

Environmental Action at Village Church

In October 2002, at the urging of the **Justice, Peace, & Environment Committee (JPEC)**, the church's governing body authorized the formation of the **Sustainable Sanctuary Task Force (SSTF)**, the goal of which was to reduce our church's environmental impact and to practice, model, and teach faithful and responsible stewardship of God's Creation. In the fall of 2007, **JPEC** and **SSTF** evolved and coalesced so that all environmental initiatives and activities are now undertaken by the **Environmental Action Committee (EAC)**. Based on an assessment of our church's ecological footprint, **EAC** sets goals and commits to making changes to make the church more environmentally aware and sustainable as an institution.

Activities and Initiatives:

- Recycling (paper, cardboard; plastic bottles & containers (1 thru 7); aluminum cans, plates, & trays; metal cans; glass; CFL bulbs; fluorescent tubes; communion cups).
- Responsible Purchasing (copy paper, towels, & napkins with recycled fibers; Styrofoam alternatives such as reusable melamine dinnerware; fair trade coffee; nontoxic chemicals).
- Education & Advocacy (classes, articles, flyers, bulletin board, minutes for mission, Creation Care Earth Fair).
- Publicity (environmental steward awards presented to two adults, one college student, and two high school students).
- Worship: Earth Sunday sermon & presentation of Haydn's *The Creation*. (April 24, 2005); Handout of 1500 compact fluorescent bulbs after worship. (April 1, 2007); Use of fair-traded sustainably harvested Eco-Palms. (Palm Sunday 2008-10)
- Buildings (computerized control system, energy efficient HVAC equipment, fluorescent lights, motion activated lighting, 18"x18" carpet squares).
- Grounds (native plants, drip irrigation, composting, mulching) (no Cyprus mulch).
- Networking (SME Earth Fair, Heartland Earthkeepers, Sustainable Sanctuary Coalition, & Presbyterians for Earth Care).
- Adoption of PC(USA)'s Recommitment to Peacemaking & Earthkeeping (October 2008) and endorsement of Kansas Interfaith Power & Light's Congregational Covenant (April 2009).

Food Pantry & Clothes Closet:

- Recycling of corrugated cardboard.
- Reuse of donated clothing and household items.
- Reuse of donated clear plastic bottles for liquid soap containers.
- Reuse of donated paper, plastic, and cloth bags.

Outreach Center (energy efficiency & other LEED criteria for new construction, geothermal heat pump, high efficiency lighting, natural lighting, heat reflective roofing, solar panels).

Awards:

- Bridging the Gap's **Environmental Excellence Award** for Non-Profit Organizations. (November 2005)
- Presbyterians for Restoring Creation's **Restoring Creation 2007 Service Award**, a national award given annually to congregations and other groups whose work for the environment is particularly "praise-worthy and creative." (October 2007)
- The Sierra Club's **2008 "Faith in Action" Environmental Stewardship Award**. (June 2008) (featured in their 2008 report entitled *Faith in Action: Communities of Faith Bring Hope for the Planet*)

Environmental Success Stories

Presented below are four Environmental success stories at Village Church:

Paper Recycling: The biggest success story has been our ongoing paper recycling program. Since February 2003, Village Church has recycled **over 427 tons of paper** and generated over **\$8,300 of income** for the church. During the last year, we have averaged about **4 tons per month**. Newspapers and magazines brought from home account for **90%** of our paper!

In 2003, we started with a single outside recycling bin at the church at 67th and Mission Road (located in the north parking lot at the northeast corner of the church). In 2004, a second bin was located at the South Campus at 99th and Mission Road (between the Day Care Center and the Food Pantry). Deffenbaugh Recycling pays **\$12.50 per ton** regardless of tonnage. There is no graduated scale with a monthly minimum.

In the fall of 2008, Deffenbaugh expanded its recycling program to permit the co-mingling of additional items, including phone books, aluminum beverage cans, #1 thru #7 plastic food containers, and flat cardboard.

