

**Channing Memorial Church
Green Sanctuary Committee
DRAFT
Environmental audit**

What are your energy usage patterns and current conservation practices?

See attached RISE Energy Audit

What are local recycling procedures and what is your level of compliance?

Recycling is not required of churches in Newport, and is not available to commercial establishments, which must hire their own refuse and recycling contractors. However, since our church owns rental property, which is eligible for the state recycling program, the church is able to recycle a wide variety of paper, corrugated cardboard, plastic containers, and aluminum and other metals in the bins provided for the residents. All staff and participants in church activities are well versed in recycling procedures, and the level of compliance is high. Office paper is collected separately from refuse, and Sunday bulletins are collected after the service, and placed in a recycling bin kept in the sanctuary. RI does not have a "bottle bill," so all beverage containers are recycled.

What are existing policies for use of non-disposable materials, environmentally friendly cleaning supplies, etc?

Property supplies—sexton purchases at BJ's when supplies are low. Cost and effectiveness are the main criteria. No environmental criteria at present.

What existing church policies govern purchasing and investing decisions? Are your investments in keeping with your environmental and other social values?

A three-person endowment committee nominated by the nominating committee and elected at the annual meeting in (?) rotating terms handles all investments. The committee functions independently of the Board of Trustees. Until this year, the committee had agreed to invest only in mutual funds, and only in stocks. This year it has begun to invest in bonds, also. At least two of the members must be in favor of an investment. No policies governing ethical selection standards are in place, and the guiding principle has been to maximize value. The funds under the committee's control include the church's endowment, a bequest on behalf of the poor and needy of Newport, which the church manages but does not own, and a steeple restoration fund started by a bequest.

Purchasing decisions are made on the basis of a balance of highest effectiveness at a reasonable cost.

Fellowship uses washable mugs for coffee on Sunday. The church is allowed to use china for congregational serving, but because our kitchen does not meet Health Department certification standards, we must use disposables for serving the public. Our monthly soup kitchen serves only on paper, and uses plastic utensils. There is no policy against Styrofoam for other gatherings. The Property Committee and the Board are looking into the costs of bringing the kitchen up to Health Department standards, which would require a dish sterilizer, a professional grease trap, and additional sinks, but space is an issue, as the kitchen is relatively small. We have a commercial gas stove.

Do you have landscaping policies that direct use of native species, landscape chemicals, etc?

No such policies exist. Building tenants are encouraged to create and maintain gardens, and volunteer gardeners offer landscaping services. The sexton is responsible for mowing and snow plowing, using church-owned gas-powered equipment. Periodic work parties after Sunday services include landscape spruce-up and maintenance. Ice melting choices are determined by maximum effectiveness for safety and minimum tracking. Salt is avoided because of the tracking it causes inside the buildings.

What current religious education programs relate to environment for both children and adults? You'll want to look back over the past few years to see what has been used previously.

The Summer program for 2007 focused on the environment, and included:

Creating a Butterfly/Wildlife Garden

Releasing 1500 Ladybugs

Creating two different kinds of compost, outdoors and indoor worm bin

Studying soil and talking about how important it is to care for the soil that gives us our food

Studying water and talking about how important it is to care for the earth's water

Recycling and burying a variety of types of garbage to see how long it took to degrade

Making homemade ice cream with local ingredients

Painting grocery bags to take to the store in place of paper or plastic

Including a segment on Fair Trade and Community Supported Agriculture.

Discussing fossil fuels

Discussing natural building

Focusing on endangered animals and plants

The web of life was the prevailing theme throughout the summer. We made every effort to reuse materials, and made very few purchases for use in the program.

Adult programming

Past Programs

- Hot Topic Forum on Global Warming with related readings and a power point presentation.
- Small Group Ministry Sessions including: *Thoreau on Wildness, Creating Paradise, Wilderness and Wildness*

What other environmental issues come up in discussion groups and adult education classes, in policy proposals for the congregation that might be the basis for a Green Sanctuary program or activity?

