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Executive Summary

What does it mean to be a “faithful steward”? It is about being deeply rooted in your own faith tradition’s teachings about caring for and honoring our Creator’s amazing masterpiece – our interconnected world. Faithful stewards prayerfully act upon these teachings and offer a “faith-filled” response to heal Creation.

A faith-filled response:

• to the ecological crises of our time is one that is filled with hope, prayer, and sacrifice.
• to water degradation is one that recognizes the human suffering resulting from the disregard for shared water resources, and works toward justice for all.
• to the culture of consumerism is rooted in prayer and witnessed in action.
• to heal the Chesapeake Bay Watershed begins with the recognition that we are not alone in this, and that we are instruments of peace.
• begins with love for every human, plant, animal, and insect which our Creator also loves unconditionally.

This toolkit is designed to provide you the means to formulate your own faith-filled response to the challenges we face in our local watershed communities. As you struggle through the challenges that undoubtedly lie ahead and as you lead your watershed community to new ways of thinking and living, may you offer up those struggles as prayers for a better world. This what it means to be a faithful steward. This unwavering faith in all that is good, loving and just is what sets the faith community apart...and what will propel a healing of the Earth.

Saints Phillip and James Catholic Church, Baltimore, Maryland
Section ONE

RAISE AWARENESS:

Promote Your Watershed Restoration Project

Photo Credit: Chesapeake Bay Program
Knowledge is the Basic Building Block

It is easy to forget that what you might understand and consider “common knowledge” is, in fact, new thinking for those around you. This can include the spiritual aspects of your work as a faithful steward, as well as basic watershed literacy.

- Remember that you had to learn about this stewardship ethic somewhere along the line.
- Don’t assume that everyone starts with the same basic knowledge. Transferring new knowledge you have gained to others in your congregation and surrounding community is essential to being a steward.

As a faithful steward, you may be the first teacher for much of this information, which is a blessing and a responsibility.

DEVELOPING WATERSHED CONSCIOUSNESS

If one does not know what a watershed is, they will not know how to love it or advocate for it. We are called to watershed consciousness and action as an expression of our faith, our love for our Creator, for our neighbor, for the Earth, and our place in it. Theologian Ched Myers calls for a “contextual theology” in which we embrace our own local ecosystems with a bioregional understanding of the interdependence of the web of life:

We are thus persuaded that the best way to orient the [faith community’s] work and witness is through bioregionally-grounded planning and action which focuses on the actual watersheds we inhabit. Because this orientation is still foreign to our ...communities, our task is to nurture watershed consciousness and engagement in our faith traditions.

To be faithful [stewards] in a watershed...we need to become [stewards] of our watersheds, which have everything to teach us about interrelatedness and resiliency. This requires literacy [about the places we live]; to paraphrase Baba Dioum, a Senegales environmentalist:

We won’t save places we don’t love.
We can’t love places we don’t know.
And we don’t know places we haven’t learned.

This is both a warning and a promise that we believe sums up our vocation as [the faith community] in the present crisis. (http://watersheddiscipleship.org/), Myers, Ched, “A Watershed Moment,” Sojourners Magazine, May 2014)
START WITH YOUR OWN STORY: HOW DID YOU COME TO HAVE “WATERSHED EYES?”

We all live within a watershed, but this reality is not common knowledge. Most do not realize the implications of the watershed context and the impacts that our daily lives have upon the waters of our local streams and rivers that run into the Chesapeake Bay.

At some point you didn’t know what you know now about the interconnectedness of all the waters and significance of our behaviors upon these waters. It took some awareness building within yourself to come to this understanding of living within the context of a watershed. And, along the line, you began to develop a keen sense of responsibility for those who are downstream of you. We can call this watershed literacy, watershed consciousness, or developing “watershed eyes.”

Here is a thought experiment to prepare your own story/testimony:
Read this essay http://www.interfaithchesapeake.org/with_watershed_eyes and create your own story to tell about how you developed “Watershed Eyes.” Reflect on how you have come to this awareness and how it is informed by your faith.