Cardboard Recycling: In January 2004, a cardboard recycling bin was located in the parking lot adjacent to the Food Pantry at 99th and Mission Road. Cardboard recycling generates no income. But, after placement of the bin, we were able to reduce trash pickups from twice to once a week, saving the church **\$200 per month** on an ongoing basis.

The cardboard recycling bin is filled to capacity with flattened corrugated cardboard each week. Sometimes an extra pick up is requested between regular weekly pickups. Deffenbaugh Recycling estimates that their 8 cubic yard bin holds about half a ton of flattened cardboard, which means the Food Pantry recycles at least **half a ton of cardboard a week!**

Melamine Dinnerware: In the fall of 2005, in a move to reduce its use of Styrofoam and its overall volume of trash, Village Church purchased **durable reusable melamine dinnerware** for use at church dinners. This purchase consists of **500** mugs and **400** dinner plates, salad plates, dessert plates, and bowls. Depending on how the comparative costs are computed, Melissa Fees (Food Services Manager & Head Chef) figured that this investment paid for itself within **two years**. Assuming an average of 300 people at our Wednesday night suppers, George Darrington (Superintendent of Building & Grounds) estimates that **ten 55-gallon trash bags of Styrofoam per week no longer end up in the landfill!**

Recycled Paper: In addition to recycling paper, Village Church has begun to close the loop by purchasing recycled paper for the following applications: **colored copy paper, white copy paper, letterhead paper, worship bulletin, and newsletter**. Depending on the application, the church is now using paper with **25% to 35% recycled content**. The “recycled paper” logo now appears on the back page of both the worship bulletin and the church newsletter.

In January 2005, Village Church launched a **Responsible Purchasing Initiative**, which included advocating the purchase and use of paper with pre- and post-consumer recycled content, manufactured with minimal toxic byproducts. One of the goals was to help provide a market for environmentally responsible products, thereby **“closing the loop.”** This conversion was done with little or no additional cost, as all products are now competitively priced. Coincidentally, the church is consuming less paper because **more communications are being done electronically**, using a model that might be loosely referred to as **“create, distribute, then print as wanted or needed by the receiver.”** This practice results in more conservation than purchasing recycled paper stock. Another way the church is reducing the cost and impact of paper is by **offering its newsletter electronically**.

Recommitment to Peacemaking & Earthkeeping

In October 2008, the Session of Village Church approved a proposal called the **Recommitment to Peacemaking & Earthkeeping**. This Recommitment was also endorsed by the **Justice & Peace Committee**, the **Environmental Action Committee**, and the **Adult Ministry Committee**.

Recommitment was an idea originated by **Rev. Mark Koenig**, coordinator of the national **Presbyterian Peacemaking Program**. Because 2008 marked the 25th anniversary of the General Assembly’s original commitment document, Rev. Koenig suggested that churches renew their vows by affirming the new document and displaying it in a prominent location. He suggested his idea at Village Church at one of the breakout sessions during Heartland Presbytery’s **Festival of Peacemaking** in March 2008.

Because this new document included a new provision ("**making peace with the earth**"), it became known as the **Recommitment to Peacemaking & Earthkeeping**. The 8 provisions of the **Recommitment** document are listed below.

Since the **Commitment to Peacemaking** was introduced in 1983, "more than 4,500 congregations and other groups have affirmed [it] and used it to shape faithful and creative ministries of peace and justice. It helps church members understand that **peacemaking [and earthkeeping] are not peripheral activities but a central declaration of the gospel and essential to the life of the church.**"

In December 1983, at the urging of the **Peace Task Force** under the leadership of **Rev. Diane Cook**, the Session of Village Church adopted the original **Commitment to Peacemaking**. The **Peace Task Force** later became known as the **Justice & Peace Advocates**. In 2002, it was renamed the **Justice, Peace, & Environment Committee (JPEC)** to reflect the full scope of its activities. Over the years, **JPEC** sponsored speakers, organized activities and projects, wrote articles and letters, planned services and classes, and hosted seminars and forums that advance the cause embodied in the Hebrew word **Shalom**.

