation and Instructions for Use of the GCI

The GCI is a planning tool.

It is designed to be completed prior to initial registration, and submitted along with the signed “Green Church Initiative Covenantal Commitment” form when you register.

The *Covenant Commitments/Actions* section provides numerous actions from which a church may choose to engage in each of the five categories of Worship, Discipleship, Stewardship, Evangelism, and Mission. The **Total Possible Points** column (green), indicates two “Required” actions that must be in place, or put into place, at the start of the program and maintained throughout: an annual worship service dedicated to creation care and a church-wide recycling program. All other actions are optional, and the points that can be earned for having them already in place, or by implementing them, is in this green column.

Use the orange column, **Pre-registration Points**, to calculate how many *Covenant Commitments/Actions* your church already has in place. Enter the number of points your church has already earned in this column. This will give you an idea of where your church stands at inception of the GCI, as well as in following years as your church earns more points. Any actions for which your church claims points must have been performed in the six months prior to your registration in general: for any actions taken prior to this six-month window for which your church wishes to claim credit, provide the approximate date. This would include certain one-time actions that are still in place, such as installing solar or wind power, installing waterless urinals or dual-flush toilets, planting a rain garden, installing a green roof, etc.

Use the yellow column, **Points for Intended Actions**, to indicate which actions your church agrees it would like to implement in the next six months to one year.

Reporting Your Church’s Progress

When you complete enough of the Intended Actions to earn certification at either the Green (300 points), Gold (450 points), or Platinum (600 points) level, simply circle the points in the yellow column for any **achieved/completed** actions, then scan the *Covenant Commitments/Actions* section and submit it electronically to CreationCareWNCC@gmail.com to document your church’s achievements. The achievement and completion of these actions is accepted on the honor basis and does not require proof of completion.

Recognition at WNC Annual Conference

If your church wishes to be recognized at Annual Conference, please submit the form documenting your church’s achievements at least four weeks prior to the start of Annual Conference.

Subsequent Years Following Initial Registration for Participation in the GCI

It is intended that the church’s planning process associated with the GCI will be repeated each year on or near the anniversary of the date of initial registration. After achievement of the Platinum Certification Level, it is hoped your church will continue to engage in at least one action in each of the five categories or some alternative plan for continued “green” action each year thereafter to show an ongoing expansion in its efforts to care for God’s “very good” creation!

Your Conference Creation Care Ministry Team looks forward to working closely with you and your church throughout this process. Contact us at any time at CreationCareWNCC@gmail.com.