THE BASICS: WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

While you may know what a watershed is, this may help you teach others.

- The Chesapeake Bay Watershed is that vast area (64,000 sq. miles) within which all surface water drainage—ditches, creeks, streams, rivers, wetlands of all sorts—flow and intersect, converge, and ultimately empty into the Chesapeake Bay.

- Water follows the surface contours of the land, and will only flow downhill. It is no different than a bathtub: no matter where the shower water hits, if it hits anywhere on the inside of a bathtub, the water will flow down toward the tub drain. The same is true within a watershed—it acts as a huge bathtub and any rain that hits any surface within that watershed will flow downhill toward a single low point.

- The Chesapeake Bay Watershed extends from Western New York State, through Pennsylvania, Maryland, the District of Columbia, parts of Delaware, West Virginia and central and northern Virginia.

- The human population of the watershed is approximately 18 million.

- Every person contributes in some way to the flow of water into the streams and rivers, and to the Bay itself. This could be by taking a shower, flushing a toilet, watering a lawn, washing a car, paving a driveway, running a factory or irrigating crops. For example, if your school group has a carwash fundraiser, and throughout a 4-hour period you wash 20 cars, that’s a lot of water that was sprayed on the cars. Where does that water go? Engineers designed

Writer-farmer-poet Wendell Berry contended in his 1989 essay “The Futility of Global Thinking”:
“The question that must be addressed is not how to care for the planet, but how to care for each of the planet’s millions of humans and natural neighborhoods, each of its millions of small pieces and parcels of land, each one of which is in some precious way different from all the others.”
our parking lots to drain quickly toward stormwater drains that carry the water in underground pipes through the municipal sewer system. This water is eventually emptied into the nearest natural stream or river, but it is not treated before it is discharged.

We all have a stake in at least one part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed: our own neighborhood, our own street, our own field, or our own back yard. The condition of the water in the rivers and the Bay depends to a very large degree upon the actions of everybody. This is how the faith community can inspire new thinking, new responsibility, new environmentally sensitive spirituality. By bearing responsibility for our individual choices that impact the rivers and streams in our own back yard, we can collectively heal the watershed communities in which we all live, play, pray, and grow. It takes each person doing their part.

**KNOW YOUR WATERSHED COMMUNITY:**

**WHERE DOES YOUR WATER FLOW?**

- Where your water flows depends where you live, that is, which river’s watershed you are in. Every drop of water falling on the ground in a specific watershed flows or percolates into a stream or river.


- Then, ask: Who else is in your watershed community?

God’s Earth is a boundless community. Forget about your church boundaries, or school district boundaries, or even county lines, which are human constructs. You are connected to others in your watershed community in a unique and deeply spiritual way. The actions you take on your property will impact those who are downstream of you. Learn how to love one another in your watershed community.

**URGENT PROBLEM CALLS FOR AN URGENT RESPONSE**

The Chesapeake Bay is the recipient of whatever enters the system upstream.

- A rain storm in Pennsylvania, a sewer malfunction in DC, a huge new church parking lot in a Maryland town, or over-application of fertilizers on a Virginia farm can all affect what flows into the Bay. For many decades the water quality in the Bay has been deteriorating.

- Aquatic life—plants, fishes, oysters, crabs—have been suffering. Whole areas are “dead” in summer.

- With severe reductions in number of crabs and oysters, the livelihood of Chesapeake Bay watermen is threatened.

- Often, it is unsafe to consume fish from natural streams and rivers.

- In some places, the water is so contaminated that it is unsafe to swim.
SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GO HAND IN HAND – WHO IS IMPACTED DOWNSTREAM?

“Do unto those downstream as you’d have those upstream do unto you,” as the poet-farmer Wendell Berry says.

Loving our neighbor is a core principle of most faith traditions.

• How we treat water is a reflection of our relationship with God and neighbor. Respect for water shows love for our brothers and sisters and all of Creation.

