

Caring for God's Earth

Presented by Jeanne Haseley, coordinator

Christ Lutheran Church, Athens, Earth Justice Advocates

Beginnings: The seed was planted at an ecumenical Palm Sunday service where a sermon was preached on Creation and how we are called upon to care for that which God has created. Subsequently an ecumenical study group was formed which eventually became the Earth Justice Network, consisting of members from various Athens churches. This led to the formation of Earth Justice groups within each of the member churches, including Christ Lutheran in 2006.

The Christ Lutheran Earth Justice Advocates began their outreach to the Lutheran congregation by sponsoring a Sunday School series to introduce the topic of Spirituality and the Care of Creation to other church members. A notice was published in the church's newsletter inviting other church members to join the group:

"The newly formed Christ Lutheran Church Earth Justice Advocates is a group of church members who are dedicated to promoting the care of the earth which God has created. Some of the ways we are exploring to do this within our church community are through educational programs for youth and adults, energy audits, purchasing resources for use by church groups, encouraging practices of conserving and using energy-saving measures in our church buildings and programs. We welcome anyone who is interested to join us at our monthly meetings which will be announced in the church bulletin."

Subsequently, the Lutheran Earth Justice Advocates planned and coordinated the following activities:

- Encouraged the use of non-paper or recyclable dishes and utensils at church activities.
- Worked with our Worship and Arts Committee to plan Earth Day and Outdoor services emphasizing the Care of the Earth.
- Wrote a Bible School curriculum, "This is My Father's World" and coordinated the Bible School activities in July of 2007.
- Started a Low Carbon Diet Program (published by the Empowerment Institute – www.empowermentinstitute.net) in which church families participated to lower their household energy consumption and carbon emissions.
- Assisted the ecumenical Earth Justice Network in sponsoring a "Global Warming Café" to introduce the Low Carbon Diet program to area church members.
- Participated in other educational programs and activities of the Earth Justice Network.

- Sponsored the attendance of a member at a Bible Institute at Trinity Seminary on "Caring for the Earth".-
- Sponsored an energy audit of the church building by John Fetters in April of 2008 and conducted an energy audit of our church house by group members who had taken energy audit training sponsored by the Sierra Club.
- Coordinated with Church Council and the Church Property Committee to implement energy efficiency measures indicated by the energy audits.
- Initiated a series of energy conservation announcements (Energy Tip of the Week) before the church services and in the church bulletin and newsletter.
- Created a church lending library of materials and books on the "Care of Creation".
- Arranged for Christ Lutheran Church to join Ohio Interfaith Power and Light.
- Arranged for the church to participate in Athens City "Green Landlord Program" for two church rental houses as part of the "Cool Cities Campaign".
- Conducted programs for "Wit and Wisdom" (over 60 group) and for the "Energizers" (youth group).
- Sponsored a series of luncheon seminars for all church members which featured environmental speakers and movies, including a panel on the impact of mineral extraction on global warming, a program on Mountain Top Removal, Greg Hitzhusen on OIPL, movies, such as "Global Warning" and "The Journey of the Universe".
- Conducted a "Weatherization" seminar for church members to demonstrate energy efficiency measures and materials.
- Sponsored a compact fluorescent light bulb exchange and a service for recycling CFL bulbs.
- Sponsored a book review group for Lester Brown's "Plan B".
- Co-sponsored "Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream" workshops and funded the training of a trainer.
- Co-sponsored community events such as the visit of Dr. Mathew and Nancy Sleeth to Athens.
- Provided for the dissemination of information to church members about area and state opportunities for educational programs, advocacy, and opportunities for energy conservation and the care of the earth.
- Toured energy efficient homes built by a group member.

-Participated in OIPL's "Cool Congregations" Contest for the church and five households, and reduced our total carbon footprint by 128,521 lbs. of CO2 in one year, winning an award.

-Donated the \$500 prize from OIPL to the church toward the purchase of an energy efficient refrigerator.

Our Future Plans: We plan to expand our activities to reach new members and our growing youth population as well as participating in more community concerns such as hydraulic fracturing. Some of our planned future activities include: Movie and Popcorn Nights to show environmental films, purchase of audio-visual materials for our lending library, forming new Low Carbon Diet groups of families within the church such as for youth and their families, "Wonder Camps or Nights" such as viewing the stars with a group members telescope, planning environmental activities for the youth with the youth director, programs with church groups using the Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream materials, and another round of energy announcements and publicizing our library materials before services and in the bulletin.

Contact Information: For additional information and addresses for resources used, contact Jeanne Haseley at haseley@ohio.edu.

