

Becoming a Creation Justice Church

	STEP ONE: CREATE A GREEN TEAM
1	<i>Find Co-Conspirators</i> Starting a team can be a fun and exciting process of finding kindred spirits. Think of who in your church has a noticeable passion for the environment. Sidle up to them during coffee hour and say, “Hey, I noticed you’re passionate about the environment. Would you want to be a co-conspirator with me in making this church come alive with energy to care for God’s creation? Let’s form a green team.”
2	<i>Make It about Discernment</i> When your team of co-conspirators meets for the first time, make your meeting first and foremost about discernment. What is God calling you to do? You may want to use this quote by Frederick Buechner to spur reflection: “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” Give an opportunity for everyone in the group to share their story of being called to this particular ministry. Why do they have a passion to care for God’s creation?
3	<i>Make Creation Justice Part of Your Church’s DNA</i> A recurring problem in many churches is that all of the energy for a particular ministry gets funneled to a small group of people while energy and ownership of the ministry dissipates in the rest of the congregation. Creation justice should be a part of an entire church’s DNA. A green team can instigate change in church practices such as energy conservation, but ultimately the goal is for every committee and ministry to have caught the environmental bug so that they are caring for creation on their own.
4	<i>Focus on Sending Your Ripples Outward</i> A temptation can be to focus solely on internal church needs such as recycling. While it can be wise to begin by tackling “easy wins” close to home, remember that ultimately God calls us to the larger world beyond the walls of the church. Research local and regional environmental injustices. Give attention to socioeconomic factors such as race and class. A number of churches, for example, get a good share of their energy from coal plants and often those coal plants disproportionately impact low-income, communities of color. Once you have done your research, discern how you can make a difference.
5	<i>Every Moses Needs an Aaron, while Every Aaron Needs a Moses</i> In addressing local and regional issues, discern what organization would be your best partner in making a difference. Interfaith Power and Light is a national faith-based organization with many state-level affiliates. Many communities also have their own local environmental justice organizations that can connect congregations to nearby struggles led by those most affected by environmental harms.

STEP TWO: REFLECT ON WHERE YOU'VE BEEN AND DISCERN WHERE YOU CAN GO

History

~2000	Recycling started at church. Cardboard boxes were placed in the church school rooms for paper recycling, a green tub in the big kitchen (still there), standard blue plastic recycling tubs were also added in the Narthex & small kitchen. We got rid of Styrofoam cups at coffee hour.
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Kick Off – Earth Day April 23, 2023

Completed	On Saturday, April 22, we invited people to attend an online UCC Earth Day Summit on Climate Justice with keynote address by the Rev. Jim Antal, the author of <u>Climate Church, Climate World</u> (many of us read this book a few years ago but if you haven't, you are encouraged to read it in March/April).
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Worship

On-going	1. Compostable/recyclable or reusable cups and dishes.
On-going	2. Worship liturgy and sermons with creation justice theme.
Completed	3. On Saturday, April 20, 2024, we invited people to attend UCC's second annual Earth Summit whose feature was celebrated author and activist Bill McKibben delivering the keynote lecture titled, "Energy from Heaven or Energy from Hell?" Then during worship service on Sunday, April 21, 2024, we introduced postcards that were signed to pledge our support of climate justice and received a sticker to wear. Interfaith Power & Light delivered signed postcards to congress that summer.
Completed	4. We celebrated this year's Earth Day late this year on what we called Mother Earth Day, Sunday, May 11, 2025. During this breakfast worship, we gathered the congregation's input to a multitude of Creation Justice questions to help us write a draft covenant for the congregation to vote on.
In work	5. On SUNday, September 21, 2025, worship was centered around the sun and solar energy. Postcards were passed out for members to write short notes to their representatives showing their support in solar energy and thereby planting seeds of hope. The collected postcards will be hand delivered or mailed to their local offices.

Facilities	
History	Trustees (now called Facilities) did the upkeep of the church & property. Various groups put a lot of effort into the nature lane by removing ivy and blackberry. The church school made use of the back property but outdoor services in nature lane dwindled as folks got older. Outdoor services are now held in the patio/courtyard.
On-going	1. Recycling bins for paper/plastics/aluminum; compostable garbage bags. We decreased our weekly waste pickup from two to one yard and added a yard waste/compost bin.
On-going	2. Clean up back acreage of ivy, blackberries, and non-native plants; haul to yard waste recycling. In 2025 we decided to look into what it will take to get goats to do the “cleaning up” of the overgrown plants for us in our back acreage. We would still need to cart off branches and remove trees that have fallen over the paths.
On-going	3. Most lights have been switched out for LEDs.
History	4. Parsonage was converted from oil to natural gas. When?
On-going	5. Most windows are at least double pane with the exception of the stained glass.
On-going	6. Ridwell collection/recycling for special items. Receptacles are at church for batteries, light bulbs, and orange prescription pill bottles.
On-going	7. Use of environmentally friendly bug and pest sprays and weed and grass killers
Discerning	8. Replacement of aging gas HVAC system with electric.
Completed	9. The heating/cooling in the office/library/pastor’s office area are all electric.

