



Seven Things Every Congregation Can Do For the Environment

[Source: California Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, www.cal-pac.org]

1. Conserve Energy

About 80 percent of all pollutant emissions, discharges, and other releases can be linked to energy consumption. For example, power plants emit huge quantities of criteria pollutants, hazardous air pollutants, and greenhouse gases. Even a small reduction in energy consumption will help to improve our air quality, as well as conserve energy resources for future generations.

The following are some helpful tips that can significantly reduce energy consumption.

1. When buying new appliances and electronic equipment make sure the new equipment is EnergyStar compliant. You will reduce your energy consumption for the appliance by at least 25 percent over the least efficient new models. For more information go to: www.epa.gov/energystar/.
2. Consider replacing that old inefficient refrigerator with a new EnergyStar compliant model. Chances are that the old refrigerator uses 2 to 3 times more energy than the best new models.
3. Replace any halogen torchier floor lamps with fluorescent models. You will eliminate a potential fire hazard and reduce energy consumption by about 75 percent.
4. Replace incandescent lamps with compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs). Modern CFLs are cost effective, reliable, and fit into most light fixtures. You may reduce your energy consumption for lighting by 50 percent or more.
5. Upgrade any incandescent exit signs to use LED lamps. By installing LED lamps, you will reduce you energy consumption for exit signs by about 80 percent.
6. Upgrade older 40 watt T-12 fluorescent lamps with either 34 watt T-12 fluorescent lamps or retrofit fixture with new energy efficient T-8 Fluorescent lamps and new electronic Ballast's.
7. Replace older thermostats with electronic programable thermostats. You will reduce your heating and cooling costs significantly by only heating and cooling areas when they are actually being used.

2. Purchase Renewable (Green) Energy.

Green power is generated using fuel resources that either don't run out or are quickly renewed through natural processes. These resources are typically defined as solar, wind, geothermal, biomass and small hydroelectric. All methods of generating electricity affect the environment. Green electricity technologies, however, are among the more environmentally friendly sources you can choose.

In the competitive market, the responsibility lies with consumers to choose renewable power. This ensures that existing renewable facilities continue to operate and provide a market for the development of new renewable facilities.

When you choose renewable power you are supporting technologies that have many environmental advantages. Renewable power makes use of secure, indigenous, and replenishable natural resources. In many applications, renewable energy can help clean our air by reducing the production of air pollutants like nitrogen oxides and reducing emissions of carbon dioxide (a leading contributor to global climate change). Renewable power may cost a few dollars more each month however the additional cost is generally small compared to the total cost of the electric bill. For more information about green power providers in your area go to <http://www.energyguide.com>.

3. Develop Recycling Programs

Most of us realize we can recycle aluminum cans, newspapers, glass containers, and plastic bottles. However, in many cases we don't recycle because it is not convenient. By making recycling convenient at your church, you can reduce the volume of waste that must be landfilled. In addition you may make a tidy profit. Also, by recycling you teach the recycling ethic.

In addition, to the "normal" list of items that are thought of as recyclable, the following items also may be recycled:

1. **Printer cartridges** may be recycled either private collection programs or through vendor sponsored programs. For example Hewlett-Packard will provide envelopes (with prepaid postage for returning used laser cartridges and printer cartridges. See <http://hpjic.startek.com/usa/> for details.
2. **Latex paints** are commonly recycled into paints for graffiti control. Contact your local city waste management agency for information.
3. **Green waste (lawn waste)** is commonly recycled as part of city waste collection programs. If your city has a green waste recycling, segregate and properly dispose of any green waste you generate. If your city does not have a green waste recycling program consider setting up a compost bin.
4. **Office paper** in most areas may be recycled if properly segregated.

The following are some helpful tips to consider when developing a recycling program.

1. Place an appropriate recycling container at every location that has a garbage can. For example, paper recycling in office areas and can or bottle recycling containers in youth and adult fellowship areas. Consider purchasing standard labeled blue recycling containers. Encourage your youth group to manage recycling of items such as redemption value cans and bottles.
2. Encourage your youth group to manage recycling of items that have significant value such as "redemption value" cans and bottles.
3. Items that don't have a resale value should be recycled through programs managed by the garbage collection service.

4. Buy Recycled and Recyclable Products

Recycling is of no use if we do not buy recycled products. The following is a partial list of products may contain recycled content.

1. Office paper
2. Binders
3. Napkins
4. Paper hand towel rolls
5. Bathroom tissue
6. Binders
7. Printer cartridges

When purchasing supplies, make a point of looking for and buying recycled products if possible. If the products are not available, ask the store manager to consider stocking more recycled items. If you have trouble locating recycled products consider looking on the Internet for vendors that specialize in recycled products.

5. Carefully Manage Hazardous Materials and Properly Dispose of Hazardous Waste.

Many common products may pose a safety hazard or harm the environment if handled improperly or disposed of improperly. Examples of waste materials that should **not be disposed** as municipal trash include: paints, solvents, pesticides, spent batteries, fluorescent lamps, cleaning solvents.

The following are some helpful tips that will improve your management of hazardous materials.

1. Buy only enough material to complete the planned project. Extra material will likely become waste that will require extra effort to dispose.
2. Make sure all hazardous materials are safely stored. Where possible use metal cabinets and always segregate incompatible chemicals.
3. Periodically inspect storage areas for unused and out dated products. Dispose of identified materials in accordance with regulations. Many cities operate waste collection programs to prevent improper disposal of hazardous substances. If you have questions regarding proper disposal procedures, contact your city or county waste management department.
4. When contracting for services make sure the vendor understands that they are responsible for disposal of any hazardous materials left over from the project.

6. Use Low-VOC Paints.

Although latex paints contain less VOCs than oil-based paints, nearly all paints emit significant quantities of smog forming VOCs when used. By selecting the paint with the lowest possible VOC content you can help to reduce air pollution.

Responding to air quality concerns several paint manufacturers have introduced "low-odor" interior paints as well as standard low-VOC latex paints. Low-odor paints are nearly VOC free and almost completely eliminate that annoying paint smell. Although these paints are not intended for every application, they are great for many applications. For example, low-odor paints work well on interior wallboard, plaster, and wood surfaces that are not exposed to wear or dirt buildup. Low odor paints are not intended for surfaces that will be subjected to repeated cleaning such as doors and kitchen walls and where a dramatic change in color is planned. Standard low-VOC paints work well where durability is a major issue.

The following are some helpful tips to consider when selecting paints.

1. When selecting paint ask about low-odor and low-VOC products. For additional information on environmentally preferable paints go to <http://www.greenseal.org/> or <http://www.paintinfo.com/>.
2. Ask to see the product data sheet and compare VOC content between products. Generally speaking environmentally friendly latex paints should not contain VOCs in excess of the values shown below.
 - Interior low-odor 10 g/l
 - Interior Flat 50 g/l
 - Interior Non-Flat 150 g/l
 - Exterior Flat 150 g/l
 - Exterior Non-Flat 200 g/l
3. Use low-odor paints whenever suitable.
4. Minimize use of oil-based paints by asking about water-based alternatives to oil-based paints.
5. Consider washing rather than repainting.

7. Incorporate Environmental Programs in Church Activities.

Where possible incorporate environmental programs into everyday church activities. The following are some examples of environmental programs that may be incorporated into the life of the church.

- Plan an Earth Day Worship Service
- Encourage Youth and adult groups to participate in local cleanup days and other environmental events.
- Plan a fund raiser that includes collecting recyclables.
- Finally, each day take a few minutes to enjoy the beauty of God's Creation.