

Green Episcopal Congregations in Minnesota

A Program of the Minnesota Episcopal Environmental
Stewardship Commission
www.env-steward.com



Rationale

The Minnesota Episcopal Environmental Stewardship Commission (MEESC) created the Green Congregations program as a way to recognize and encourage Episcopal congregations in their creation care efforts. Multiple resources and lists of ideas have already been published. But sometimes it helps people to have clear targets, specific steps they can take to meet those goals, and recognition for meeting them. Although we *should* care for creation just because it's the right thing to do, in reality all of us are more likely to follow through when we've made specific commitments. People and congregations also enjoy the sense of accomplishment that comes from being recognized for their efforts.

Cost

The program is an opportunity for congregations, not a requirement.

Participating congregations will be asked to contribute \$35.00 per year to MEESC, to help keep the program going.

Description of the program

Each participating congregation will form a green team, create a plan to reduce its carbon footprint and other negative environmental impacts, and take steps to nurture creation on its own property. Part of the plan will include steps to be taken by individual members at their homes or workplaces. The congregation will choose from a list of possible creation care activities, each of which has been assigned a point value. The local green team may identify actions besides those listed and agree with their MEESC contact person on point values for them.

The congregation will be recognized by certificate, and encouraged to celebrate, when it has earned points as follows:

- Spring Green 30 points
- Bright Green 60 points
- Evergreen 90 points. (Also recognized with a handmade decorative tile.)

Each

congregation is asked to "pay it forward" by helping another congregation.

The program is designed to be flexible, while still specific enough to give direction and yield concrete results. Creation care activities undertaken prior to officially joining in the program may be counted toward the Spring Green certificate.

While fixed ratios are not required, activities should be spread across various areas of congregational life:

- Education
- Specifically for children
- Worship / Preaching
- Programs and Support
- Buildings and Grounds
- Community involvement
- Commitments by members to take action in their homes. (Members commit in writing to take specific steps they select for themselves.)

Congregational Buy In

Participating congregations are asked to sign a covenant with MEESC by official action of the vestry or Bishop's Committee. It is preferred that a separate green team be created in the congregation. In smaller congregations, however, this work may be folded into the work of a related committee or even the vestry itself.

Each congregation will appoint a liaison, who will meet with a member of MEESC at least once a year to report on the congregation's activities. The liaison's report should also be made part of the Annual Report of the Congregation.

Evaluation

Completion of each award will be confirmed, where possible, with a visit to the congregation by a member of MEESC. The visit is intended to be supportive and encouraging. It will also help MEESC learn and improve the program.

Activities and point values

Introduction

For each level of recognition the congregation needs 30 points. Below are the categories and a few examples. To save paper and facilitate ongoing development, the bulk of the program material is located at the MEESC website: www.env-steward.com. There you will find extensive lists of ideas, resources, and action steps with point values assigned. They are intended to spark your creativity, not constrain it. If you come up with an activity you'd like to do, propose it to the Green Congregations contact person at the above web address and agree on a point value.

Education: up to 4 points per level

1 point per hour.

See list on MEESC website if you need ideas for educational activities.

Activities Specifically for Children: up to 6 points per level

2 points per hour.

See list on MEESC website if you need ideas for children's activities.

Worship / Preaching: up to 6 points per level

1 point per creation care sermon.

2 points per Sunday that includes creation care themed music, prayers of the people, Eucharistic prayer, and sermon. These might be celebrated on Earth Day, near Rogation Days, near the Feast of St. Francis, or as part of a Creation Season.

See list on MEESC website if you need ideas for sermons or ideas for worship.

Programs and Support: up to 10 points per level

For example: Use cups and dishes that can be washed and re-used.

- ½ point per parish event or
- 3 points if adopted for all coffee hours
- 5 points if adopted for all events including coffee hours.

See MEESC website for a list of activities and values. You may also propose your own ideas to the Green Congregations contact person.

A major initiative may be awarded more than 10 points or be spread across more than one level. Consult the Green Congregations contact person.

Buildings and Grounds: up to 20 points per level

Examples:

Seal air leaks to the outdoors: 5 points

Increase insulation in roof or attic: 15 points.

See MEESC website for a list of activities and values. You may also propose your own ideas to the Green Congregations contact person.

Community Involvement: up to 15 points per level

See MEESC website for a list of activities and values. You may also propose your own ideas to the Green Congregations contact person.

Green Activities at Home: up to 20 points per level

The green team picks one or more action steps to promote throughout the congregation. Members turn in a card when they have completed each step.

Whatever percentage of the average Sunday attendance takes a particular step, the congregation receives an equal percentage of the points assigned for that action, times two. Thus in the example above, if 75% of the congregation sealed air leaks and added insulation to their roof or attic, the congregation could count 30 points toward the next level. [75% times 20 points, times 2.]

Previous work

Property improvements going back 5 years, or ongoing activities may be counted toward the Spring Green level. For activities at home a commitment to maintain the structure or continue the activity is promised on the card.