



Green Team Kit

COVENANT

BEFORE TAKING A KIT, READ THIS FIRST:

This kit is designed to help churches in Upper New York take the initial steps toward forming a Green Team. A Green Team is a group of volunteers who are dedicated to promoting environmental responsibility and sustainability within their local church. These teams work to educate church members about environmental issues, advocate for sustainable practices, and implement initiatives that reduce the church's environmental impact.

If you feel your church is ready to take this step, please help yourself to our thoughtfully-designed Green Team Kit. As you take a kit, please provide your name, your church name, and a good contact email on our sign-out sheet.

By taking a kit, we want to covenant with your church over the next year(s) in your journey toward creation care. We invite you to sign this covenant as a demonstration of your willingness to be in covenant with us, your conference Creation Justice Team, as you make tangible steps in your local church to care for God's creation.

Church Name: _____

Church Representative: _____

Signature: _____



How to FORM A GREEN TEAM

1. Gather Your Core Team 🌱

Start with at least two or three committed individuals—Jesus said that’s enough for him to be present!

Identify additional people passionate about creation care and justice, to join the team

Seek out a mix of skills and interests, including advocacy, education, and hands-on sustainability efforts.

Invite someone to commit to praying for the team’s mission and growth.

2. Engage Your Church Leadership 🏛️

Talk to the pastor and church council about forming a Green Team.

Keep leadership informed and encourage them to integrate creation care into sermons, liturgy, and ministry planning. Seek support from trustees and Sunday School leaders.

3. Identify Needs and Opportunities 🔍

Look at the church’s land, building, traditions, and surrounding community.

Identify issues like food insecurity, waste management, or energy efficiency that the team could address.

Consider the assets available: space for gardens, members with expertise, or local environmental challenges to tackle.

4. Start with a Small, Meaningful Project 🌿

Choose an initial project that is achievable and visible to build momentum.

Examples: planting native trees, setting up a recycling program, replacing Styrofoam with reusable dishes.

Celebrate small successes to encourage participation and engagement.

5. Educate and Communicate 📣

Provide Bible studies or book discussions on creation care.

Host guest speakers, film screenings, or workshops on sustainability and environmental justice.

Use church newsletters, social media, and worship bulletins to keep the congregation informed.

Develop a Green Team logo, T-shirts, or posters to build identity and awareness.

6. Expand and Sustain the Team 🌍

Recruit new members through personal invitations, announcements, and events.

Encourage participation at different levels—some may want to take leadership roles, while others may contribute occasionally. Partner with other churches, community groups, and organizations for support and shared projects.

7. Incorporate Worship, Education, Practice, and Advocacy

Worship: Organize Earth Sunday services, include prayers for creation, and integrate environmental themes into sermons. **Education:** Offer Sunday school lessons, Bible studies, and forums on environmental justice. **Practice:** Implement eco-friendly changes like composting, energy efficiency, and sustainable landscaping. **Advocacy:** Engage with policymakers, write letters, and support initiatives that promote environmental justice.

8. Connect to Larger Movements

Use resources from our United Methodist connections: The United Methodist Creation Justice Movement; your conference staff, especially the Caretakers of God's Creation coordinator, the conference green team, and the conference resilience and response efforts. Find out about potential funding sources, including the UMC Faith Foundation. Join regional or national environmental efforts, such as Interfaith Power & Light and local environmental groups. Encourage team members to become trained advocates or facilitators.

9. Keep the Momentum Going

Schedule regular meetings and report progress to church leadership. Share stories of impact to inspire ongoing involvement. Recognize and celebrate accomplishments, both big and small.

10. Potential Green Team Projects

Worship

Organize a Creation Care Sunday service. Include environmental prayers in worship. Plan an outdoor worship service to connect with nature. Develop eco-friendly liturgy and hymns. Host a prayer vigil for environmental justice.

Advocacy

Write letters to policymakers advocating for environmental protection. Participate in local clean-up and conservation projects. Host an Earth Day fair or sustainability expo. Support fair-trade and sustainably sourced church supplies. Encourage congregation members to vote with environmental concerns in mind.

Education

Offer Bible studies on creation care and environmental justice. Invite guest speakers from environmental organizations. Screen films and documentaries on climate issues. Host nature walks or eco-retreats. Organize children's activities focused on creation care.

Practice

Start a community garden or food forest. Install energy-efficient lighting and appliances. Set up a church-wide composting program. Plant native trees and pollinator-friendly plants. Reduce plastic and Styrofoam use at church events.

By following these steps, your Green Team can create a lasting impact, helping your church live out its calling to care for God's creation and serve the community with justice and compassion.



How to COMPOST @ CHURCH

Composting Basics

There are a number of YouTube videos that describe in detail how composting works. If doing church composting, find an area where you can lay out two or three collection areas directly on soil (not paved base). Compost requires brown material, green material, water, air, and labor.

