

Earth Care Congregations Certification Program to be Launched

At General Assembly in July 2010, the Environmental Ministries Office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) will launch a new certification-Earth Care Congregations--for congregations that take concrete steps to care for creation. Earth Care Congregations are congregations that have committed to an "Earth Care Pledge" and accomplished a specific number of steps toward caring for God's earth in four categories: worship, education, facilities, and outreach. Congregations earning enough points in each of the four categories will be certified and receive various honors. Congregation members will also be invited to participate as individuals by completing similar steps in their homes. A Guide to Greening Presbyterian Churches will provide congregations with worksheets, resources, and instructions for becoming an Earth Care Congregation. Four categories of actions in the "Earth Care Pledge" were used as a guide for developing "Earth Care Congregations: A Guide to Greening Presbyterian Churches."

The Eco-Justice Team of Cascades Presbytery encourages interested congregations to form a creation care team to review the program. The session must give its support to the congregation's application. This fall the team will provide training opportunities for congregations that want to know more about the program or that wish to be certified. First Presbyterian of Portland was one a couple dozen pilot congregations that tested out the program this spring.

The program provides a tangible way for congregations to live out *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*, the policy adopted by the 1990 the 202nd General Assembly that calls our denomination to engage in the tasks of restoring creation. The "Call to Restore the Creation" is part of the resolution and stated that the General Assembly:

- Recognizes and accepts restoring creation as a central concern of the church, to be incorporated into its life and mission at every level;
- Understands this to be a new focus for initiative in mission program and a concern with major implications for infusion into theological work, evangelism, education, justice and peacemaking, worship and liturgy, public witness, global mission, and congregational service and action at the local community level;
- Recognizes that restoring creation is not a short-term concern to be handled in a few years, but a continuing task to which the nation and the world must give attention and commitment, and which has profound implications for the life, work, and witness of Christian people and church agencies;
- Approaches the task with covenant seriousness –"If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God...then you shall live" (Deut. 30:16) – and with practical awareness that cherishing God's creation enhances the ability of the church to achieve its other goals.

In consideration of this "Call to Restore the Creation" congregations are invited to participate in a certification program for Earth Care Congregations based on the "Earth Care Pledge". The honor of being an Earth Care Congregation must be renewed each year. Renewal requires earning new points in the four categories. Churches meeting the renewal requirements will be awarded an updated certificate, permission to use the ECC logo, and continued listing on the PC(USA) Environmental Ministries website.

Please contact Jenny Holmes, Eco-Justice Educator at jehrestore@aol.com or 503-281-8175 if you would like to participate in training on the program, have a good congregational greening story to share from your congregation would like a presentation for your congregation.