

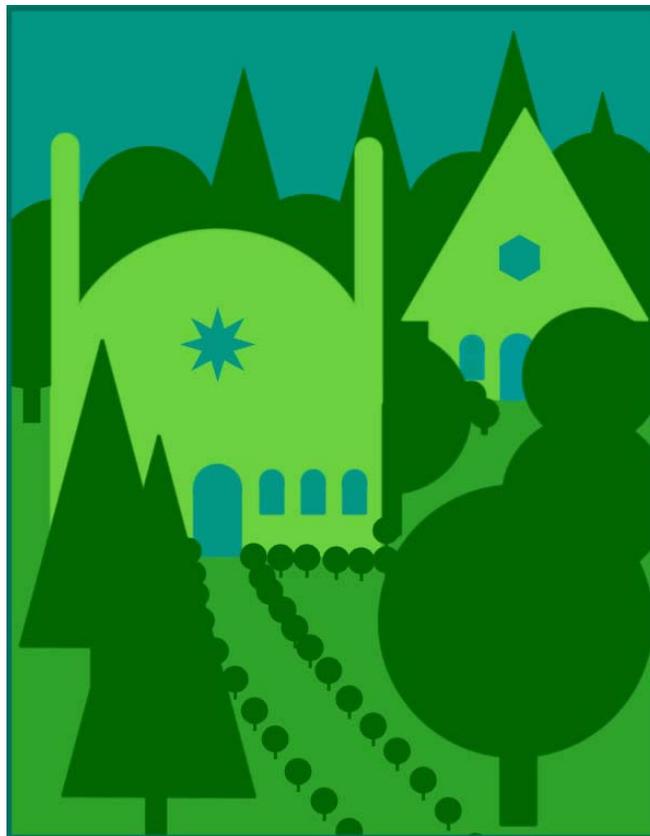


**Faith & the Common Good**

Seeking Common Ground for the Common Good



*Faith & the Common Good presents:*  
**Greening Sacred Spaces**  
**An Eco-Spiritual Workshop for**  
**Canadian Faith Communities**



**Greening Sacred Spaces - Regional Contacts**

*Ottawa: Kristina Inrig • 613-445-1900 • ottawa @faith-commongood.net*  
*Toronto: Katharine Vansittart • 416-532-5799 • toronto @faith-commongood.net*  
*Waterloo: Jane Snyder • 519-747-5139 • waterloo @faith-commongood.net*  
*Calgary: Julie Hrdlicka • 403-270-9669 • calgary @faith-commongood.net*  
*Vancouver: Paige Dampier • 604-321-1302 • vancouver @faith-commongood.net*

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# Greening Sacred Spaces

## A practical, eco- spiritual workshop

In this workshop, participants will focus on aspects of daily life, such as food, home, place of worship to explore how they may make small but significant changes and apply their spirituality in practical ways to reduce energy consumption and help care for creation.

### **Goals of the Session:**

- To explore how “greening” sacred spaces is relevant to this faith community
- To explore the relevance of “greening” to my way of life
- To explore the connection between our faith and the health of the Earth
- To explore how our beliefs become concrete in our behaviour
- To explore possibilities to make our homes, lives and sacred spaces greener
- To create an action plan to begin making changes
- To encourage one another to change

### **Leader Preparation:**

Take a moment to think about the connection between your faith and your relationship with the Earth. What satisfies you? What would you like to change?

In your faith, what words of caution and inspiration express the sacredness of Earth? Bring references from your sacred texts to use in the workshop.

Review the FCG Energy Action Planner and ensure that you have enough Planner booklets for everyone to take away at the end of the session.

Collect information from other environment sources such as The David Suzuki Nature Challenge, the Sierra Club, The Ontario Conservation Bureau and so on. Display this information and any related books or pamphlets you know about throughout the sessions. Invite participants to do the same.

Option: Invite a speaker from an environmental organization to visit and answer questions or make a statement near the close of the session.

Read through the Green Rule Study Guide and display the Green Rule poster

Decide how you want to open the workshop, such as lighting a candle and offering a prayer from your tradition or a quote related to eco-spirituality...

Prepare the meeting space: Set out a circle of chairs, consider using a flip chart or chalkboard, and providing name tags

Organize equipment: Set up video and monitor to view Greening Sacred Spaces video and provide recycled paper and pencils for people to take notes.

Option: If you would like to open or close with music, arrange for a musician or tape or CD player. The Renewing the Sacred Balance CD has some meditative music that may be useful

### **Step One: Welcome and Opening Prayer**

Welcome everyone to the session. Open the session by lighting a candle and offering a prayer from your faith tradition, from your own heart, or simply ask people to gather for a moment of silence in this time of reflection and interaction with one another.

Introduce the Green Rule poster and explain that it draws wisdom from our faith traditions that speak to a primary concern of our time – our spiritual relationship with Creation and the need to care for Creation. To meet the challenges of this era we need a “green rule”, like the “golden rule”, that says Do unto the Earth as we would have it do unto us. As people-of-faith we are called to make this a priority. (Read a couple of quotes from different traditions.)

