

A Challenge to the Congregations of Evanston from the Evanston Interreligious Sustainability Circle

As an interfaith organization working in Evanston, the Evanston Interreligious Sustainability Circle offers this loving challenge to our brothers and sisters in religious congregations. We call on them to provide leadership in the stewardship of creation.

Because the Earth and the life it sustains are God's Creation, the faith community has an important role to play in leading our society toward a way of life in harmony with nature and respecting both human and non-human life. Our faith traditions may differ, but they share the responsibilities of loving one another and caring for this fragile planet where we all must live. This planet suffers from imbalances we have created that will ultimately leave us a world that cannot sustain life if we continue on the present path.

- Pursuit of non-renewable energy sources threatens eco-systems and exhausts resources, while leaving renewable energy sources untapped..
- Soaring housing costs push families far into outlying suburbs, while forcing them to drive cars further and further.
- Chemicals boost agricultural production while destroying the topsoil upon which our food supply depends.
- Cars and factories pollute the air while causing asthma, particularly among those who cannot afford housing far from sources of pollution.
- Our consumer economy encourages consumption, while hiding the true costs of our lifestyle in exploited workers, deforested land, and toxic dumps.
- The desire to control resources such as water and oil leads to conflict, while resource use continues to escalate.

We challenge the congregations of Evanston to become active stewards of the environment. Our houses of worship are filled with people who care about Creation but are frequently distracted from this concern by the pressures of everyday life. Because we often don't see the costs of our lifestyle, we create injustice, fail to show love for one another, and neglect to sustain an environment where all species can be fruitful and maintain the full diversity of God's creation.

Care for the environment is a profoundly religious issue. The needed solutions to our current dilemma will come from those motivated from the depths of their faith and from the lively hope that faith brings to daunting problems. We call upon the congregations of Evanston to take leadership in translating our faith teachings into everyday practices that show our love for one another and all of life.

THE CONGREGATIONAL PLEDGE:

We ask the congregations of Evanston to pledge themselves to be active stewards of creation. We suggest that each congregation designate a person or group of people to provide leadership and to oversee accomplishment of goals for action in four areas: their facilities, their religious education, their worship, and their witness in the community.

EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE ACTIONS FOR CONGREGATIONS:

Facilities

- Conduct an energy and consumption audit to find possible savings.
- Create an energy conservation / renewable energy investment section in the budget.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Recycle paper, cans, and bottles.
- Purchase recycled-content paper, building supplies, and other products
- Replace toxic cleaning supplies and solvents with natural alternatives.
- Purchase organic shade-grown fair-trade coffee so coffee growers receive a living wage.

Religious Education

- Hold classes that inform members of environmental facts and issues.
- Conduct workshops in simple living.
- Embed the topic of care of Creation throughout the children's curriculum.
- Hold regular activities for youth that model stewardship of creation.

Worship

- Take advantage of the liturgical year to celebrate God's creation and reflect on our responsibility to care for it.
- Make the connection between stewardship of money and stewardship of all we have received from God, including the world in which we live.
- Include the environment in prayer concerns.
- Emphasize that faith is a source of hope for solutions to seemingly insurmountable ecological problems.

Witness

- Participate in community organizations seeking to improve public transportation.
- Work for passage of a building energy code for the City of Evanston.
- Set an example of non-consumption in a consumer society.

OUR PLEDGE TO CONGREGATIONS:

The Evanston Interreligious Sustainability Circle is an organization of individuals belonging to diverse Evanston religious congregations committed to moving Evanston and its religious congregations toward greater justice among people and greater harmony with the Earth. We pledge ourselves to support the congregations of Evanston through the following:

- Resources – people, books, magazines, web sites
- News from other local congregations and opportunities to work together locally
- Workshops to assist congregations and leaders in accomplishing goals

The Evanston Interreligious Sustainability Circle belongs to a larger metropolitan organization – Faith in Place. Please call Steve Perkins for services at 773-278-4800, ext. 155, or visit www.faithinplace.org.