Brown material includes the following:

- **Leaves and small twigs**
- **Non-glossy paper plates and cups**
- **Wooden utensils**
- **Straw**
- **Dryer lint and vacuum dust**
- **Coffee grounds and filters**
- **Other similar dry products**

Green materials are organic in nature such as:

- **Grass clippings**
- **Food wastes**
- **Egg shells**
- **Dead plants (not diseased or weeds)**
- **Other used food materials**

Mix the above in approximate equal amounts and add water to moisten the entire mixture. Aerobic composting requires that the compost be turned every week. Depending on the climate, finished compost can be ready for use in 6 to 10 weeks. If you do not have the capacity to turn it weekly, it will still break down more slowly over time.

Plastics, meats, oils and dairy products, animal feces, and other related non-degradable waste materials should not be placed into the compost system.

Church Composting

Churches that want to plan a compost system should construct two or three bins in their church yard. Bins can be constructed with concrete blocks, panels of wire fencing, or with wooden pallets that are ready to be discarded from a local business. A two-stage operation involves two bins with fresh compost material in one and more finished compost in the other. A three-stage operation just expands this process over three bins.

Collecting compost at church functions requires education about what can and cannot be composted. We recommend you start labeling compost receptacles in your main eating spaces and educate the church at every opportunity. We have included a placard on the back of this guide that could be copied, laminated, and used to label your composting receptacles. Have dedicated volunteers or staff ready to empty the receptacles regularly. Be sure to place a dedicated receptacle near your coffee station for grounds to be collected.

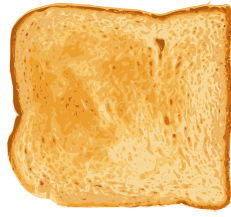
COMPOST



paper plates



paper napkins



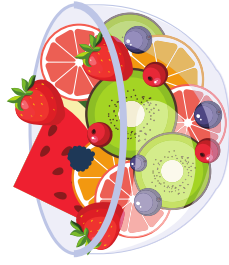
bread



vegetables



no meat



fruit

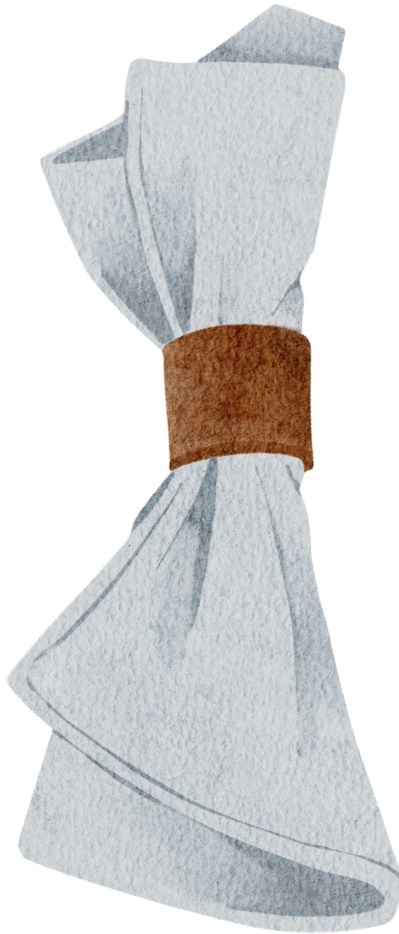


salads



pasta

How to CLOTH NAPKIN PARTY



Cloth Napkins can be a great way to reduce your church's garbage at large meal gatherings. They are also fun to make together and bring a sense of craft and care into every meal where they are used.

Throw a **Cloth Napkin Party** at your church to make enough cloth napkins to supply your typical meal events.

- Find fabrics at thrift stores like table clothes to reuse for napkins. Pre-wash the gathered fabric.
- Recruit a portable sewing machines to use at the party.
- Cut the fabric into 18"x18" squares.
- Hem each side of the fabric on the sewing machine.
- Find two baskets at a local thrift store. One for clean napkins and one for dirty napkins.





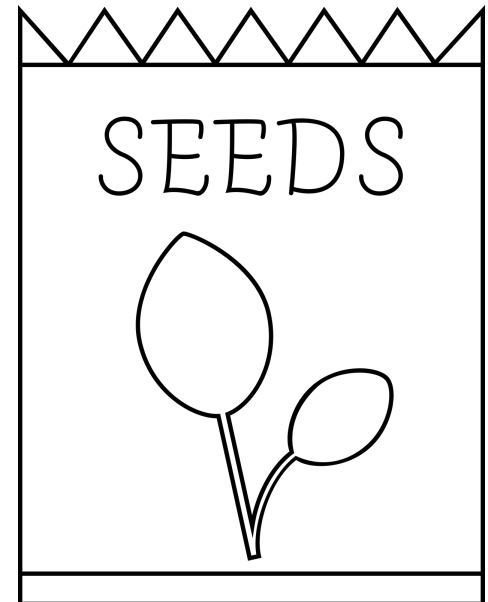
How to PLANT NATIVE

To effectively plant native plants in your United Methodist churchyard, start by assessing the needs and desires of the congregation, researching local native plant species, and planning the garden design. Consider partnering with other churches or local organizations for shared activities and resources. Finally, focus on creating a vibrant, visually appealing, and ecologically beneficial garden that supports pollinators and wildlife.