• When we care for nature we are also caring for each other, advocating for the right to clean accessible water for all people: environmental justice and social justice are interconnected.

• Why would we feed the hungry and clothe the naked, but then turn around and defile the Earth? This reflects the growing disconnect between how we see each other, and how we see each other as part of God’s Creation. For example, the Anacostia River is so filled with toxins and pollution, that people are discouraged from eating fish from the river. Yet a study conducted by the Anacostia Riverkeeper and other partners indicated that 17,000 people consume fish from the Anacostia River each year, to supplement their diet. Our daily living has trampled the natural rivers that God provides and upon which our most vulnerable neighbors depend for sustenance.

We are interconnected through water. We all live within a watershed community. The health of the water and its direct impact on people’s lives has largely not been “front and center” in much of faith-based organizing, but if we use a “watershed lens” with which to view the environmental justice aspects of our work, then we can see the human face of water degradation.

CALLED BY FAITH TO CARE FOR SACRED WATERS

Our faith traditions teach us that just as God loves us, God loves future generations, too. For them, we must act sustainably. We now see more clearly that it is our responsibility to think ahead and to conserve precious resources in ways that ensure they will last. The Genesis story of Creation concludes with the assertion that God looked at what he had created and declared it to be “very good.” It is still very good, very beautiful, life-giving
and spirit-uplifting. We know that natural systems have great powers of regeneration and regrowth under the right conditions. Our stewardship responsibility calls us to work with all our energy and knowledge to create those conditions and to address the challenges to these sacred waters. http://www.interfaithchesapeake.org/challenges. More on Faith Responses to the crises facing the Earth’s waters and the Chesapeake Bay can be found here: http://www.interfaithchesapeake.org/faith_responses.

**Messaging**

**Know what inspires your audience**

One congregation will hold the importance of preserving biodiversity as their top priority. For another congregation, it will be the immorality of environmental injustice. In order to change hearts and minds within your congregation, you will need to understand the messaging that will resonate with them. But, be genuine to your own values at the same time, too. You will be more compelling and inspiring if you speak from your own passions.

There are myriad examples of messaging that draw people of faith into stewardship, of which a few are offered below:

- It is our sacred duty to be stewards of the Earth. (Genesis story)
- We are but guests “in the master’s house,” and we need to behave respectfully while we are here.
- Biodiversity is essential to a balanced web of life (Noah’s Ark story).
- Environmental degradation impacts the vulnerable of our society first and foremost; so to truly love our neighbor we must protect and honor the Earth.
- Environmental injustice is immoral and must be addressed if we are to promote a society in which resources are equally available to all.
- Caring for the Earth is an act of love for each other and for future generations.
- There is a need for urgency – science tells us that global and local environmental degradation is severe and without a drastic change in lifestyle within 1-2 generations, impacts will be devastating (for example, the UN estimates that by year 2025, two-thirds of the world’s population will be living in places where water scarcity is a serious threat).
- We are part of a watershed community and what we do on our properties impacts those downstream: “Do unto those downstream as you’d have those upstream do unto you.” (the ethic of community service).

**ONGOING LEARNING**

Staying knowledgeable and informed is just as important as learning new things. Science changes, best practices are constantly being evaluated, and religious statements are ever-evolving.

**IPC’S MENU FOR ACTION**

www.interfaithchesapeake.org/menu_for_action

- This Menu for Action is a living document which is constantly updated with both spiritual and secular educational resources to help you stay in the know.
- You will also find what statements various denominations have made about ecological degradation.
- It is updated by the users who frequent it, so you, too, might have new information to add!
How will you know what will work? Here are some ways you might determine this:

- Chat with your pastor or respected leadership. They may have a good understanding of how the critical mass of your congregation views these issues and which messages will resonate with them.

- Conduct an informal survey. This can be as easy as paper surveys at the end of each pew, or an electronic survey (free online electronic surveys can be administered through Survey Monkey www.surveymonkey.com for up to 100 responses).

