



The Massachusetts Conference of
the United Church of Christ

Green Congregation Challenge

Why?

The Green Congregation Challenge is a fantastic way for your church to **set attainable goals, experience success, and build momentum** around environmental protection and climate justice.

It also provides excellent exposure. After completing each level, you will be featured at Annual Meeting and recognized on the Conference website in perpetuity. Previous honorees have chosen to reach out to local media outlets that've been happy to broadcast their witness of environmental stewardship.

How?

Simply complete any **twelve tasks** from each column to receive that level of recognition. Levels must be completed in order.

There is **flexibility**. Some congregations may choose to heavily invest in ten projects instead of lightly touching on twelve. You may have ideas that aren't listed. Patti Babcock (babcockp@macucc.org) is happy to discuss which alterations make the most sense for your congregation while retaining the aspirational quality and rigor of the Challenge.

Awards

Besides pride in your accomplishments and the joy of having helped heal the Earth, you will receive:

Level One - Certificate & Stole

Level Two - Certificate & Parament

Level Three - Certificate & Tree*

*We will either 1. reimburse you for the purchase of a tree up to \$100 or 2. have a tree planted in your name through the Worcester Tree Initiative or a program of your choice.

Please let us know if you are working on the Challenge!

Don't hesitate to ask questions. Recommendations are always welcome.

Contact Patti Babcock (babcockp@macucc.org)

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Level One

1. Hold an annual Earth Day Sunday complete with climate justice sermon, appropriate liturgy, and hymns. ([Green Faith](#), [MACUCC](#), [KIITG](#))
2. Form a “Green Team” to coordinate and motivate your efforts. ([How to start a Green Team](#))
3. Recycle as much as possible. If your municipality doesn’t recycle many materials, have a congregant bring them to their home for recycling.
4. Help members reduce unwanted junk mail. ([FTC](#))
5. Broadcast resources, tips, and upcoming events through a “Green Justice” column in your church newsletter or on the website.
6. Shift to Fair Trade, local, and sustainably sourced products for coffee hour and events. ([UCC & EE](#))
7. Screen environmental films and documentaries. Be sure to invite the broader community! ([TDF](#), [RI-IPL](#))
8. Invite local experts to give presentations or hold panel discussions on environmental topics.
9. Conduct a Lenten, Bible, book, or small group study on climate change or other environmental topics. ([NW Earth Institute](#), [Bible & Ecology](#), [Grounded](#))
10. Organize and/or participate in an event sponsored by 350.org or Transition Towns. ([350MA](#), [Transition US](#))
11. Schedule an energy audit of church buildings. Once you’ve figured out your carbon footprint and identified inefficiencies, make a plan to gradually improve it. ([Mass.Gov](#), [National Grid](#), [Mass Save](#), [MIPL](#))
12. Put office machines on power strips and unplug rarely used appliances. Turn off power strips, computers, sound systems, and projectors when not in use.
13. Turn down the water heater’s thermostat to 120 degrees. If you have a washing machine, turn off the hot water supply so it can only wash with cold water.
14. Install low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators to use less hot water. ([Energy Federation](#))
15. Replace incandescent bulbs and halogen lamps with LED bulbs. ([Energy Federation](#), [Mass Save](#))
16. Install energy efficient fluorescent lights/ballasts.
17. Light your holiday decorations with LED lights rather than incandescent bulbs.
18. Clean or replace air filters, radiators, heating ducts, and refrigerator coils regularly.

Level Two

1. As a congregation, join Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light. ([MIPL](#))
2. Install low energy LED exit and emergency lighting and signs.
3. Install occupant sensors and timers for lights in common areas.
4. Use curtains and blinds to utilize natural lighting and help regulate temperature.
5. Install and use programmable thermostats. Increase the AC temperature and decrease the heating temperature by a few degrees.
6. Insulate and/or weather-strip pipes, heating ducts, walls, ceilings, windows, doors, and water heaters.
7. Purchase 100% of energy needs from clean renewable sources. Encourage families in the congregation to do the same. ([Mass Energy](#), [National Grid](#))
8. Shift church communications from paper to electronic media.
9. Use recycled and sustainably sourced office products. Switch to environmentally safe cleaning agents. ([NWF](#), [EcoClean](#))
10. Ban Styrofoam and shift to reusable dishes/utensils.
11. Only run the dishwasher when full. Open the door and let air dry to save energy.
12. Start a composting system at the church or establish a composting “buddy system” where those who don’t have a compost pile can give their compostable waste to those who do. ([URI](#), [MassDEP](#))
13. Shift to organic landscape care. ([Beyond Pesticides](#))
14. Install bike racks at your church.
15. Develop a car pool system for church events/meetings. Institute “walk/bike/carpool to church” days.
16. Adopt an Earth-centered curriculum for the children’s religious education program and/or organize a summer camp with an environmental theme. ([Life of Grace](#))
17. Organize a phone bank or hold a letter-writing campaign to demand environmental justice from elected officials at local/state/national levels. Make sure you develop a clear and specific ask. ([MAICCA](#), [350Mass](#), [No Fracked Gas in MA](#), [Creation Justice](#))
18. During Worship, ask who has contacted their legislators to demand climate justice.

Level Three

1. Create a “Green Fund,” to be spent only on projects that reduce the carbon footprint of the church.
2. Establish a community garden.
3. Provide education on how to plant and care for a garden and how to cook and preserve fresh food.
4. Landscape using native and drought-tolerant plants to reduce maintenance and water usage. Select plants that will also benefit pollinators. ([NANPS](#), [Pollinator](#))
5. Divert excess storm water or alleviate flooding issues by building a rainwater garden. Select plants that will benefit pollinators. ([NANPS](#), [Pollinator](#))
6. Plant evergreen trees on the north and west sides of buildings to buffer cold winds. Plant deciduous trees on the south and west sides to provide shade.
7. Partner with Mass ReLeaf Ministry for a public tree-planting project. ([Mass ReLeaf](#))
8. Send a congregant to a UCC Center for Environmental Justice workshop or training. Make sure they share their experience with the greater congregation. ([UCC](#))
9. Review church investments and divest current holdings from fossil fuels. Direct future investments into socially and environmentally responsible funds. ([Fossil Free UCC](#), [Go Fossil Free](#))
10. Install solar panels for electricity generation.
11. Replace old windows and doors with efficient models.
12. Install dual flush toilets and motion-activated faucets.
13. Purchase Energy Star models of any appliances or equipment you need (e.g. refrigerator, washer/dryer, dishwasher, copier, furnace, heater, AC, etc.). ([ES](#))
14. Replace your inefficient hot water heater with an on-demand system or solar hot water heater.
15. Offer to measure the carbon footprint of each family in the congregation. Ask for individual commitments to reduce energy consumption at home. ([TNC](#), [EPA](#))
16. Share your results and creative ideas with others in the *Spotlight* newsletter. (email: vait@macucc.org)
17. Collaborate with other congregations and activism groups to facilitate community action and advocacy.
18. Meet with legislators to advocate for local/state/national energy efficiency, environmental justice, and climate justice policies. Make sure to report back to the congregation.