



Earth Care Congregations

A Guide to Greening Presbyterian Churches

Version 4, updated 2018

SUMMARY OF EARTH CARE CONGREGATIONS (ECCs)

Earth Care Congregations are congregations that have committed to the “Earth Care Pledge” and accomplished a specific number of actions toward caring for God’s earth in four categories: worship, education, facilities, and outreach. Congregations earning 25 points in each of the four categories will be certified as Earth Care Congregations and receive various honors. Congregation members will also be invited to participate as individuals by completing similar actions in their homes. “A Guide to Greening Presbyterian Churches” provides congregations with worksheets, resources, and instructions for becoming an Earth Care Congregation. The 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.”

BACKGROUND

In 1990 the 202nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) adopted Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice, which 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” (Form 2). Certification requires churches to commit to the “Earth Care Pledge” and complete actions in the four categories identified in the pledge: worship, education, facilities, and outreach.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE FOR THE EARTH?

Our faith urges us to strive for eco-justice: defending and healing creation while working to assure justice for all of creation and the human beings who live in it. This call is rooted in the human vocation of “tilling and keeping” the garden from Genesis 2:15, as well as Christ’s charge to work with and for the most vulnerable. Because of their love for Christ who is firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:15), churches are challenged to live in a manner consistent with God’s call to not only care for creation, but commune with creation.

HOW CAN MY CHURCH BECOME AN EARTH CARE CONGREGATION?

The first step is to form an Earth Care Team and complete the audit which is part of the ECC application, and available at www.pcusa.org/earthcarecongregations.

The Earth Care Team can be as small as two people and does not need to be a formal committee. Completing the audit will give the Earth Care Team information about what earth care activities and facilities improvements the church has undertaken and what remains to be done. The environmental audit is divided into four categories where earth care progress can be evaluated. Many of the activities can be completed with little to no funding.

With the environmental audit completed, the Earth Care Team can recommend next steps based on available resources, cost-effectiveness, and acceptance by the congregation. The Earth Care Team should then present the information to the session and ask for approval of the Earth Care Pledge and approval to submit an Earth Care Congregation Application. Pledge and Application available at www.pcusa.org/earthcarecongregations.

Once you have completed an Earth Care Congregation application, the application will be reviewed by the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP) and if 25 points have been earned for actions in each of the four categories, your church will be awarded the honor of being an Earth Care Congregation. The honor includes an Earth Care Congregation certificate, use of the ECC logo, listing on the website, notification of your presbytery, a press release for local publicity and other resources.

If the audit shows that your church has not earned a total of 100 points, 25 in each category, your church should continue to take actions towards earth care and apply to be an Earth Care Congregation once the point total has been reached. This Guide lists examples and resources for the four categories of earth care activities that your church can choose to implement. Responsibility for making progress in each of the four categories can be assigned to existing church committees such as worship, education, facilities, and outreach. PHP can help churches with ideas on how to implement activities and facilitate changes to work toward the Earth Care Congregation certification.

The honor of being an Earth Care Congregation should be renewed each year between 1/1 and 2/15. Renewal requires earning a total of 50 points in the four categories with a minimum of 5 points in each category. (For recertification, points must be earned within the previous year, i.e., if the church's high-efficiency furnace was installed 4 years ago, it cannot be counted for recertification. However, if a church continues to use reusable dishes, this can be counted again for recertification. In general, if an item takes further or continued action, points count toward recertification.) Churches meeting the renewal requirements will be awarded an updated certificate, permission to use the ECC logo, and continued listing on our website.

WHAT CAN MY CHURCH EXPECT?

Congregations applying to be Earth Care Congregations will become involved in making their church buildings, operations, worship services, education and outreach respectful of the glory of God's creation. This concern for preserving and sustaining what our Creator has made will go beyond church operations and extend into the homes and family lives of congregation members. The ECC program helps churches plan their continued earth care ministry and can create greater support for this ministry from the whole congregation.

Please contact PHP for assistance in becoming an Earth Care Congregation or with any questions that may arise throughout the process at (800) 728-7228, x5626.

For more information **and all related forms** for the Earth Care Congregations program please visit www.pcusa.org/earthcarecongregations.

