



What can I do?

Climate change and environmental justice can be overwhelming, and our first reaction may be to wish it would all disappear. But that's because we tend to view it as a negative force that means giving something up and making painful changes.

And this is where the promise of the Gospel comes into our lives with the words of Jesus who said, "I have come to bring you abundant life." Ask yourself the question, "What is abundant life and what would it mean in my life?" Is it about accumulation and consumption? Is it about working more hours to buy the "things" that we have been told to buy that advertising says we can't live without?

In the United Church of Christ, we believe that the abundant life promised by Jesus is more about "belonging" than "belongings." It is about developing deep and meaningful relationships with family and friends and people we do not yet know. It is about working together like members of a symphony or a band to create beautiful music that all can experience. It is about sustaining the abundance of God's natural creation so that all may have enough to eat, a shelter to call home, a job that brings satisfaction, and a safe community to live in.

In the next 20 years, there will be profound shifts in the world economy that will lead us to question the idea of what leads to an abundant life. Peak oil and climate change will force us all to examine our basic values and as people of faith, we will answer this basic question over and over again:

"How can I develop a sustainable faith.....in a sustainable community.....that sustains God's creation for the next generation?"

Developing a Sustainable Faith

Developing a sustainable faith has a double meaning: it is a faith that looks inward and sustains you both through the good and difficult times of your life, but it is also a faith that looks outward in balance with all of God's creation. A sustainable faith strives towards harmony, peace, and justice for all creation, understanding that humankind is a part of God's gift of life and that we have a profound responsibility to care for God's gift

for the next generation. Developing a sustainable faith is about both knowing and practicing the values of your faith. Here are just a few suggestions for action:

- Find a quiet time and make three lists: what you need, what you want, and what others think you should have or do. See if these match the values of your faith. Then do the same exercise with your family.
- Ask your pastor or education director to develop a small-group study on what the Biblical texts say about care of creation.
- Read some of the books or periodicals suggested on this website, or start a reading group that can meet weekly and reflect on what you have read.
- Go to [Cool Congregations](#) and use the measurements to see how much energy your family uses and how it compares with other families. Then pledge to reduce it by 10% per year. Google “saving energy in the home” for all kinds of ideas, complete the most affordable first, then plan how to do the most expensive items as you can.
- Sit with your own family and talk about how to lessen your carbon footprint. You may find it helpful to talk about family “systems” such as housing, transportation, recreation, etc. and examine how you can reduce your energy use in each system.
- Attend an Environmental Justice, Justice LED, or Transition Town workshop and bring new information and strategies for action back to your home and your community.
- Lead by example. Let your actions speak of your developing sustainable faith.

Developing a Sustainable Community

Developing a sustainable community has a double meaning: it is a community that sustains you and your family both through the good and difficult times of life, but it is also a community that looks outward in balance with all of God’s creation. A sustainable community strives towards harmony, peace, and justice for all of God’s creation. It examines its internal values and practices that sustain God’s creation , but it also accepts its responsibility to help lead the larger community towards spiritual and environmental health and wholeness. Here are just a few suggestions for action:

- Begin or join the “Green Team” at your home church. Use the “Green Justice Congregations” check-list to see how to take specific actions.
- Start or join a book discussion group based on some of the suggestions from the website reading list.
- Form a small group of 8-12 people who want to meet for about 6-8 weeks for 2 hours or so at a time. Use a resource like Choices for Sustainable Living or

Voluntary Simplicity from the Northwest Earth Institute www.nwei.org to help guide your group through an examination of your values.

- Work with your worship planning team to plan a “Green Justice” Sunday worship service with a focus on creation care in liturgy, hymns, and the sermon.
- Ask your church trustees or property managers to conduct an energy audit to determine how your congregation can cut energy consumption.
- Host a community event that features a speaker or panel on faith and the environment.
- Ask your local congregation to underwrite the cost of sending a member of your community to an Environmental Justice, Justice LED, or Transition Town workshop to bring new information and strategies for action back to your community.
- Lead by example. Let your actions speak of your developing sustainable community.

Sustaining God's Creation for the Next Generation

At the beginning of our lives we wonder what we will encounter in the years ahead. In the middle of our lives, we often focus on the difference we can make to our family, our friends, and our community. And towards the end of our lives, we often wonder about the legacy we are leaving for the ones to follow. At all the stages of our lives, we are intimately involved in environmental justice, for the values we develop and practice have concrete consequences for the earth and for all our neighbors on the earth. Our values determine what we use now, what we share with others, and what we leave for those who live after us. Our values and our faith ask us deep and ethical questions:

- How much is enough?
- If I take more than my share, do I deprive someone else of what they need?
- Will I leave the earth a more or less beautiful and bountiful place than I inherited from my parents’ generation?
- What kind of world will my children and/or grandchildren live in?

Here are a few suggestions for actions you can take that sustain God’s creation for the next generation:

- Let your elected representatives at every level know that sustainability and care of the earth are issues of faith. Call, write, or visit your federal and state senators and representatives. Let your local government know that you want them to save energy and develop sustainable practices.
- Start or help plan a community garden that uses compost and organic methods rather than pesticides.

- Support your local organic farmers. Buy local as much as possible – but only what you need - from Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) sources and local businesses.
- Reduce, reuse, recycle.
- Put your savings to work in socially responsible investments and pursue the same for your place of business and your congregation.
- Join others or donate some of your resources to stop harmful environmental practices such as mountaintop removal, clear-cutting forests, toxic waste dumps near communities that have suffered enough.
- Join others or donate some of your resources to help positive initiatives like Transition Towns, Interfaith Power and Light state chapters, and U.C.C. Environmental Justice training opportunities.
- Lead by example. Let your actions speak volumes of how you care for God's earth for the next generations.