- In the recent series: Building Your Own Theology, BYOT: Exploring, and BYOT: Ethics, environmental issues often arose as people grappled with their theological beliefs, concerns, and actions.
- Environmental issues arose during the Year of Decision (2006-2007) as important to consider in the planning of congregational life, and to include in our new vision statement.
- Environmental issues have been highlighted in our monthly newsletter in a column called "Eco Bits and Tips" and shared on a bulletin board in the Parish Hall.

There is interest in starting a Simplicity Circle so members can support one another in sustainable living. (Since writing this audit, we have completed one curriculum of the Northwest Earth Institute, and we are contemplating a second, on Voluntary Simplicity for the fall.)

How well does your worship integrate the wisdom of the Earth?

Nature, science, and earth-centered traditions are a steady source of inspiration for the congregation of Channing Memorial Church.

Worship Space

The central image of our Sanctuary is "The Sower," a stained glass window by Donald MacDonald after the painting by Millet. This window was a gift of William Ellery Channing's descendants, for whom the church is dedicated. The window beautifully illustrates a man working in harmony with nature by sowing seeds and evokes a reverence for the environment.

During each Sunday service, there is a Time of Sharing and the candles that members and friends light rest on the core of a tree. This slab of oak was from a tree on Channing's property in Portsmouth. This ritual serves as a reminder of our historic roots and it is fitting that the rings of a tree support our joys and concerns.

Many people find solace and an uplift of spirit from the beautifully carved wood of the Sanctuary. Just below "The Sower" window is a carved medallion with acorns. These life-affirming symbols are reminders of our earth home and wonders of creation.

Hymns

Some of the most beloved hymns include: #12 *O Life That Maketh All Things New*, #15 *The Lone, Wild Bird*, #21 *For the Beauty of the Earth*, #38 *Morning Has Broken*, #51 *Lady of the Seasons' Laughter*, #61 *Lo, the Earth Awakes Again*, #100 *I've Got Peace Like a River*, #134 *Our World Is One World*, #159 *This is My Song*, #163 *For the Earth Forever Turning*, #203 *All Creatures of the Earth and Sky*, #207 *Earth was Given as a Garden*, #301 *Touch the Earth, Reach the Sky!*

Each Sunday, we sing #123 *Spirit of Life* as a Song of Praise. Many church members have memorized this song whose nature imagery is a source of strength.

Services

Each church year there are several services devoted to the wisdom of the earth. Here is a sampling of services from three church years: *The Sacred Nature of Shinto*, *Seeds of Joy*, *Birding: A Call of the Spirit*, *Growing Like Tree*, *Winter Solstice*, *Gardening and Spirituality*, *For the Beauty of the Earth (Choir Sunday)*, *Flower Communion*, *Thoreau as Spiritual Guide*, *Surfing the Seas for Spirituality*, *Creating Paradise*, *It's Easy Being Green*, *Why are we playing God?*

The Intergenerational Thanksgiving and Easter services often draw upon the rhythms of the seasons celebrating harvest and rebirth.

Readings

Poetry, literature, sacred texts, scientific research, earth-based prayers and natural images are often used in worship services to highlight our interdependence with all living beings.

How is earth caring a part of your overall social action program?

Following on the "Hot Topic" discussion of global warming led by a congregation member two years ago, the Social Justice Committee voted in September, 2006 to designate climate change the focus of 2006-07 activities and studies. Our minister and lay leaders followed up on that decision by offering a service on this theme early in the year. Our initial action was to show *An Inconvenient Truth* as a joint church/community event, through a notional program sponsored by Interfaith Power and Light. (We have since become active in the newly formed RI Chapter of Interfaith Power and Light.) In the fall, we also showed two shorter films, including *Too Hot (?Not) to Handle*, after Sunday service.