This guide was originally developed by Jane Laping, Stewardship of Creation Enabler from Houston, as "Restoring Creation Congregations." PC(USA) Environmental Ministries worked with Jane Laping and Alan Jenkins, founder of Earth Covenant Ministry in Atlanta, to update this first guide to become "Earth Care Congregations" to be used on a nationwide scale for Presbyterian congregations interested in earth care. The guide was updated in July 2011, one year after the ECC program was launched, in 2013 and again in 2018.

A GUIDE TO GREENING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING APPENDICES

- Appendix A** Steps Toward Becoming an Earth Care Congregation
Appendix B Examples and Resources for Four Categories of Earth Care Activities
Appendix C Overview of Earth Care Congregations

FINDING THE APPLICATION FORMS

FIRST YEAR CHURCHES

The Earth Care Congregation application for congregations applying for their *first year* is available at: www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/earth-care-congregation-first-year-application. This application includes the Earth Care Pledge.

RECERTIFICATION

The Earth Care Congregation application for congregations who are *recertifying* is available at: www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/earth-care-congregation-recertification. This does not include the Earth Care Pledge, as the Pledge does not need to be resubmitted after first year certification.

EARTH CARE PLEDGE

The Earth Care Pledge can be downloaded by itself as a Word document at www.pcusa.org/earthcarecongregations.

APPENDIX A

Steps Toward Becoming an Earth Care Congregation*

1. Form an Earth Care Team of at least two people who are interested in your church becoming an Earth Care Congregation (ECC) and who will complete the Environmental Audit from the ECC application. If your church needs assistance with this, please consult the Presbyterian Hunger Program by calling (800) 728-7228, x5626.
2. Complete Environmental Audit to see if your church earns 25 points in each category. It is helpful to collaborate with church committee members who are focused on each of the four categories in the audit.
3. Use the audit to recommend next steps to either earn 25 points in each category for initial certification or, if your church has earned the required points, to complete ECC recertification next year (which requires at least 50 points, with at least 5 in each category).
4. Regardless of whether you have yet reached 25 points in each category in the Environmental Audit, present the results of the audit and your recommendations to your congregation's session. Ask the session to approve the Earth Care Pledge, which needs the signature of the clerk of the session, recognize the next steps for earth care, and if 25 points have been earned in each category, approve the submission of the Earth Care Congregation Application (<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/eccapplication/>).
5. If your church has not earned the required points for initial certification, work on implementing further earth care activities suggested in Appendix B until these points are earned, and then apply to be an Earth Care Congregation.
6. If your church has earned the required points, apply to be an Earth Care Congregation and list your next steps on the Earth Care Congregation Application.
7. If your church's application is complete and meets the criteria of the required number of points in each of the four Earth Care categories, PHP will certify your church as an Earth Care Congregation.
8. After certification as an Earth Care Congregation, your church will be honored with an Earth Care Congregation certificate, use of the ECC logo, listing on the website, notification of your presbytery, a press release for local publicity and resources for your church library.
9. Earth Care Congregations must be recertified each year. Renewal requires earning a total of 50 points within the previous year in the four categories with a minimum of 5 points in each category.
10. Once your church has become certified as an ECC and integrated earth care into its church life, you are urged to encourage and educate members on how to live sustainable lifestyles and to work for change in the larger systems and structures of our world.

*A presentation explaining this process is available at <https://bit.ly/2BhoOh1>.

APPENDIX B

Examples and Resources for Four Categories of Earth Care Activities

Listed below are resources and examples of activities for each of the four categories in Earth Care Congregations.