- Ask a small group of people from your congregation to come together for a potluck dinner to discuss this. Be open to hearing their viewpoints if you’d like to be able to “reach beyond the choir.” Prepare a few questions in advance (or seek help from IPC, Watershed Stewards Academy or others) and essentially facilitate your own focus study.

- Or simply learn by trial and error. You might have a good sense for what messaging will be effective, so start with that and see how it goes.

- Include earth steward messaging at events that are already planned at your church. Check with those in charge of the Annual Picnic, Fundraising Dinner, Fish Fry, etc. to see if you can have an information table or activity. See if you can work with the committee leadership to “green” the event.

Field Trips

We get so lost in the busy-ness of work and ministry that we forget to make a direct connection with nature. Taking a field trip with your pastoral leadership and fellow congregants is essential in gaining the church’s commitment to your project.

- Visit your local creek, wetland, or river to treasure the natural beauty right in your own back yard.

- Study tracks in the winter to determine who shares the land with you.

- Invite a Master Naturalist as a guide to what to see and actions to take. http://www.anrosp.org/programs.html

PRAY / OFFER GRATITUDE FOR CREATION

While outdoors, meditate, pray, and invoke gratitude for the beauty of Creation. Ask for God’s guidance on how your faith is calling you to take action. One possible such prayer could be:

“Love all God’s Creation, the whole and every grain of sand of it. Love every leaf, every ray of God’s light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love.” From: Father Zosima in Dostoyevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov. (New York: Farrar and Straus, 2002)

Reflect on these words of scripture while you are outdoors:

Ask the animals and they will teach you,
the birds of the air and they will tell you.
Ask the plants of the earth and they will teach you,
and the fish of the sea will declare to you:
in God’s hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of every human being. Job 12:7-10

More on beauty of Creation:

Beauty unites all things and is the source of all things. It is the great creating cause which bestirs the world, and holds all things in existence by the longing inside them to have beauty. Pseudo-Dionysius
• Recruit someone from your congregation who is knowledgeable about your local watershed ecology. Ask them to speak about its current condition and suggest actions to restore the environment based upon their faith.

• Organize a tour of best management practices on institutional and residential properties in your community.

**Bulletins/Newsletter Inserts**

• Communicate with your fellow congregants using routine channels such as printed bulletins, congregation email lists, and Facebook pages, if available.

• Make your message inviting, inspiring, informative, and brief.

Here are few brief sample bulletin inserts you can adapt for your specific watershed restoration project:

**God Makes the Rain, but We Make the Runoff.** Did you know that when rain lands on man-made parking lots and roofs, it becomes polluted stormwater? If we are to be good stewards of the Earth, we need to do our fair share to reduce our pollution. Join us next Sunday to help plant our new rain garden and be part of the solution! While we cannot change the whole world, we can improve our corner of it.

Will there be clean water for tomorrow’s children? What legacy are we leaving behind for our grandchildren? If you want to learn more about what is happening to water in our region and how you can contribute to the healing of sacred water through changes at home, join us for an informational meeting right after Bible Study this Wednesday.

Leave your Sunday “Go to Meeting” clothes at home next Sunday. Wear your tree planting clothes and bring a shovel to church instead! Why plant trees? Here’s just a few reasons why we, as good stewards of God’s Creation need to plant trees: Trees clean the air. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, removing and storing the carbon while releasing the oxygen back into the air. In one year, an acre of trees can absorb the CO2 produced from 26,000 miles of driving your car. Trees help prevent water pollution. Trees reduce runoff that pollutes streams and rivers and ultimately the bay. They filter water naturally and help recharge ground water supplies. Trees are Creation’s Cure-All. And that’s only a handful of reasons. See other benefits of trees here: [http://www.treepeople.org/top-22-benefits-trees](http://www.treepeople.org/top-22-benefits-trees).

You don’t have to be a communications expert to create bulletin announcements or Facebook postings. The key points that every announcement should include are:

• What is the event?

