

## **Global Warming Ministry – How One Congregation Began:**

Approximately two years ago one of the members of Asylum Hill Congregational Church had a conversation with the senior associate minister about the need to begin discussing and addressing the issue of global warming. With staff support and encouragement a notice was put in the weekly bulletin (and an announcement made from the pulpit) that a meeting of interested church members would be held following Sunday worship to discuss what might be done.

In response to the invitation approximately 15 people showed up. The first meeting was one of brainstorming ideas about how we might proceed. Enthusiasm underscoring the importance of doing something was very real. As a result, we began by identifying areas that we might take a look at and come up with ideas for:

- Education about global climate change and its consequences within the congregation;
- Identification of practices we can undertake personally to conserve energy and reduce CO2 emissions;
- Educating our children about global warming and things they can do;
- Identifying effective ways our congregation can “feed into” larger initiatives around the state, region and country;
- Advocacy for larger scale political change, reaching out beyond members’ personal practices to a larger audience;
- Education about/advocacy of the importance of becoming energy independent as a country, for political and economic reasons, apart from global warming;

In response, people began to sign up to work on one or more of these areas. We quickly compiled ideas/material to address the first two: education about global warming and personal practices each of us might undertake. We agreed to set up an “Earth Ministries” table in the coffee hour room for people to visit following the Sunday services. Someone(s) agreed to be at the table each Sunday. We compiled information – articles, books and other materials. We began selling low energy light bulbs, than later shower/faucet water-saving heads, than outlet draft stoppers. A member of the committee brought in his new electric lawnmower; several people with hybrid cars stationed them one Sunday for people to check out. We handed out Q & A information about climate change.

Meanwhile we began holding monthly meetings of our new “team” of people, continuing to publicize our meetings. And our numbers increased --- while not everyone attended the meetings our data base grew to around fifty. New ideas emerged. New hands were raised. Last spring we learned about and began an energy audit of the church itself. Recently members of the team were up in the church ceiling, insulating a particularly large meeting room that we learned was letting a lot of heat out in the winter and heat in in the summer.

This process of “becoming green” continues. We got the children involved at one point – educating them and inviting them to be part of a “walk not ride to church” Sunday. Now we are looking at ways to “ramp up” what we are doing, knowing that curtailing global warming has become a much more urgent matter for our nation and the world.

And we’re having fun --- we’ve made new acquaintances, found new friends and a common cause that we believe God would want us to be working with.

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