General resources:

- PC(USA)
www.pcusa.org/environment
- Presbyterians for Earth Care (PEC), an Eco-Justice Network, that cares for God's creation,
<http://www.presbyearthcare.org>
- Creation Justice Ministries,
www.creationjustice.org
- Interfaith Power and Light,
www.interfaithpowerandlight.org
- Earth Ministry,
www.earthministry.org
- GreenFaith,
www.greenfaith.org

1. WORSHIP (WORSHIP COMMITTEE)

Earth Day worship services and other special days of celebration (blessing of the animals, garden blessing):

- Creation Justice Ministries Earth Day Sunday (on the Sunday before or after April 22) resources
www.creationjustice.org/resources
- Web of Creation Blessing of the Animals service
<http://www.webofcreation.org/Worship/services/blessinganimals.htm>
- Web of Creation Garden Blessing
[http://www.webofcreation.org/Worship/services/trinity WorshipPlan.pdf](http://www.webofcreation.org/Worship/services/trinity%20WorshipPlan.pdf)
- Season of Creation, a four-week worship and education program in September
<http://www.seasonofcreation.com>

Hymns about the environment:

- Glory to God Hymnal, (Hymns #12- #48)
- Presbyterians for Earth Care Presbyterian hymnal suggestions
www.presbyearthcare.org/devotional-and-worship-aids

Scripture readings about the environment:

- Presbyterians for Earth Care suggested Scriptures
www.presbyearthcare.org/devotional-and-worship-aids

Sermons on earth care:

- Eco-Justice Ministries: “Three Layers of Environmental Preaching”
<http://www.eco-justice.org/3layers.asp>
- Interfaith Power and Light sermon and worship resources
<http://interfaithpowerandlight.org/clergy-corner>
- Earth Ministry sermons
www.earthministry.org/worship/sermons

General resources for worship:

- (PCUSA) eco-justice worship page:
www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/worship-and-eco-justice
- Eco-Palms (sustainably harvested palms by workers who are paid a just wage) for Palm Sunday
www.pcusa.org/palms
- Earth Care-focused Lenten daily calendars from PHP
www.pcusa.org/environment
- Earth Ministry worship aids
www.earthministry.org/worship
- Web of Creation worship resources
www.webofcreation.org/Worship/resources.htm
- Green Bible, the New Revised Standard Version from HarperCollins Publishers, in which all verses dealing with God’s care for creation are printed in green ink.
<http://greenletterbible.com>
- Lent 4.5 seven-week faith formation program in Christian Simplicity. (Copies available from PHP upon request.)
www.earthandspiritcenter.org/lent45/

2. EDUCATION (EDUCATION COMMITTEE)

Find earth care curricula:

- Eco-Justice Ministries Curriculum Review for all ages
<http://www.eco-justice.org/CurricReview.asp>
- *Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table*, Presbyterian Hunger Program Curriculum with versions for middle school students (available in English and Spanish) and adults
<http://www.pcusa.org/justeating>
- *God's Creation, Our Health: Taking Action Together* is a PCUSA four-session study for older elementary youth that connects faith, environmental stewardship, and young people in Peru to young people in our U.S. congregations:
<http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/children/pdf/cambiola-study-session.pdf>

Vacation Bible School curriculum with an earth care theme:

- Solar Under the Sun curriculum for VBS:
www.solarunderthesun.org/resources/vbs.cfm
- Living Waters for the World *Clean Water for All God's Children* VBS curriculum:
www.livingwatersfortheworld.org/pray
- New Community Project VBS curriculum
http://www.newcommunityproject.org/pdfs/operation_creation.pdf

Schedule earth care speakers or programs:

- Presbyterians for Earth Care Regional Representatives
www.presbyearthcare.org/connect

Books on earth care for your church's library:

- Earth Ministry book list
www.earthministry.org/holdings

Educate members on sustainable lifestyle choices:

- Encourage church members to perform home energy audits or carbon calculations
www.energysavers.gov/your_home
www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator
- Encourage members to learn about environmental health choices:
Creation Justice Ministries environmental health materials <http://creationjustice.org/educational-resources>
Environmental Working Group environmental health resources www.ewg.org/childrenshealth

- PHP's Just Living series, resources on lifestyle integrity
www.pcusa.org/justliving
- Encourage members to give up bottled water
- Start a book club on earth care issues
- Encourage church members to invest in socially and environmentally responsible stocks. Learn more from PC(USA) Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI)
www.pcusa.org/mrti

Earth care themed DVDs with faith-based guides:

- “Cherishing God’s Earth”
www.pcusastore.com/Products/2436010002/cherishing-gods-creation-dvd.aspx?bCategory=PSSW
- *Renewal*: A documentary about people of faith working on environmental stewardship with tools
www.renewalproject.net
- Earth Ministry Study Guide and clips to accompany Ken Burns’ *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*
www.earthministry.org/ken-burns-national-parks-religious-study-guides-and-clips-dvds
- *Deep Down*: A documentary on mountaintop removal coal mining
www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/deep-down
- *Let There Be . . . Stuff?* Six-session curriculum connecting faith, consumerism and environmental stewardship from GreenFaith and the Story of Stuff Project
<http://atyourservice.arocha.org/en/let-there-be-stuff>
- *Fresh*: A documentary about sustainable food, with accompanying study guide from GreenFaith
www.freshthemovie.com

General resources and suggestions for education:

- Make announcements about how to be good stewards of God’s earth
- Reuse supplies and purchase sustainable supplies for Christian education
- Collect disposable items to use in children’s craft projects (egg cartons, toilet paper rolls, bottle caps)
- Hold an educational event in addition to Earth Day Sunday worship to celebrate Earth Day, which occurs every year on April 22
www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/earth-day-sunday

- PHP's environmental resources
<http://www.pcusa.org/environment>
- Presbyterians for Earth Care resources
<http://www.presbyearthcare.org/resources>

3. FACILITIES (BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE)

Energy use, conservation, and renewable energy possibilities:

- Perform a professional energy audit:
Though not required, Earth Care Teams are encouraged to complete a professional energy audit of church buildings in addition to the ECC Environmental Audit. An energy audit critiques the energy efficiency of your buildings and recommends steps to make your buildings more energy efficient. An energy audit will give you much of the information you need to complete the energy conservation section of the ECC Environmental Audit and help you set goals for the future.
- Contact your utility company to see if they offer free or low-cost energy audits for churches
- Contact your local or state government to learn about incentive programs for energy audits
- ENERGY STAR for Congregations: Environmental Protection Agency program to assist churches with energy efficiency. Participating churches receive technical help and may use the Portfolio Manager system to track and reduce energy
<http://www.energystar.gov/congregations> <http://www.energystar.gov/benchmark>
- ENERGY STAR Greening Your Congregation Guide book
<https://bit.ly/2QaFC16>
- Explore LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Certification
<http://www.usgbc.org/leed>
- PC(USA) Carbon neutral challenge
www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/carbon-neutral-guide.pdf
- Interfaith Power and Light congregation carbon calculator
www.coolcongregations.com/calculator
- Find incentives for renewable power and energy efficiency
www.dsireusa.org
- Purchase ENERGY STAR appliances
www.energystar.gov
- Learn about options for buying green power
www.epa.gov/greenpower/green-power-supply-options
- Perform two preseason checkups to maintain HVAC systems each year
http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=heat_cool.pr_maintenance

Suggestions for heating and cooling energy conservation:

- Determine how well insulated different parts of your church are, and add insulation where necessary and effective
- Install an insulation blanket on water heaters seven years of age or older, and insulate the first three feet of the heated water “out” pipe from your water heater
- Install an energy-efficient electric or gas water heater
- In areas of infrequent water use, consider “tankless” water heaters to reduce “standby” storage costs and waste
- Set your water heater to 110–120 degrees Fahrenheit where appropriate (some local health codes require higher temperatures)
- Install seven-day programmable thermostats
- Install thermal shades for windows to conserve heat in winter
- Install tinted windows to reduce solar heat gain in summer
- Clean or change your HVAC filter once a month
- Utilize natural light where possible
- Utilize natural cooling and ceiling fans to avoid use of air conditioning
- Check ductwork to ensure that joints are sealed
- Include responsibility for best environmental practices in your church’s facilities manager’s job description or include this in the duties of the building and grounds committee
- Establish a fund for energy improvements in the church’s budget

Water conservation:

- ENERGY STAR for Congregations
www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=congregations_guidebook.congregations_guidebook_water
- Environmental Protection Agency WaterSense
www.epa.gov/watersense

Suggestions for water conservation:

- Repair leaking pipes, fixtures and seals and consider purchasing low-flow toilets and waterless urinals
- Install controls that turn faucets off automatically, and/or put reminder signs near faucets to not let water run unnecessarily

