

Ways to Connect with Environmental Well-being

“In this area, people are filled with compassion and really do want to help and to make a difference. They may be ignorant as to how they personally could make a difference on a daily basis.”

~Thea Yoder, Fountain City Connections

Make a Difference through Prayer

- Pray that Christians will grow in gratitude for the blessings of creation and in openness to the biblical mandate for environmental stewardship.
- Pray that individuals, businesses and communities would adopt changes that contribute to environmental well-being – even when costly.
- Pray for those entrusted with planning and development in our region, that they might have wisdom and courage to make decisions leading to sustainable development.
- Pray that people would see the hand of God in the natural beauty of our region, and that the environmental movement would lead people to worship the one true Creator.
- Pray for the restoration of the land, water and air of Appalachia now damaged by the practice of mountaintop removal, and that efforts toward less environmentally damaging practices would be successful.
- Pray that we all might repent of greed, materialism and selfishness that contribute to environmental destruction, and that Christians might become a witness to our society in being led by faith to care for creation.

Make a Difference through Your Life

- Recognize that environmental concerns are not just a matter of practical self-interest, but a spiritual mandate. The earth is not ours—it belongs to God (Psalm 24:1).
- Realize that part of loving our neighbor is taking care of the environment that sustains life and health for our neighbor. Examine how your everyday decisions and activities affect the environmental well-being of the broader community and the planet.
- Take practical actions of environmental stewardship, e.g.: use energy saving light bulbs, install energy-saving windows, conserve water, turn off unneeded lights and appliances, grow your own vegetables and buy locally-grown food, choose items with less packaging, reduce waste by recycling. Even small steps can bring about big change over time.
- Walk or bike instead of drive whenever possible – not only will this save energy, it can lead to a slower-paced life and precious times of communion with God.
- Communicate the importance of creation care to children in your family and in your congregation, and help instill habits of conservation and appreciation for creation. For example, have children identify “green” products at the store.
- Reduce your electricity consumption and sign up for TVA's Green Power Switch program (<http://www.greenpowerswitch.com>). Call KUB Customer Service (865-524-2911) or check with your local utility for an energy audit of your home and church.

- Become an informed advocate for creation care in your church, business and neighborhood, and provide suggestions for increasing energy efficiency, conserving water and reducing waste.
- Support policies at local, state, and national levels that encourage clean energy and protect creation. Strategic public-private initiatives to improve air quality are a particular priority for the Knoxville area.

Make a Difference Through Your Church

- LEAF (<http://www.tnleaf.org>) offers Sunday School materials that provide concrete ways for children and their families to express their concern for the Lord's creation.
- Conduct an energy audit of church buildings (call KUB Customer Service, 865-524-2911) and develop a plan for energy efficiency improvements.
- Establish a Creation Care Ministry to educate and organize members around issues of environmental stewardship.
- Hold a Bible study on creation care in a natural setting such as Ijams Nature Center.
- Plan special events around Earth Day, such as a worship service celebrating God's creation and a service project (clean a local park, plant trees for low-income homeowners, start a community garden).
- Contact the Knoxville Recycling Coalition (865-525-9694) for a free waste audit of your church and for information on recycling options for church members.
- Organize a “walk to church” campaign for members of the congregation who live nearby. If your church is not pedestrian-accessible, consider building a walking path (in consultation with the city planning department).
- Provide funds and support to help small nonprofits become more energy-efficient – such as by helping to arrange an energy audit, donating energy-efficient light bulbs and appliances, and weatherizing the facilities.
- Work with elderly or low-income households to become more energy efficient by donating energy-efficient light bulbs, fixing leaky faucets, changing air filters, sealing windows, etc.
- Adopt a public park or stream that needs tender loving care: pick up trash, weed, plant flowers (check with the city planning department).

Make a Difference as a Volunteer

Connect with the following organizations that work to ensure environmental well-being:

Fountain City Connections: 865-281-9165, <http://www.fountaincityconnections.org>

A group organized for the purpose of making Knoxville more pedestrian-friendly. Promotes the development of sidewalks, pathways and greenways to connect all parts of our city, as well as programs to educate pedestrians and drivers about safe practices.

- Coordinate efforts that encourage walking, such as volunteering to walk the children in your neighborhood to their schools in the mornings.
- Organize events around sidewalk or greenway installation, clean-up, or repair.
- Help develop a walking/biking incentive program that could be used by schools, churches, businesses, or the city.
- Become a pedestrian liaison and advocate for pedestrian safety and accessibility.

- Families: Educate other families of the physical, social and environmental benefits of walking, and organize a walking group in your community or congregation.

Lindquist-Environmental Appalachian Fellowship (LEAF): <http://www.tnleaf.org>

A Christian fellowship of Tennesseans whose faith leads them to awaken congregations to the Biblical call for creation care; educates Christians on the issue of mountaintop removal and encourages them to address the environmental destruction and economic injustice this practice inflicts on the land and people of Appalachia.

- Join LEAF's e-mail list of churches and individuals willing to write their elected officials to encourage legislation that exhibits concern for the Lord's creation.
- Lead a small group study of LEAF materials, such as the *Kilowatt Ours* and *Mountain Mourning* DVDs.
- Organize a book study on *Serve God, Save the Planet* by Dr. J. Matthew Sleeth.

Tennessee Interfaith Power and Light: <http://www.tn-ipl.org>

Helps congregations work for a healthier creation by reducing human actions that contribute to global warming; educates and equips congregations to be stewards of God's creation.

- Show a video on environmental issues available from IPL, such as *God's Creation and Global Warming*, followed by a discussion and call to action.
- Sign up for a four hour training called "Cool Congregations," designed to help church members understand:
 - The biblical mandate to care for the earth and all its inhabitants and resources.
 - The benefits and methods of reducing energy consumption, promoting energy efficiency, and promoting renewable energy and green power.
 - Actions that can reduce the carbon footprint of individuals and organizations.
 - How to build relationships among local churches to foster ongoing community around issues of environmental stewardship and creation care.
 - New ideas and strategies for creating sustainable communities.
- Participate in seasonal programs, such as environmental initiatives around Lent, Advent and Earth Day (April 22).

How to Learn More

- See the links to environmental information and initiatives on the Knoxville Utilities Board website (<http://www.kub.org>).
- Visit the website for the City of Knoxville's Energy & Sustainability Task Force (<http://www.ci.knoxville.tn.us/policy/energy/default.asp>) for reports on the city's energy policies and strategic initiatives to increase energy efficiency and decrease emissions.
- Contact Fountain City Connections (www.fountaincityconnections.org) or Tennessee Interfaith Power and Light (<http://www.tn-ipl.org>) for information about their monthly meetings.
- Arrange for Interfaith Power and Light (<http://www.tn-ipl.org>) to lead educational programs at your church on a range of topics related to energy conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and other sustainable practices.

- LEAF (<http://www.tnleaf.org>) offers an informational session that introduces Creation Care to pastors and lay leaders who can take the message back to their congregations.
- Good national sources of information and support for Christian environmental stewardship include the Evangelical Environmental Network (www.creationcare.org), The National Religious Partnership for the Environment (www.nrpe.org), Christians for the Mountains (<http://www.christiansforthemountains.org>), Serve God, Save the Planet (<http://www.servegodsavetheplanet.org>), and A Rocha: Christians in Conservation (<http://www.arocha.org>).