Here's a more detailed approach:

1. Gauge Interest and Needs:

- Before diving into planting, determine if there's a desire for a community garden within the congregation.
- Consider the different types of gardens that could be most useful, such as a pollinator garden, a wildlife habitat, or a Bible garden.
- Explore the theological frame for planting native gardens that resonates with the faith community, such as creation care or stewardship.



2. Research and Plan:

- Identify local native plants: Research plants native to your area that are well-suited to the site's soil, sun, and climate.
- Assess garden conditions: Consider the soil type, sunlight exposure, and any existing landscaping features.
- Plan the design: Create a visual plan that incorporates the chosen plants, considers pathways, and creates an inviting and visually appealing space.
- Consider the benefits of native plants: Remember that native plants provide food and habitat for local wildlife, help filter water, and can reduce the need for pesticides and herbicides, according to the National Wildlife Federation.

3. Implement and Maintain:

- Prepare the site: Clear the area, amend the soil as needed, and consider using raised beds or other methods to accommodate the chosen plants.
- Plant carefully: Choose plants that are suited to the site and provide proper care to ensure their success.
- Mulch and weed control: Use mulch to retain moisture and suppress weeds.
- Water wisely: Provide adequate watering, especially during establishment, but also consider rainwater harvesting techniques to reduce water usage, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

4. Partner and Engage:

- Reach out to other congregations: Explore opportunities to collaborate with other churches in the community, perhaps sharing resources or hosting joint events, according to Faith and Leadership.
- Engage the community: Consider hosting workshops, volunteer days, or educational events to share the garden's benefits and promote environmental awareness.
- Seek guidance from experts: Connect with local nurseries, garden clubs, or extension offices for advice and support.
- By carefully planning and implementing a native plant garden, a church can transform its grounds into a vibrant, ecologically beneficial space that strengthens the faith community and benefits the environment.





How to GREEN THE CHURCH KITCHEN

- Eliminate the use of styrofoam products.
- In fact, why not do away with disposable plates, cutlery and napkins altogether! Many churches have already gone to using regular cutlery, but disposable plates often still are used for ease of clean-up. Washing the dishes can be a chore, but it can also be a time of great fun and fellowship.
- Encourage church dinners that periodically go meat-free. It can be fun to find new recipes and share in this creative, eco-friendly activity.
- Don't let the faucet run when washing dishes by hand. Most church kitchens have a two-compartment sink, so fill one with clean water for rinsing. Perhaps the trustees might be willing to invest in a low-flow aerator; it'll save even more water.
- Encourage the use of eco-friendly cleaning products. Try sponges made from recycled materials and biodegradable, phosphate-free dish soaps and detergents to help save marine life. Swedish dishcloths (like the one enclosed) are used for a wide variety of cleaning tasks around the church, offering a reusable and environmentally friendly alternative to paper towels and sponges.
- Switch back to glass communion cups. It's likely your church (or a neighboring church) has their original glass cups packed away somewhere. Using and washing glass cups cut down tremendously on waste.
- Do an efficiency study on kitchen appliances. Many church refrigerators run all the time, even when people are not in the building. Some run for the sole purpose of keeping coffee creamer preserved for the next Sunday or meeting night. Unplugging a full-sized refrigerator (until an event requires it) and running a smaller unit is more cost-effective and better for the environment, and it can lower the church's energy bills.
- Consider replacing a traditional water heater with tankless, on-demand units. A forty- or fifty-gallon water heater was not very economical running in your church during the pandemic, and odds are, it is still inefficient as you move toward reopening your facility. A new generation of tankless, on-demand water heating units can be mounted in-line under sinks and will heat water only when needed. These units can cost as little as \$200, use a fraction of the energy of larger units, and probably can recoup their cost in as little as a year.



guide to RECYCLING SOFT PLASTIC

Plastic bags and film packaging are ubiquitous in our homes and churches. Everything from food to newspapers to bundles of paper towels are wrapped in this soft plastic. But these materials **SHOULD NOT** be recycled in most curbside carts or single stream programs. Thankfully, your church can become a collection site for bags and film to be recycled **AND** earn a bench made from recycled plastic bags in the process.

