

**Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ
218th Annual Meeting 2017
2017 GREEN CONGREGATION AWARDS**

LEVEL ONE AWARD

**United Church of Christ, Congregational, Burlington
Burlington, MA**

<http://www.UCCBurlington.org>

UCC Burlington started a Green Team consisting of seven core members, and since forming has held Earth Day Sunday services in 2015 & 2016, including intergenerational participation. They illustrated how much of our regular diet directly relies upon insect pollination according to research by Cornell University and other known agricultural research groups. They bought blue recycle bins to encourage recycling of used programs, bulletins and bottles. They researched “green tips” from over 200 sources and publish them in their newsletter and bulletins. They have had screenings of a documentary about plastic (*Bag It: Is Your Life Too Plastic?*), and pollination (*Wings of Life*), and have encouraged gardening groups to use the building to meet and invite the public. They hosted Rev. Jim Antal who gave a sermon and met with congregants about eco stewardship. They had an energy audit, use power strips, installed LED fixtures, and reset their water heater temperature. The Trustees already do annual checking of all lights and filter replacement in the building, and have happily added cleaning the refrigerator coils to that checklist so it will be completed not only this year, but regularly going forward. They are looking forward to having solar panels sometime in the future.

**Edwards Church
Framingham, MA**

<http://www.edwardschurch.org>

Edwards Church is already a Green Congregation in many ways. They host meetings and events of Transition Framingham for free in their buildings. Transition Town is working to make Framingham more sustainable and resilient through grass-roots organizing. Their “Open Spirit” building also hosts an organization called the One Earth Collaborative, which is “dedicated to transforming our consciousness and our culture by acknowledging and strengthening our spiritual connection to the Universe and all it contains and allowing that connection to move us to action and to meaningful changes in our lives and in our communities.” On the more day-to-day level, they have accomplished the energy-saving goals listed for Level One, and are in the process of forming a Green Team to keep them motivated and on track. They serve Fair Trade products and promote them at their Alternative Gift Fair at Christmas time. They have already taken on many of the tasks at Levels Two and Three, having installed solar panels and a community compost, and are in the process of helping to create both a permaculture “food forest” and a community garden on their grounds. They continue to work with their community to be a beacon of hope and leadership for creation care.

**Federated Church of Orleans
Orleans, MA**

<http://www.fedchurchorleans.org>

The Federated Church of Orleans's work on becoming a Green Congregation was organized under three themes. The first is raising the congregation's environmental awareness by a monthly creation theme reading in regular Sunday peace-candle lighting, and implementing care-for-creation focus in a 5-week Lenten series, working with the pastor to regularly include this theme in Sunday liturgy. The second theme is making church practices more environment-friendly: by arranging a comprehensive energy audit by Cape Light Compact and installing solar and LED fixtures/lights resulting in a \$5,000 annual energy saving. They planned a Sunday lunch/forum to introduce members to home solar options, and launched a robust recycling system. The third theme is cooperating with environmental organizations: joining the new Cape Cod Climate Change Collaborative, and agreeing to seek other faith communities for membership. They also facilitated members' participation in the April 29 People's Climate events in Washington DC, Boston and Provincetown. Their Care for Creation team now looks forward to helping lead their church toward Level Two of the Green Congregation Challenge.

**First Congregational Church of West Tisbury
West Tisbury, MA**

<http://www.wtcongregationalchurch.org>

First Congregational Church of West Tisbury's green team has grown to nine members, who are energizing recycling and earth care education efforts with weekly "green tips" in their church bulletin. The pastor is leading a six-week worship series from Earth Day to Pentecost with sermons, music and meditations focused on creation. In response to the Mission 4/1 Earth campaign, they invited an environmental speaker to preach to the congregation on climate change and creation care. They also had speakers from the Martha's Vineyard Conservation Society, the Polly Hill Arboretum, the Nature Conservancy, the MV Shellfish Group and Mass Audubon. The Island-Grown Schools gave coffee fellowship talks to the congregation about climate change, recycling, water quality and the importance of locally-grown food. The Earth Care book group gathered for many weeks to discuss books such as Jim Hansen's *Storms of My Grandchildren*, Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, and Bill McKibben's *Eaarth* as well as the Pope's encyclical, *Laudato Si*. Congregation members participated in the Island-wide Earth Day beach cleanup and attended climate marches in Washington DC and on the Island. The physical plant is also greener: the church replaced its oil furnace with a high-efficiency heat pump system and installed LED lighting in the parish hall and church offices.

LEVEL THREE AWARD

South Congregational Church, UCC Amherst, MA

<http://www.staff.amherstsouthchurch.org/>

The Wisdom to Survive: Climate Change, Capitalism & Community, made a strong impression on the Green Team members when they gathered to watch it. This informative and inspiring documentary became the underpinning of a broadening perspective of reaching beyond the greening of their physical church into the territory of spreading the word, taking climate concerns into the community, and more fully recognizing the spiritual, ethical and social dimensions of climate change. One member continues to spend hundreds of hours consulting with others' houses of worship, retirement communities and private homes on energy saving possibilities. Further collaboration has come with actions inspired by their local Interfaith Climate Group sponsoring events such as those surrounding the Paris Climate Accord and Pope John's Encyclical and visit to the US. Joining with Mothers Out Front and Climate Action Now, some members have engaged in writing politicians and the EPA, as well as marching and appearing at public sessions against pipelines and gas leaks. Inspired by their minister and a member activist, they support Nuestras Raices by transporting produce from local CISA area farmers to their food co-op in Holyoke, providing healthy food to low-income people. South Church has done much to their building including installing solar panels, replacing old windows and doors, and buying more efficient appliances, while continuing to reach beyond their walls to lessen their own carbon footprint and listen to God's call to embrace the need for sacred activism.