• Why is it important?

• Where is it?

• What time will people start?

• Who should someone call for more information?
Consider these announcements as invitations to new people to join you and be inspired.

Be open to all walk-ins and remember that you will be the face of your project, so be warm and welcoming to all participants.

Make the Most of Project Milestones

Project milestones are excellent opportunities to infuse messaging into your congregation about the project and why it is important. Milestones can include:

- Groundbreakings
- Volunteer planting days
- Finishing touches and final ribbon-cuttings
- Gatherings, celebrations, congregational picnics, and outdoor liturgies are just a few of the ways to make the most of your project milestones by bringing people together to celebrate the efforts and public witness of stewardship.
EXAMPLES OF PRAYERS, LITANIES, BLESSINGS FOR PROJECT MILESTONES
(Adapt these for your faith tradition)

Litany of Water Scriptures for a Rain Garden Blessing or Celebration

Reader: (God says to Isaiah:) See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in a wasteland. (Reading: Isaiah 43: 16-21)

Response: We are doing a new thing! We are called to restore Creation.

Reader: You make springs gush forth in the valleys; ... they give drink to every wild animal; By the streams the birds... sing among the branches. (Reading: Psalm 104: 10-13)

Response: We are doing a new thing! We are called to restore Creation.

Reader: Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Reading: Amos 5:24)

Response: We are doing a new thing! We are called to restore Creation.

Reader: We are called to fulfill a vision of Creation restored, Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, healing the polluted waters with God as our help and guide.

Response: We are doing a new thing! We are called to restore Creation.

Prayer of Dedication: Blessing of Our Hands to Plant Trees

Look at your hands: We are the hands and feet of God/ Christ. Today we are planting trees. We plant today as act of prayer. God bless these hands and bless the planting of these trees as our act of Prayer, an act of Hope. Of hope for: a healed earth, restored relationship with Creation, cleaner water, cleaner air to breathe, flourishing ecosystem, home and habitat for birds and insects, shade from the sun, holding the soil from erosion, a place to play, a place to pray and meditate on the first Word of God: Creation.

What other hopes do we plant with these trees?

God bless the work of these hands as we engage in the restoration of God’s gift: a good and blessed Creation. Help us fulfill our calling to be good stewards of your Creation. God bless this planting to fulfill our hopes and your hopes for healing the earth. Amen. Let’s PLANT!

Covenant United Methodist Church, Montgomery Village, Maryland
Commissioning Prayer for the Trees

Leader: With these trees we have planted faith in God’s redemption of the world.
Response: With these trees we have planted faith.
Leader: With these trees we have planted joy in God’s love expressed throughout Creation.
Response: With these trees we have planted joy.
Leader: With these trees we have planted beauty for future generations to enjoy.
Response: With these trees we have planted beauty.
Leader: With these trees we have planted healing of the air, water, and earth.
Response: With these trees we have planted healing.
Leader: With these trees we have planted hope for God’s Creation.
Response: With these trees we have planted hope.

All Sing: Amen
And / or:
All Sing: “Trees of the Field” (based upon Isaiah 55: 12)

Listen to this song here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M915v9r1T6M

Groundbreaking Ceremony

LEADER: This is the day that the Lord has made.
ALL: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
LEADER: We are standing on holy ground. God our Creator, we come before you today to give thanks. You have given us charge to keep and tend the earth (Gen. 2:15). You have given us stewardship of this holy ground upon which we stand. With you, nothing is impossible.

On this groundbreaking day we are dedicating ourselves to care for this piece of God’s good earth, this corner of Creation. Today we are embarking on a journey with this [NAME OF PROJECT] and pray that you will walk side by side us on this journey, guiding our steps and our decisions. Consecrate our actions to aid us in bringing this [NAME OF PROJECT] to fruition.

Let us now begin, as we take the first step, this groundbreaking. (All who have shovels dig up part of the soil.)

May this [NAME OF PROJECT] be a sign of our dedication to faith in action to help cleanse and restore your sacred waters.