Christian Education

On-going	RECOMMENDED BOOKS A. Fiction i. <u>Flight Behavior</u> by Barbara Kingsolver ii. <u>Parable of the Sower</u> by Octavia E. Butler iii. <u>The Fifth Season</u> by N.K. Jemisin iv. <u>The Overstory</u> by Richard Powers B. Non-fiction i. <u>After the Blast</u> by Eric Wagner ii. <u>Awe</u> by Dacher Keltner iii. <u>Beyond Guilt</u> by George Johnson iv. <u>Brave the Wild River</u> by Melissa Sevigny v. <u>Cathedral on FIRE</u> by Brooks Berndt vi. <u>Consumed</u> by Aja Barber vii. <u>Crow Planet</u> by Lyanda Lynn Haupt viii. <u>Earth Prayers from around the World</u> by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon ix. <u>Finding the Mother Tree</u> by Suzanne Simard x. <u>Nature's Best Hope</u> by Douglas Tallamy xi. <u>Organic Prayer: Cultivating Your Relationship with God</u> by Rev. Nancy Roth (a book discussion was led on Oct 5, Oct 19, Nov 2, 2000 @ 7 pm) xii. <u>Speak with the Earth and It Will Teach You</u> by Daniel Cooperrider xiii. <u>The Comfort of Crows</u> by Margaret Renkl xiv. <u>Land is Not Empty</u> by Sarah Augustine xv. <u>The Serviceberry</u> by Robin Wall Kimmerer xvi. <u>The Story of More</u> by Hope Jahren xvii. <u>To Speak for the Trees</u> by Diana Beresford-Kroeger - xviii. <u>Windfall</u> by McKenzie Funk
Completed	Blue Theology - Three youth and three adults participated in a Blue Theology mission trip to Monterey Bay, California! One of the aims of Blue Theology is to build partnerships between faith and science and encourage faith communities to use creation care theology to address climate change. The group did projects like counting sea life, replanting shorelines, and beach cleanups. There was time for reflection, prayer, art, whale watching and kayaking as well.
On-going	Seahurst Beach clean-up – Participate in an intergenerational cleanup removing items from the beach to keep plastic and other garbage out of the food chain. Some of the odd things that have been found are a washcloth and plastic netting.
Completed	Focused on Creation Justice as our 2023 Lenten study.
On-going	Webinars and videos.

Outreach & Parish Care

Completed	1. Member of Earth Ministry ~2000 NPUCC joined Earth Ministry which started out as an ecumenical (i.e., Christian) concern in Seattle in 1992. We are sorry to say that they closed their operations in August 2025 due to the political and funding climate, combined with unexpected challenges.
On-going	2. Registered as a tree nursery with Grow It Forward
On-going	3. Pay Real Rent to the Duwamish
On-going	4. Collect donations for natural disasters and community needs
On-going	5. Advocacy such as signing petitions and demonstrating
On-going	6. Joined "One Home One Future" in October 2023.

STEP THREE: DRAFT A CREATION JUSTICE COVENANT

Completed	Using a template and words and phrases gathered from the Mother Earth Sunday breakfast worship service on Sunday, May 11, 2025, the Green Team drafted a covenant and after getting the council's approval with a couple of changes had it ready to present to the congregation.
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STEP FOUR: VOTE TO ADOPT THE CREATION JUSTICE COVENANT AND BECOME A CREATION JUSTICE CHURCH

Completed	Our congregation voted on and approved our Creation Justice covenant at our annual meeting on Sunday, September 14, 2025.
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STEP FIVE: SUBMIT AN APPLICATION

In work	
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BONUS STEP: SPREAD THE WORD AND KEEP IT UP!

Once your church is recognized as a Creation Justice Church, it will receive a Creation Justice banner. Gather the congregation to take a picture with the banner before putting it on display. Next, let others know about what your church has accomplished. Send a press release along with the photo of church members with the banner to local media outlets. Ask your conference and association offices to announce your designation in their newsletters and social media platforms. Last, but not least, find ways to maintain creation justice as a core part of your church's DNA. Here are five ways that can be done:

1. On each Earth Sunday (the Sunday closest to Earth Day), have the entire congregation recite its Creation Justice Covenant in unison during worship.
2. Each year revisit the discernment questions for the four dimensions of a Creation Justice Church in order to measure, evaluate, and set goals for continued progress. Make a practice of submitting a one-page annual report to the church's leadership council. Email your report to UCC's Environmental Justice Minister as well.
3. Create an annual event to keep your congregation's creation justice knowledge fresh and up-to-date. Examples include an environmental justice guest speaker series, an all-church book read, a movie night, or a community fair featuring local environmental organizations.
4. Become a Creation Justice multiplier. Through personal contacts in the UCC or through conference committees, annual gatherings, and newsletters, find ways to encourage and accompany other congregations in becoming Creation Justice Churches.
5. Have a representative from your church join the UCC's Council for Climate Justice. The Council meets via Zoom six times a year on the first Wednesday of every other month. Anyone from the UCC can join, and it is a great way to learn what fresh initiatives are happening in other parts of the UCC. Contact Brooks Berndt if you would like to join or learn more.

2024 CLIMATE HOPE POSTCARD MESSAGES

1. As a person of faith – it's time we do all that we can for the planet!
2. Love of creation matters. If we love God, we love God's creation.
3. We must leave our Mother Earth better for our grandchildren. For all of the generations to follow us.
4. Stronger, more comprehensive pollution standards are crucial to the survival of our earth!
5. We must take care of our earth as well as each other.
6. We desperately need this please!
7. Climate change is real, let's fix this!! We all need to help!
8. Protect our earth for the sake of our children and the generations to come.
9. The country is ready to prioritize the environment. Please take action now.
10. Make efforts to focus on the positive ways to adjust fossil fuel reliance. Too costly to our planet.
11. Save our planet!