In 2002 and 2003, **JPEC** proposed **Sustainable Sanctuary** and started its task force, whose goal was to reduce our church's environmental impact and to practice and model faithful and responsible stewardship of God's Creation. The current **Environmental Action Committee** was formed in the fall of 2007 to consolidate the environmental work of the former **Justice, Peace, & Environment Committee** and the **Sustainable Sanctuary Task Force**. Its call is to promote earthkeeping within and beyond the walls of our church and to advocate environmental education, motivation, and inspiration.

The **Recommitment** document suggests eight peacemaking actions that congregations can commit to:

Worship

—provide worship that expresses the reality of God's peace giving;

Prayer and Bible Study

—Encourage prayer, Bible study, and spiritual disciplines that nurture and deepen the spiritual life of the community and equip people to share the gospel message of peace to the world;

Peacemaking in Families and Community Living

—Create opportunities for people of all ages to develop peacemaking skills such as conflict resolution, mediation, or nonviolence training that will help them grow as peacemakers in their families, in the congregation, and in the community;

Community Ministries

—Work with and support ecumenical and interfaith partners and other bodies in their pursuit of social, racial, and economic justice, to confront racism and all other forms of prejudice, and to respond to people in communities, local, national, and worldwide, who are caught in poverty, hurt by unemployment, or burdened by other problems;

Study and Response to Global Issues

—Support human rights and economic justice efforts in at least one area of the world—through presbytery partnerships and sister countries;

Global Security

—Study global security concerns, work for worldwide arms control, and support alternatives to military solutions to international and civil conflicts;

Making Peace with the Earth

—Protect and restore the environment through study, advocacy, and individual and corporate lifestyle commitments;

Receiving the Peacemaking Offering

—Support financially the churchwide peacemaking effort by receiving the Peacemaking Offering and through other means. The signed **Recommitment** pledge with these 8 actions are framed and displayed in the hallway where the Justice & Peace and the Environmental Bulletin Boards are located. The complete 6-page **Recommitment** document can be read online by linking to: www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/peacemaking/pdf/commitment.pdf

Statements like the **Recommitment to Peacemaking & Earthkeeping** are signposts for change and betterment. They provide a vehicle, a framework, a springboard for a process that includes education and inspiration leading to action.

—*Justice & Peace Committee*

—*Environmental Action Committee*

Melamine Dinnerware Promotes Environmental Stewardship

In the fall of 2005, in a move to reduce its use of Styrofoam and its overall volume of trash, Village Church purchased durable reusable melamine dinnerware for use at church dinners. This purchase consists of **500** mugs and **400** dinner plates, salad plates, dessert plates, and bowls. Depending on how the comparative costs are computed, **Melissa Fees** (Food Services Manager & Head Chef) figures that this investment will pay for itself within one to two years. Assuming that an average of 300 people attend our Wednesday night suppers, **George Darrington** (superintendent of Building & Grounds) estimates that **ten 55-gallon trash bags of Styrofoam per week will no longer end up in the landfill!**

The switch from Styrofoam to melamine is an earthkeeping initiative of the **Sustainable Sanctuary Task Force**. Sustainable Sanctuary is a program whose goal is to reduce our church's environmental impact and to practice and model faithful and responsible stewardship of God's Creation.

In this photo at right, five members of the Sustainable Sanctuary Task Force are viewing some of the recently purchased melamine dinnerware. The storage carts are composed of recycled plastic material. Pictured from left to right are Rev. Dwight Tawney, Bob Siemens, Chuck Gillam, April Schmidt, and Jerry Rees.



Village Church Wins Environmental Excellence Award

Pictured from L-R: Chuck Gillam, Jerry Rees, Sallie Veenstra, Rev. Dwight Tawney, April Schmidt, and Rick Heinze.

In November 2005, Village Church received Bridging the Gap's **Environmental Excellence Award for Non-Profit Organizations**. Bridging the Gap is an environmental education and advocacy organization headquartered in KC, MO. Each year they give local Environmental Excellence Awards in the following categories: individual, for-profit business, and non-profit organization.