ALL: We are restoring sacred waters. Lord, we dedicate this land to you and unto your glory. We pray that [NAME OF CONGREGATION] may be a “beacon on the hill” shining out to our community “so all may see it,” (Mt. 5:14) – or: a “light breaking forth like the dawn” Isaiah 58:8), inspiring others to be good stewards of the Earth.

Christian: All this we do and pray in the name of Christ, who is “in all, above all,” of Creation, your Beloved Son Our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Other: Creator bless this, the work of our hands.

Video of a Blessing of a Rain Garden at Cathedral of Incarnation Episcopal Church in Baltimore: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mm-g9W_K0KM
Change Hearts and Minds

Get the most out of your project milestone by turning them into educational opportunities as well:

- At every milestone celebration, make sure you have 10-15 minutes to tell the congregation why your community took on this project and how it relates to the watershed-wide effort.
- Request that your congregational leadership publicly validate the project with their support and appreciation.
- Recognize all of the people who contributed to the project (so that others might see a group of like-minded people with which they may wish to associate).
- Purchase and install permanent signage explaining the purpose of the project, so that the project continues to demonstrate to many others the importance of caring for God’s Creation.
- Survey people in your church (formally or informally) before and after the project to determine if attitudes toward the project changed. If so, be sure to share this with your congregation through a bulletin announcement!
- Invite the religious educators for your congregation’s children to use the projects to enhance their teachings, or allow the children to help with plantings or watering at appropriate times – teachers are always looking for easy activities for the little ones.
- Encourage members of the congregation and wider community to “go forth and do likewise” on their properties.

Don’t forget to report back to the congregation the “happy ending” once this project is completed. Tell the success story, give the numbers of how much grant funding was secured to make it possible, or how many volunteers made it happen. Thank the community for their support. Even if you forget a few milestones along the way, the happy ending story is probably the most important.

Build Your Green Ministry Program

As momentum builds throughout your project’s timeline, consider the congregants who have shown great interest in the project.

- Are these people who are being called to this ministry with you?
- Can you accomplish more as a team? Is this the beginning of your congregation’s green ministry program?
- Consider this project as the kickoff point for a more formal green ministry.
- Consider having a “sign-up sheet” at your milestone celebrations as a way of inviting other congregants to join you in future efforts.
• Ask your pastor, rabbi, or imam if they know of other fellow congregants who have expressed interest in your project.

Offer to facilitate a group who feel called to this work together, and seek their advice on who should be part of that group and what the group’s objectives should be.

Once you have 3 or 4 names besides yourself, you have a good-sized group to begin to meet casually, share ideas, hopes and dreams.

**STEPS TO CULTIVATE YOUR “GREEN TEAM”**

**Steps To Form a Green Ministry Overview**

1) **Background & Definitions**

   • **Eco-Justice** (National Council of Churches): All ministries designed to heal and defend Creation, working to assure justice for all of Creation and the human beings who live in it

   • **Creation Care** ((Evangelical Environmental Network): Caring for all of God’s Creation by stopping and preventing activities that are harmful (e.g. air and water pollution, species extinction), and participating in activities that promote reconciliation of all of Creation to God. Other terms: Green Ministry, Green Sanctuary; Consistent with Judeo-Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim & other religious teachings

   • **Green Team**: The group that leads Creation Care efforts in a congregation. Also known as: Caring for Creation Group, Green Ministry Team, Earth Stewardship Team

2) **Five Steps to a Green Team**

   1. **Prepare & Organize**
      
      a. Secure commitment from congregational leadership
      b. Recruit a team of 5-10 worker bees (well-connected, with time & passion)
      c. Research your faith tradition & denomination’s teachings (IPC’s Menu for Action has many of these collected for you already)
         Visit [www.interfaithchesapeake.org/menu_for_action](http://www.interfaithchesapeake.org/menu_for_action)
      d. Write a Mission Statement to guide your group’s work