NEXTREX RECYCLING CHALLENGE PROGRAM

Trex® is proud to sponsor local recycling programs in communities throughout the country. For example, for K-12 schools, civic organizations, houses of worship and university organizations etc. If your team can collect more than 1,000 pounds of soft film plastics and packaging in a 12-month span, we will award a Trex® furniture bench to your organization. Visit nextrex.com for information.

- Choose a 12-month collection time frame
- Collect a minimum of 1,000 lbs
- Weigh, record and attach pictures at my.trex.com
- Deliver the collected plastic film to one of
- our participating drop-off retailer locations for recycling

TESTIMONIAL

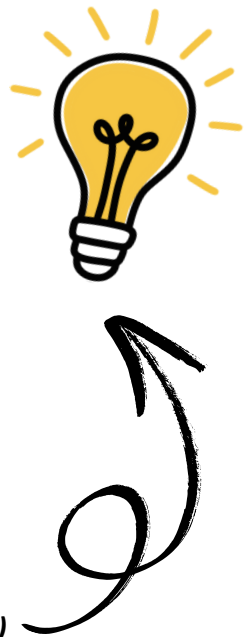
When Cobleskill United Methodist Church began their 12-month NexTrex Challenge in December of 2023, they weren't sure that such light weight bags could add up to 1000 lbs. Word got out to the community, though, and soon the hardware stores were collecting empty pellet bags from their customers, neighbors were saving their bags, and local stores were saving the wrappings their goods came in. Within 4 months the church collected it's 1000 lbs. Now the church is collecting toward bench goals for a local elementary school and a sister UMC church's Code Blue Warming Station.





guide to GREEN CHURCH AUDIT

DONE!	WILL CONSIDER	NOT FOR US	WORSHIP
			Include environmental concerns in worship/prayer
			Ask God's forgiveness for doing harm to the environment
			Connect with creation during worship (worship outside)
			Sing hymns or songs celebrating creation
			Save trees by reducing/eliminating paper bulletins
			Use recycled, chlorine-free paper for any printed materials
			Use locally produced communion elements
			EDUCATION
			Study/explore environmental issues in Bible studies
			Include earth themes in Sunday school/children's church
			Hold a forum or film screening on environmental issues
			Include youth in a conservation project
			Encourage children/youth to spend time in nature
			Hold an environmental summer camp for children
			Organize/host an Earth Day event
			BUILDING
			Add insulation to church building (walls/ceiling)
			Choose appropriately sized rooms for activities
			Install a smart/programmable thermostat
			Use energy-saving light bulbs (LED/CFL) (<i>like the one enclosed</i>)
			When replacing appliances, choose energy efficient ones
			Unplug/turn off appliances when not in use
			Check water faucets for drips and leaks
			Install water-saving devices on toilets and taps
			Install an energy-efficient dishwasher & run weekly
			Encourage use of virtual meetings when possible
			Use environmentally friendly cleaning products
			Add a bottle filler to drinking fountains
			Consider adding solar to the roof or building a solar carport
			PROPERTY
			Make minimal use of weed killers and pesticides
			Allow areas of property to grow 'wild' for use by insects, bees, and animals
			Use native plant species that benefit wildlife
			Install bird feeders and bird nest boxes
			Mow leaves instead of raking and discarding them
			Consider using green space for flower/vegetable gardens



GREEN CHURCH AUDIT

continued

DONE!	WILL CONSIDER	NOT FOR US	
			Compost yard waste & use as fertilizer
			Install a rain barrel and use it to water flowers
			Install a rain garden/wetland where water naturally pools
			Install EV chargers (solar-powered if possible)
			CONSUMABLES
			Purchase Fairtrade or locally made products when possible
			Purchase food from farmers' markets or other local suppliers
			Have recycling containers available with instructions
			Purchase recycled, unbleached and/or chlorine-free paper products (copy paper, paper towels, napkins, coffee filters)
			Consider using real plates and silverware instead of paper or plastic
			Ban Styrofoam cups and plates from church events
			Use real coffee cups that are donated or thrifted
			Consider composting food waste to keep it out of landfills
			Use compostable trash liners (<i>like the one enclosed</i>)
			LIFESTYLE
			Publish green tips/ideas on the church website, newsletter, & social media
			Promote home energy audits and carbon footprint tracking
			Encourage recycling and waste reduction at home
			Encourage walking, cycling, public transport, and car-pooling to church
			Encourage parishioners to join a CSA or use a local farmers market
			Partner with a local conservation non-profit to pick up litter
			Organize a seed exchange in your church or community
			ADVOCACY
			Organize an offering of letters to policy makers, urging them to take meaningful action for the environment
			Hold a community prayer vigil for environmental justice
			Become involved in UWF's Just Energy 4 All campaign
			Encourage your congregants to give up plastic for Lent
			GENERAL
			Establish a 'green team' that can help guide efforts to green your church
			Adopt a written environmentally preferable (or green) purchasing policy
			Encourage groups that use church property to care for the earth as well