### **Step 2: Introductions**

Ask people to introduce themselves and state one reason they have come to this session. Begin by introducing yourself and giving your reason for coming to this session (you are modeling for people how to introduce themselves and the kind of brief reason for coming).

### **Step 3: Show the Greening Sacred Spaces (GSS) video**

Tell people that you are going to show them a short video introducing them to the theme of GSS. This video points to the reasons why we need to think about eco-spirituality, what can be done, and how to begin.

Tell folks there will be an opportunity after the video to discuss 1) our reasons why, 2) what is possible, 3) how to get started.

### **Step 4: Discussing the Greening Sacred Spaces video**

1. Why is it important for faith communities to “green” their buildings?

Some ideas: Our buildings are visual representations of what we believe, therefore they need to be symbols for both the faith members and broader community about our concern for, and care of creation.

2. Our faith calls us to be concerned for the “Other”, whether other humans, animals or any aspect of creation. How we treat the Other is reflective of our primary faith commitments.
3. Of the light, medium, and deep green levels of engagement what do you think is possible for this faith community? Brainstorm a list on flipchart paper.

### Step 5: How do we get started?

Ask: Who will be part of a core group willing to facilitate these ideas?

Determine what decision-making processes are involved in making the first changes. Determine who will speak to (or form) a property committee, finance committee, board etc... to begin implementing the greening? Make a list of volunteers and their contact information.

\*\*\*\*\* **Refreshment Break – Reconvene in 10 minutes** \*\*\*\*\*

### Step 5: Energy Action Planner

Once you have an action plan for the Greening Sacred Spaces program in place, you can begin to organize to get people taking the Energy Action Planner, to help them save energy and save the planet around their own homes.

Read this aloud or paraphrase it to convey the general idea:

*In Canada, our shelters vary widely. How we choose to live in our various apartments, houses, houseboats, condominiums etc...says a lot about us. Just as the body is the home for our spirit, our homes are an expression of who we are. The amount of money we choose to spend on furnishings, the incense or cooking spices that perfume the air, whether our walls are plain or covered in art, whether or not we have houseplants and gardens, all express our being. These expressions also impact each of us, our families, our communities and the planet.*

*Everyday we must make choices about what we bring into our homes in consumer goods, the containers we use to carry goods and what we do with it all once we've used them. We can choose to use chemicals on our lawns and gardens or not. We can choose the kind and amount of paper, cleaning products and energy we use, and the amount of garbage we generate each week. The choice is ours. Greening the Sacred Spaces that are our public places of worship and our private homes means that in our everyday lives we are conscious of how our actions affect rivers and lakes, soil and air, people and the whole planet. We remember, when we purchase anything, we are responsible for the energy spent to make it, use it and dispose of it.*

Hand out the Energy Action Planners and go over how to use it. Invite any questions.

### **Step 6: Action Plan**

Ask: Who would you be willing, as an extension of the GSS program, to participate in FCG's Energy Action Planner to reduce energy consumption around their home?

Suggest that in two weeks or so, after having complete Stage One of the Energy Action Planner, participants:

1. Write how they believe their religion helps them be a steward of Earth.
2. Report on their progress regarding the Energy Action Planner
3. Celebrate their progress, and move on to Stage Two of the Energy Action Planner

### **Step 7: Closing**

Thank everyone for coming and for sharing their ideas, hopes and concerns. Ask if there are further comments, suggestions or questions. Invite participants to bring in any helpful, inspiring resources such as videos, books, website addresses or magazine articles that they could share with others at future gatherings. Keep in touch with your core group and invite them to meet with one another.

Close with a piece of music of your choice, a prayer and /or read this passage:

If the Earth were only  
a few feet in diameter, floating a  
few feet above a field somewhere,  
people would come from everywhere to  
marvel at it. People would walk around it,  
marveling at its big pools of water, its little pools  
and the water flowing between the pools. People would  
marvel at the bumps on it, and the holes in it, and they  
would marvel at the very thin layer of gas surrounding it and  
the water suspended in the gas. The people would marvel at  
all the creatures walking around the surface of the ball, and  
at the creatures in the water. The people would declare it  
precious because it was the only one, and they would protect  
it so that it would not be hurt. The ball would be the  
greatest wonder known, and people would come to behold  
it, to be healed, to gain knowledge, to know beauty  
and to wonder how it could be. People would love  
it, and defend it with their lives, because  
they would somehow know that their  
lives, their own roundness, could be  
nothing without it. If the Earth  
were only a few feet  
in diameter.

Author unknown

*Some ideas to get you inspired and involved right now! Consider...*

- walking, biking, taking public transit to shop, attend school, visit friends, attend worship
- using recycled, chlorine-free paper products
- using only biodegradable cleaning products
- composting and recycling all possible products and reducing your garbage by half
- using a push lawnmower or plant native plants, fruits and vegetables in the yard to replace grass
- using water as if it were sacred
- donating to and shopping at second-hand stores for clothes and furnishings
- sharing your home with another family or person
- joining a community garden, tree-planting or other ecology-minded group
- moving through each day with greater awareness of and appreciation for the beauty and generosity of the natural world