Following are some actions undertaken in 2006-08, under the banner of our Global Warming theme:

- Rev. Amy Freedman's *Newport Daily News Clergy Corner* columns
- Educational pieces in the *Catalyst*, and our new monthly *Catalyst* feature, "Eco-Bits and Tips"
- Making available literature on things we can all do to reduce our "carbon footprints"
- Conducting two presentations by the companies responsible for the green energy options offered by National Grid
- Letters to the editor and opinion pieces by Channing members in local press
- Selling compact fluorescent light bulbs during fellowship,
- Donating the remaining bulbs to the RE students to take home to their families
- The church's conversion of many of our lights to compact fluorescent
- Evaluating National Grid Green Energy options for the church,
- Drafting a mission statement on environmental responsibility
- RE program Earth Day clean-up and plans for a green summer program
- Two Channing members named to a Newport Climate Task Force.
- Networking with Portsmouth United Methodist Church's (PUMC) Missions/Social Justice Committee and other UU churches' Green Sanctuary committees
- Collaborating with PUMC to produce Step It Up 2007 in April. Since Step It Up, the coordinators have continued local educational efforts through monthly guest appearances on a local radio interview program and monthly booths at two local growers' markets. We are also assisting the Newport Water Department in publicizing an area sale of rain barrels. We will have a booth at the local bird sanctuary's annual Harvest Fair, and hosted another Step It Up event in November. Several Channing members and friends have volunteered for these efforts. Step It Up also took a free will collection at the November Step It Up event, and used the proceeds to purchase almost 600 CFLs, to donate to the Martin Luther King Center, to be distributed to recipients of Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets. In April 2008, Step It Up hosted a weekly Earth Month Film Festival at a local coffee shop, showing global warming and environment-related DVDs. The showings were free and open to the public.
- Governing Board's approving becoming a partner in People's Power & Light (one of the National Grid GreenStart alternate energy companies,) allowing church members who enroll in that program to name the church as a recipient of shared referral funds.
- Conducting a four-session sustainability circle with the (maximum recommended) enrollment of twelve, using the Northwest Earth Institute Curriculum, "Global Warming: Changing CO₂urse"
- Hosting an organic foods potluck dinner in March 2008, featuring three of our congregation's gardeners, giving a broad range of gardening guidance, including vermiculture
- Featuring a full-page Green Congregation explanation and update on Green Sanctuary in the church's newsletter, *The Catalyst*
- Introducing a motion to the Governing Board to approve congregational membership in RI Interfaith Power and Light. The Governing Board will vote on this motion at its May meeting.
- Arranging a meeting of Newport BioDiesel (which uses cooking oil/petroleum blends for home heating and diesel engine fuel) with the Property Committee, to consider a heating contract for next winter. (Meeting held on April 17. Contract is about to be signed.)
- Property Committee's meeting with a representative of a company that installs geothermal heating/cooling systems in March
- Applying for a NE Grassroots Energy Fund grant for startup funds for our proposed weatherization project for low-income households.
- Religious Education program's launching the "Spring Pillar" of classes on the environment for all age levels, in April 2008

- Launching plans for an Aquidneck Island Energy Conference, under the joint sponsorship of Channing, the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission and Salve Regina University
- Presenting the Earth Day service, April 20, 2008, featuring “Conversations with Earth,” www.uuplanet.tv, a highly creative and engaging presentation by Rev. Amy Bowden Freedman and Peter Freedman Bowden, and an excellent children’s message on energy presented by Barbara Russell-Willett, an architect and member of Channing, who was the service’s lay leader.

In spring, 2007, the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to endorse the creation of a Green Sanctuary Committee to begin the certification process, and mandated the appointment of a member of each standing committee to the Green Sanctuary Committee. In June, the committee held its convening meeting, and voted to rename itself the Green Congregation Committee, and to begin our environmental audit. In October, we completed the audit and began composing our Action Plan. Throughout the process, we have continued with “Green Congregation” activities, so that many of our proposed programs have already become continuing programs.

What other environmental issues come up in discussion groups and adult education classes, in policy proposals for the congregation, and in the local community that might be the basis for a Green Sanctuary program or activity?

Most of our projects have developed from Social Justice Committee discussions and presentations, the Children’s Religious Education program, and Sunday Services, led by our minister. Our church has also completed a yearlong visioning process, and is completing a strategic planning process, which developed in close parallel with our Green Congregation Action Plan. Also see similar question, above.