



Especially for Green Teams

Start small. Remember, Jesus says you only need two or three, and he'll be on your team! Find your initial group and be intentional about talking about what each of you is passionate about in terms of creation care and justice. Pick a small, relatively easy to-do project. Success energizes and appeals to others. Keep your eyes and ears open for others God will send your way and invite them to join you in this sacred work. Find one or more persons who will commit to praying for your team and for creation justice.

Regard your pastor as a leader and ally. Talk with them about your team's hopes and dreams. Invite their input; especially ask them to lead your team in a Bible study to help your group be grounded in the Scripture and theology related to creation justice. Encourage pastoral preaching and communication that includes lifting up creation care and justice whenever appropriate. No matter what level of involvement your pastor(s) are able to commit to, continue to keep them "in the loop."

Identify needs and opportunities. For example, one team knew that their neighborhood included many families who were food insecure. The church building was at the top of a hill with a long expanse of sunny lawn in front of it. Instead of mowing, they turned to growing. A few members had experience and passion for gardening. They provided expertise. Volunteers helped with

planting, weeding, harvesting—and feeding. The church's front garden nurtures those who were hungry and stands as a testimony to who the church is and how it cares for creation and justice.

Use your assets. Not every church can create a garden or put up solar panels, but some can. Not every church can use their parking lot for a big community recycle day or Earth Day information fair, but some can. Not every church can do X, Y, or Z. But every church can do something! Look at your land, your building, the roof, the parking lot, the community around you, your church's traditions—and your people who have experience and skills. What are your church's assets? What opportunities might they present?



Use your connections. One church's property included a small tributary to a local, flood-prone creek that regularly damaged homes and businesses. The church realized adding trees on their land would help stabilize life downstream. They did the planning and then invited volunteers from other United Methodist churches and the neighborhood to plant. Seventy-five people came; they planted 400 trees in one day. In short order the benefits were visible: improved water clarity, healthier vegetation, more fish, and less flooding. And the community volunteers saw the church at work for climate justice.

Communicate. Find ways to keep creation care and environmental justice in front of people. Do you have a logo? Green team T-shirts? Do you sponsor events? A poster contest for children? Does a team member write up announcements and updates, contribute a creation justice message, or select from the monthly Creation Justice Tips ones to go into the church newsletters or worship bulletins? Use whatever channels your church has to communicate to members to keep the needs of God's creation visible and top of mind. Be seen and heard.

Educate. Sunday school classes, weeknight programming, small groups, women's or men's groups, and special Bible studies—the church provides many occasions for people to learn. Scripture and our United Methodist Tradition underline creation justice as a matter of faith. Use your connection to find outside speakers or a video. Or create your own slide show presentations or videos, do a panel discussion, or simply set up a forum for conversation—including listening to the concerns and questions of the audience. The classes provide a venue; your team can supply the content.

Advocate. Every small action we do on behalf of creation helps, but a key driver of the climate crisis—burning fossil fuels—can only be stopped through legislation. Policy changes in businesses and corporations are also essential to address other practices that are harmful to creation, such as plastic packaging. The related justice issues cannot be solved by individual action. But people can speak up, advocate, vote, and push the ones in power to

act on behalf of the planet, the future, and their constituents. The Green Team can marshal the voices and amplify them so they cannot be ignored.

Practice what you preach. We all have circles of influence—our families, friends, colleagues, organizations. People pay attention to what we say because they see what we do. We become trusted sources. The Green Team's major circle is the church and through the church, the community. Setting up recycling for worship bulletins, using silverware and real plates for church dinners, arranging for food scraps to be composted, hosting a mug-decorating party to create reusable cups for fellowship hours, planting a butterfly garden, putting out bike racks are but a few of the practices Green Teams have created to invite others to walk the talk with them.

Reach out. The United Methodist Church provides many excellent resources for Green Teams through the UM Creation Justice Movement, Global Ministries EarthKeepers training, and our Social Principles, to name a few. Interfaith Power & Light brings diverse faith traditions together around creation justice issues, providing additional resources and the power of many working together. Explore secular environmental organizations online to educate yourselves. You may also choose to sign advocacy petitions, which will be sent to appropriate policy makers, or to support their work financially, knowing that *you*—through these groups—will continue to make a positive difference.



Visit umcreationjustice.org for more Tips.