This award is the culmination of three years of environmental initiatives: In October 2002, at the urging of the **Justice, Peace, & Environment Committee (JPEC)**, the Session authorized a program that has become known as **Sustainable Sanctuary**. This commitment to **Sustainable Sanctuary** was reaffirmed in February 2005. The goal of Sustainable Sanctuary is to reduce our church's environmental impact and to practice and model faithful and responsible stewardship of God's Creation.

The Tillotson Building's Sustainable Design Features:

On the PC(USA) environmental website, the **Sustainable Design Features** of Village Church's **Tillotson Building** (aka the Food Pantry) are highlighted. This information was provided by Rev. Dwight Tawney to Katie Holmes, coordinator of **Environmental Ministries**.

This story can be read at the following link:

www.pcusa.org/ministries/environment/church-earth-care-stories/
www.pcusa.org/environment/



Under the heading **“Share Your Story”** are highlighted four Presbyterian churches that are making environmental stewardship part of their ministry through worship, education, facilities, and outreach projects that respond to our call to till and keep the garden. Village Church is the fourth story:

The Tillotson Building at Village Presbyterian Church, which was built with sustainable design techniques.

“The Tillotson Building, which houses the food pantry and clothes bank at Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas, was built using sustainable design techniques. These include high efficiency lighting, refrigeration, heating and cooling; increased use of natural lighting; a demonstration photovoltaic array that provides solar electricity and opportunities for public education; interior finishes that do not contain harmful VOCs; heat reflective roofing and water efficient systems, including a rain garden and sub drainage system to return rainwater to the ground.”

Village Church’s Tillotson Building Sustainable Design Features

Gastinger, Walker, & Harden Architects have provided the following list of Sustainable Design Features for the **Tillotson Building**, which houses Village Church’s Food Pantry and Clothes Closet.

- Building design- Access for multiple users allow individual parts of the building to function without requiring the whole building to be conditioned, lit etc. Compact footprint.
- Site design- Roof rainwater is delivered to a rain garden south of the building designed with native planting and sub drainage system to efficiently return the rain water to the ground. Building plantings are maintained with a drip irrigation system that will greatly reduce water usage. A water-free urinal is installed in the Men’s restroom.
- Site lighting- Utilizes low poles with full cutoff fixtures minimizes light pollution.
- Central work area harvests daylight from an insulated skylight system, reduces daytime lighting requirements.
- Building Shell- Highly insulated, SIPS (structural insulated panels) roof is 10” of Styrofoam, rated R40; walls are R22. SIPS faces are OSB (oriented strand board) made from small pieces of recycled wood. No VOC (volatile organic compounds), no formaldehyde.
- Glu-laminated timber structure- Renewable resource, small pieces of wood combined to provide maximum strength/span. No old growth timber, no VOC, no formaldehyde. Warm friendly material.
- Roofing- Heat reflective Energy-Star, cool roofing council rated membrane material that aids in building cooling.
- Demonstration Photovoltaic Array- is installed to provide public education and supplement electrical needs for the walk-in cooler and freezer.
- Interior Finishes- All paint is low to no VOC. No PVC finishes. Large areas of floor are concrete with special non VOC finish. Carpeted areas receive carpet tile, minimum waste, maximum maintenance flexibility, high recycle content.
- Mechanical System- Ground source heat pump is state-of-the-art highest efficiency cooling available. Utilizes (28) 400’ deep wells. No condensers are a visual and acoustic plus for neighbors. Heat recovery wheel provides outside air intake and exhaust efficiency.
- Small heat pumps are tied with water loop to wells; provide maximum flexibility of use; areas of building not utilized during the day do not need to be conditioned.
- Lighting- High efficiency T5 lamps are used throughout, providing maximum lumens per watt input. Overall lighting design is less than 2/3 watt per square foot with many areas less than ½ watt per square foot. All major lighting is dual level switched with motion sensors providing further reduction of electrical usage.
- Walk-in Cooler and Freezer- Condensers are located remotely to utilize generated heat in the winter and more efficiently remove it from the building in summer.