

**Sustainability Action Plan  
The Presbyterian Church  
Fredericksburg, VA**



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**ENVR S-599A**

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1. **Background** -- The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) sponsors an Earth Care Congregation certification program that recognizes congregations that have accomplished a specific number of actions toward caring for the earth in four categories – worship, education, facilities, and outreach. After achieving at least 25 points in each area during a year, the congregation can apply for certification between January 1 and February 15 of the following year. Annual recertification requires at least five points in each area and total points of 50 or more (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2018).

The Earth Care Congregation program was established in response to the 1990 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly resolution, Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice. As of 2020, there were 263 Earth Care Congregations in the denomination including 14 in Virginia (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2020).

2. **Client Requirements** -- The Presbyterian Church of Fredericksburg, Virginia seeks Earth Care Congregation certification in 2022 through the completion of qualifying initiatives in 2021.

3. **Opportunities & Risks** – Completion of this effort will lead to Earth Care Congregation certification and the initiatives completed will provide various benefits across the church and beyond. The effort should also raise the awareness of individual members regarding sustainability issues that could lead to positive changes in other aspects of their lives and the community. Failure to seek certification might allow continuation of uniformed and inefficient actions, policies, and procedures.

4. **Key Stakeholders:**

- Rev. Allen H. Fisher, Jr. -- Pastor/Executive Sponsor,
- Congregation,
- Session,
- Worship and Music Committee (Elders Sherman Brown, Chris Hall, Brian Liska, and Michelle Porter) – Lead for worship initiatives,
- Christian Education Committee (Elders Connie Barnes, Michal Gloyd, Michelle Porter, and Beth Valasko) – Lead for education initiatives,
- Buildings and Grounds Committee (Elders Kurt Chewning, Steve Davis, Bryan Eland, and Vanessa Huffman); John Copley, Maintenance Supervisor; and Piper Foresman, Kitchen Coordinator – Leads for facilities initiatives,
- Mission Committee (Elders Linda Benn, Erik Fino, Beth Huber, and Andrea Ilardia) – Lead for outreach initiatives.

5. **Recommended Initiatives** – A detailed program explanation is provided in *Earth Care Congregations: A Guide to Greening Presbyterian Churches* (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2018). The first-



year application provides lists of all qualifying initiatives by area (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), n.d.).

While the lists of initiatives to be undertaken may evolve over time, the initial lists provided below constitute **feasible** (possible based on current capabilities or past performance) and **sufficient** (completion of initiatives achieve required points) plans for continuing discussion and planning. Additional initiatives may be added in response to new opportunities and the evolving interests of the congregation. If any initiatives are removed, however, they may need to be replaced by others to ensure that the minimum required points are still achieved.

a. **Worship:**

- Outdoor worship service at Congregational Retreat at Camp Hanover, Virginia, March 2021,
- Include earth care prayers, hymns, and readings in worship services,
- Provide Minute for Mission presentations during worship services to introduce the Earth Care Congregation program and progress on selected initiatives by each committee,
- Promote and participate in an earth care focused Lent discipline.

b. **Education:** For six Sunday mornings last spring, The Christian Education Committee planned a special course, *Connecting with Creation: How is the Church Called to Engage?* Scheduled guest speakers included:

- Christian Brooks, Representative for Domestic Issues from the Office of Public Witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),
- Colleen Earp, Director of Youth, Environment, and Service Ministries at Camp Hanover,
- Hal Wiggins, Environmental Scientist (Retired),
- Jason Hayob-Matzke, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Mary Washington (The Presbyterian Church, 2020).

The course was cancelled after two sessions because of the COVID-19 outbreak. The committee has expressed plans to present the course in the spring of 2021.

c. **Facilities:** For initial certification, the facilities area is scored differently from the others. While worship, education, and outreach initiatives must be completed in the year specific to certification, facilities upgrades can have been made in the past.

Areas of facility upgrades include:

- Energy conservation,

- Heating/cooling,
- Lighting,
- Heating water,
- Renewable energy,
- Water conservation,
- Recycling/waste,
- Grounds,
- Storm water management (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), n.d.).

A current facilities audit using the Key Performance Indicators provided below yielded 88 points, far in excess of the 25 points needed in this area for initial certification.

For subsequent recertification, all facilities upgrades must have been completed in the year specific to recertification.

**d. Outreach:**

- Congregational Retreat at Camp Hanover, Virginia, March 2021,
- Collections of gently used clothing for the Fredericksburg Interfaith Community Council's School Dressing Days program,
- Promoting carpooling for session retreat, presbytery meetings, mission trips, youth group events, etc.,
- Mission trip to New Bern, NC for hurricane disaster relief, spring 2021.

**6. Fostering Sustainable Behavior of leadership, staff and the community in support of the initiatives:**

- a. **Vision of Sustainability** – The mission statement of the Presbyterian Church, Fredericksburg, Virginia is: "Led by the Holy Spirit, we glorify God, nurture the faith with each other, and witness the fullness of Christ's love in the world (The Presbyterian Church, n.d.)."

Scriptural references abound regarding the goodness of creation and humanity's stewardship responsibilities. The 1990 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly resolution, Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice, summarized the current need and call to action:

"Theologically, then, we believe that God who redeems and liberates, who executes justice, and who acts with revelatory power in special times, comes at this turning point in history not only to judge but to restore.



God hears creation's cry. God calls human beings, especially those who, following Jesus, accept stewardship as servanthood. In faith we discern God's new doing and hear the call to become involved with God in restoring creation, human and nonhuman (202<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly, 1990, p. 26)."