Recycling/Waste:

- Identify and use recycling locations
<http://earth911.org>
- Purchase recycled paper and office products
www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/rrr/buyrecycled.htm

Suggestions for recycling:

- Donate to charities that accept unneeded items that cannot be recycled
- Use refill kits for ink cartridges and toner cartridges
- Recycle ink cartridges and toner cartridges that cannot be refilled
- Use labeled recycling bins for aluminum, glass, plastic, metal and cardboard

Food:

- Purchase fair trade coffee and tea (that is sustainably grown) through the Presbyterian Coffee Project
www.pcusa.org/coffee
- Prepare vegetarian recipes
www.vegetariantimes.com/recipes
- Support your local farmers' markets
www.localharvest.org
- Be a pick-up location for CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)
www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csa.shtml

Cleaning supplies:

- Make your own less-toxic cleaners with vinegar, baking soda, salt, borax, etc.
www.eartheasy.com/live_nontoxic_solutions.htm

Grounds:

- Practice green landscaping (greenscaping or xeriscaping)
<https://bit.ly/2Diq58I>
- Eliminate pesticides with organic gardening
- Use integrated pest management (IPM) methods
www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/ipm.htm
- Select plants for church grounds that are native to the area to decrease invasive species and reduce the need for watering.
www.wildflower.org/plants

- Consider diverting gray water for irrigation rather than using fresh water
www.epa.gov/WaterSense/docs/water-efficient_landscaping_508.pdf
- Use a rain barrel or cistern to store rainwater for later use
www.lid-stormwater.net/raincist_specs.htm
- Compost yard waste and food scraps
www.howtocompost.org
- Increase wildlife habitat on church grounds by planting butterfly gardens, pollinator gardens, or creating other habitat
www.xerces.org http://web4.audubon.org/bird/at_home
- Become certified as a “Community Wildlife Habitat” from the National Wildlife Federation
www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Outdoor-Activities/Garden-for-Wildlife/Community-Habitats.aspx
- Plant shade trees to reduce heat gain and help with storm water management

Storm water management:

- Learn about storm water management issues and strategies from the EPA
www.epa.gov/weatherchannel/stormwater.html
- Plant a rain garden or install a bioswale (landscape elements designed to concentrate or remove debris and pollution out of surface runoff water)
www.raingardennetwork.com
- Create a green roof on your church
www.epa.gov/heat-islands/using-green-roofs-reduce-heat-islands
- When repaving the church’s parking lot, consider a permeable paver
www.lid-stormwater.net/permpavers_benefits.htm

Recognitions and programs available for greening facilities:

- Earth Ministry Greening Congregations Program
<http://earthministry.org/programs/greening-congregations>
- ENERGY STAR Certification for Houses of Worship that demonstrate superior energy efficiency through the free Portfolio Manager Tool
www.energystar.gov/benchmark
- Interfaith Power and Light: many state chapters offer Congregational Covenants
<http://interfaithpowerandlight.org/state>
- Georgia Interfaith Power and Light *Creation Wise* program
www.gipl.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Creation-Wise-Summer2015.pdf

General resources and suggestions for facilities:

- Web of Creation’s “The Environmental Guide for Congregations, Their Buildings, and Grounds”
www.webofcreation.org/Environmental%20Guide.pdf
- Explore green design and remodeling options if your church is rebuilding or renovating
- Purchase used items for renovations
- Learn about Indoor Air Quality
www.epa.gov/iaq/voc.html
- Recycle or donate used items if your church does renovations

Read earth care success stories from other congregations:

- Church Earth Care Stories on PHP’s Eco-Journey Blog
www.presbyterianmission.org/eco-journey/stories-earth-care-congregations
- National Religious Partnership for the Environment
www.nrpe.org/stewardship-stories.html
- Interfaith Power and Light
<http://interfaithpowerandlight.org/success-stories>

4. OUTREACH (OUTREACH/MISSIONSCOMMITTEE)

Advocacy:

- Advocacy resources from the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness
Legislative Action Center <http://capwiz.com/pcusa/home>
“Holy Discontentment: Lifting Your Voice for Effective Advocacy”
www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/holy-discontentment-advocacy-resource
- Advocate for eco-justice through various campaigns at Creation Justice Ministries
<http://creationjustice.org/campaigns>
- Advocate for sustainable food policies through the Presbyterian Hunger Program
www.pcusa.org/hunger/national
- Web of Creation “Public Ministry and Political Advocacy Action Plan”
www.webofcreation.org/PublicMinAdvocacy/actionplan.htm

Sustainable food practices:

- Become involved in direct farm marketing or other sustainable food practices at your church.
Use GreenFaith’s “Repairing Eden” for ideas
[www.livingthechange.net/site/data/000/001/Repairing_Eden_doc\(1\).pdf](http://www.livingthechange.net/site/data/000/001/Repairing_Eden_doc(1).pdf)
- Organize a community garden
www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/food-sovereignty-all
- Participate in the Food Week of Action and World Food Day
www.pcusa.org/foodweek

General resources and suggestions for outreach:

- Visit urban parks and nature centers
- Organize an eco-justice tour of your community to explore blighted areas and work with justice leaders on these issues
- Write a letter to the editor or an op-ed
- Donate used materials instead of throwing them away
- Habitat for Humanity Restore collects reusable and surplus building materials
www.habitat.org/restores
- Become a group member of Presbyterians for Earth Care
www.presbyearthcare.org
- Share, speak with, or teach at another congregation, to encourage their Earth Care activities

- Sponsor an e-trash recycling day for the community
www.epa.gov/recycle/electronics-donation-and-recycling
- Share or rent office space within the church with local nonprofit groups to reduce the building footprint
- Purchase Sweat-Free clothing (no sweat-shop labor used)
www.greenamerica.org/green-living/sweatshop-free-clothing
- Include environmental action and education in your church mission trips, domestic and abroad
- Network with other houses of worship and organizations in your area that are active in earth care
- Share the Earth Care Congregations program by connecting with other congregations in your presbytery and/or by hosting informational tables and sessions at presbytery events
- Contact the Presbyterians for Earth Care Regional Representative for your area to learn about opportunities to be involved in earth care
www.presbyearthcare.org/connect

APPENDIX C

Overview of Earth Care Congregations

Earth Care Congregations is a structured certification program for Presbyterian churches to function in a manner consistent with God's call to care for creation. The Earth Care Congregations guide uses easily achievable steps to reach certification and has been designed for small to large congregations and for those who have been caring for the earth for years or who are just starting. The certification process for Earth Care Congregations is based on the "Earth Care Pledge" that was updated from "A Pledge to Heal and Defend God's Creation" that is contained in the 202nd General Assembly's report on Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice.

Churches that choose to become Earth Care Congregations commit to the "Earth Care Pledge" and complete actions in four categories derived from the pledge: worship, education, facilities and outreach. Earth Care Congregations become involved in making their church buildings and operations, worship services, education and outreach respectful of the glory of God's creation. This concern for preserving and sustaining what our Creator has made will extend into the homes and family lives of congregation members.

Churches become Earth Care Congregations by earning a specific number of points toward caring for God's earth in a church's worship, education, facilities and outreach. Once a congregation has earned 25 points in each of the four categories and the session has affirmed the Earth Care Pledge, that congregation is certified as an Earth Care Congregation. Certification must be renewed each year, which requires earning 50 points with a minimum of 5 points in each of the four categories. Various honors will be awarded and will serve as motivation for churches to become certified Earth Care Congregations. Once your church has become certified as an ECC and integrated earth care into church life, you are urged to encourage and educate members on how to live sustainable lifestyles and work for societal change.

Presbyterian congregations may become certified as Earth Care Congregations by following the tips included in "Earth Care Congregations: A Guide to Greening Presbyterian Churches" and submitting the certification application available at www.pcusa.org/earthcarecongregations. A presentation that outlines the certification process is also available from the Presbyterian Hunger Program. Earth Care Congregations answer the challenge to live in a manner consistent with God's call to not only care for creation, but commune with creation because of their love for Christ who is firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:15).