   2. **Hold First Meeting**
      
      a. Get to know each other
      b. Discuss everyone’s hopes and dreams
      c. Listen to each other – everyone should feel they are important and offer essential skills – this will help with buy-in down the road
d. Remember – our Creator brings us together for a reason – everyone has a role, not just the leader/facilitator

3. Develop an Action Plan
   a. What enhancements can be made at worship/celebration to expose your community to the morality of caring for Creation?
   b. What can be introduced into the Religious Education program? (IPC’s Resource page: www.interfaithchesapeake.org/materials)
   c. What actions can be taught to your fellow members about sustainable living at home and work?
   d. What ways can Church Operations demonstrate sustainable living?
   e. Diving deeper – how can your community be a voice for Environmental Justice and Public Advocacy?
   f. Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake can help you with all of these things. Once your group decides which direction to go, contact us for support if needed.

4. Develop Communication Plan
   a. How will you communicate your goals, activities and progress to the congregation?
   b. Identify available communication vehicles: Newsletter, Bulletin, email, Website, Worship, Local Media

5. Review Plans Annually
   a. What did we accomplish? – Celebrate your accomplishments! Even the small ones!
   b. What’s still left to be done? – Identify the barriers and discuss how to overcome those. IPC can help you with overcoming barriers
   c. What are our goals next year?

3) Advice and Resources:
   • Be visible, inclusive, have fun, and love one another at all times
   • Recruit reliable people, and welcome even those who are not as effective but have energy
   • Start with win-win projects (save money with energy changes or stormwater fee reductions)
   • Emphasize simple living and curing “affluenza” (overconsumption)
   • Don’t start with the sacred coffee hour! Challenging coffee hour can be met with resistance such as “this is how we’ve always done it,” or “purchasing compostable cutlery or biodegradable paper products is too expensive.” Test the “waters” on this first before moving forward. Understand the resistance before trying to overcome it.
   • Track and publicize your progress
   • Check out free programs available to you from IPC: www.interfaithchesapeake.org/programs
• Check out the Menu for Action for a multitude of ideas and connections to other partners: www.interfaithchesapeake.org/menu_for_action

• IPC Prayer cards can help you get your meeting started, plus the flip side highlight the five major ways a congregation can heal Creation. (see page 24)

With your newly formed team of like-minded stewards, develop an Action Plan for what you all want to do next. Navigate that decision-making with some basic questions, or seek help from IPC and other organizations for planning support:

• What arena do you want to focus on? Water, Land, Energy, Waste, or Public Advocacy?

• Identify a vision - what end impact do you want to have on Creation? (Example: Contribute to a healing of Back River)

• Extrapolate goals - what are the various milestones you will need to reach to bring about that vision? (Example: 4 goals: reduce our parking lot runoff, plant buffer trees, educate our neighborhood, identify one commercial property owner in the neighborhood that we can influence to change their thinking)

• Describe the individual projects that make up those goals (Example: Parking lot runoff – work with Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay to capture 0.5 acre of runoff from our parking lot and direct it to a rain garden for natural filtration)

• Articulate a timeline for the projects

• Identify the strengths of your congregation’s leadership and members who can help bring these goals to fruition.

• Identify partners and supporters outside your congregation who can help you get this done.

• Identify resistance within your congregation or obstacles you will face. Who will help you overcome these obstacles?

• What resources will you need to assemble to get this project done (financial, technical, communications, etc.)?

• How can this project be integrated into existing congregational mission and vision?

• What other ministries at your congregation would have a vested interest in this project? (Example: the grounds committee might like the idea of converting lawn to forest because it’s less grass to mow)

• What type of internal approval will be required to move this project forward? What type of permits will be required from the jurisdiction and who can help you secure those?

• Outline the incremental steps needed to get this project done.
Publicity

Spreading the word beyond your congregation demonstrates a growing awareness of the importance of your role as a steward and leader in the community. This exposes people outside your network, people of different faiths, and even the general public about the importance of working together for a balanced Earth. Also, unaffiliated religious people searching for a new congregational community might hear your story and decide they want to learn more about the congregation and leadership who made this project possible.