- b. **Leadership's role and recommended actions to engage the staff** – The participating committees will be introduced to the program through presentations at their regularly scheduled meetings. The committees will have primary responsibility for selecting and implementing initiatives in their areas. The session will be introduced to the program through a presentation at a regularly scheduled meeting and they will have the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment by adopting the "Earth Care Pledge."
  - c. **Communication/Marketing** – The congregation will be introduced to the program and updated about continuing progress through presentations during worship services, announcements in the weekly bulletin, the monthly newsletter, and the website.
  - d. **Educational Programs** – Education is one of the four key categories of initiatives and is discussed in detail above.
  - e. **Organizational structure in support of Sustainability** – Often called a "Green Team," this project will employ an "Earth Care Team" to coordinate efforts. Team membership will include representatives from each committee and other interested members of the congregation.
7. **Sustainability Capital Reserve** – Many of the initiatives will have little or no costs involved. Sustainability projects requiring capital, however, can be self-funded by establishing a Sustainability Capital Reserve (SCR) on the organization's balance sheet. Savings resulting from implementation of the recommended initiatives can be captured and set aside as a rotating pool of capital to fund sustainability projects. The SCR also enables management to view easily the financial impact of implementing the sustainability initiatives (O'Brien, 2020).
8. **Performance Metrics & Reporting** – The qualifying initiatives for the program are well defined and performance is measured as **binary** (Yes/No for action completed), **proportions** (Some, Half, Most, or All), or **integer** (number of times actions are completed) and points are assigned accordingly. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the

selected initiatives are listed below:

a. **Worship:**

- "Number of worship services conducted outdoors in the past year" – 5 points for one service,
- "Number of Sundays that worship services had an intentional earth care component (prayers, hymns, readings) in the past year" – 10 points for five items,
- "Number of Sundays that a Minute for Mission on earth care issues was presented" – 10 points for five presentations,
- "Did your church promote and participate in an earth care-focused Lent discipline?" – 10 points for "Yes" (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), n.d.).
- Total Points: 35

b. **Education:**

- "Number of adult courses (series of classes) with an earth care focus" – 12 points for one course,
- "Number of guest earth care speakers or programs" – 16 points for four speakers (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), n.d.).
- Total Points: 28

c. **Facilities:**

- "Are your church's furnaces high-efficiency models?" – 4 points for "Most",
- "Are your church's air conditions high-efficiency models?" – 4 points for "Most",
- "Are your church's HVAC systems programmable to turn on and off at set times?" – 4 points for "Most",
- "Are your church's HVAC systems zoned so that not all rooms need to be heated/cooled continually?" – 4 points for "Most",
- "Number of outside doors that seal tightly" – 5 points for "All",
- "Number of windows that seal tightly" – 5 points for "All",
- "Number of windows that are double-pane" – 7 points for "Most",
- "Number of windows that are covered with plastic/storm windows for energy efficiency" – 2 points for "Some",
- "Number of fixtures with efficient light bulbs: compact fluorescent light bulbs, LEDs, or efficient tube lights" – 7 points for "Most",
- "Number of exit signs with light emitting diode (LED) bulbs" – 10 points for "All",
- "Number of restrooms with motion sensors on lights" – 4 points for "Most",
- "Number of church's water heaters tankless or on-demand" – 4 points for "Most",



- "Number of dual-flush toilets or low-flow toilets installed" – 7 points for "Most",
- "Number of faucets with aerators" – 5 points for "All",
- "Amount of electronic equipment recycled" – 5 points for "All",
- "Are church members given the option of receiving the church newsletter via email?" – 3 points for "Yes",
- "Amount of plants on the church grounds that are native" – 4 points for "Most",
- "Does your church have a bike rack on its property?" – 2 points for "Yes",
- "Amount of the parking lot that has permeable pavement" – 2 points for "Some" (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), n.d.).
- Total Points: 88

d. **Outreach:**

- "Number of camping trips, nature walks or outings in which your church has participated" – 4 points for one event,
- "Number of times used materials were donated for reuse in social justice projects such as Habitat for Humanity, clothes closets, etc." – 2 points for one program,
- "Number of times your church encourages members to carpool or use non-single-occupancy vehicles" – 10 points for five or more trips,
- "Does your church participate in disaster recovery efforts that are sustainable and resilient?" – 10 points for "Yes" (Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), n.d.).
- Total Points: 26

9. **Recommendations:** As the committees make progress on initiatives in 2021, they should identify follow-on initiatives to undertake in 2022 to further enhance sustainability and to qualify for recertification in 2023.

10. **Roadmap:**

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Activity/Deliverable</u>
July 20, 2020	Meet with Mission Committee (Completed).
July 28, 2020	Meet with John Copley, Maintenance Supervisor (Completed).
August 11, 2020	Meet with Christian Education Committee (Completed).
August 19, 2020	Consultant presents SAP to Executive Sponsor; client emails Client Satisfaction Survey to the course instructor.
September 13, 2020	Program introduction to session.



TBD	Meet with Worship and Music Committee.
TBD	Meet with Buildings and Grounds Committee.
January 2021	Church newsletter (December 14, 2020 deadline) and website update.
January 2021	Program introduction to congregation during worship services.
January 1 to December 31, 2021	Continuing progress on Earth Care Congregation initiatives.
January 1 to February 15, 2022	Apply for Earth Care Congregation certification for 2022.

**Presentation Event Plan**

- August 19, 2020/2 PM/Zoom meeting with Rev. Allen H. Fisher, Jr., Pastor/Executive Sponsor.
- As required by ENVR S-599A, this meeting will present the final instructor-reviewed Sustainability Action Plan and solicit client feedback through the Client Satisfaction Survey.
- As the session meets monthly at regularly scheduled meetings on the second Sunday of the month (currently via Zoom), the consultant will brief the church's collective ruling body on September 13, 2020. Updates on program progress will be presented as needed.
- Both meetings will include a PowerPoint presentation and a question and answer period.

## References

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