LOCAL PAPERS, RADIO AND LOCAL WATERSHED ORGANIZATIONS

- When contacting local papers, reach out to the religion editor and/or person who handles community affairs.
- Be sure to plan with enough advance notice for your event to be publicized (some local papers are only issued weekly).
- Don’t underestimate the power of the small-town paper, which is still widely read.
- Using the internet, visit your local paper’s webpage and search for key phrases such as Press Release, Community Events, or Religion Editor. This should lead you to their instructions for how to submit a press release. Most press releases will need to be submitted electronically.

FIND YOUR LOCAL WATERSHED ORGANIZATION OR RIVERKEEPER

- Seek their help with this publicizing effort. They would love to hear about the project and help give it more visibility. Also, they may already have relationships with the local paper.
- They may even publicize it on their website or Facebook page and mobilize volunteers to turn out for your event to show support for your efforts.
- Invite local watershed organizations to have an informational table at your event as a way for them to meet community members and grow their impact.

PRESS RELEASES AND PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSA’S)

Publication through the radio is another way to reach more people, and most radio stations offer this for free to nonprofits as a way to meet their federal requirements to “give back to the community.”

Most stations will allow you to include a telephone number for more information in your PSA.

PSA’s can raise awareness of your event or get the word out that your congregation participated in this project. Helpful tips on how to write a good PSA can be found here: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/public-service-announcements/main
SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 12, 2015

CONTACT NAME

Faith United Methodist Church

Email

Phone

**Faith United Methodist Church is Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed**

**One Rain Garden at a Time**

PLACE, MD — On April 12, 2015 at 2 pm, a Dedication Liturgy will take place at the newly installed permeable pavement and rain garden on the grounds of Faith United Methodist Church. This congregation of 200 members came together to implement this project to reduce their contribution of polluted runoff to their local river. Knowing that polluted runoff is the only source of pollution in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that is still increasing, leadership at the congregation felt compelled to take action to reduce their pollution and teach others how to do the same at home and work. It is a tenet of their faith to care for one another, and that includes caring for the Earth, which we must all share.

Church volunteers also planted 50 trees last spring and join roughly 30 other congregations throughout Maryland who have all planted native trees on congregational grounds.

The church received valuable assistance from {project partners such as Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay or Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake} in making this project possible. As Pastor Williams said, "{quote from your pastor or other leadership}.”

During the dedication, there will be a blessing of the grounds, and Council Member John Smith will be in attendance to celebrate the successful project completion. Permanent signage will also be installed to tell the story of this project long after the dedication ceremony is completed. Rain Barrels will also be for sale during the event for all those who wish to reduce stormwater pollution at their home.

Congregations across Maryland are participating in [insert your watershed restoration activity here] contributing to watershed and habitat restoration while creating sources of beauty, enjoyment, and mediation now and for future generations.

Learn more at [give website addresses of your partner organizations], DATE (Time) of your Event {Groundbreaking or other Green Ministry activity}

For more information, please contact name, email address, phone

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SAMPLE PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Sample radio PSA script – live copy

Use: Immediate TFN (“til further notice”) or might provide range of dates the announcement should be aired

Time: 30 seconds

Organization: Amazing Grace Baptist Church

Title: “Clean Water for all God’s Children”

Main Point: “Clean Up for Clean Water” will be held April 20 at Amazing Grace Baptist Church. Streams and rivers are getting more polluted and filling with trash. Join youth and adults on April 20 to clean up River Run Creek and learn from Trash Free MD about what you can do to clean up the water, one stream at a time. People of faith are making a difference so all God’s children will have clean water and so can you!

###

POST ON YOUR CONGREGATION’S WEBSITE, FACEBOOK PAGE

If your congregation maintains a website, Facebook page and/or Twitter, these are quick and easy ways to get the word out to your members.

- Some of your members will be so proud of this project that they will share it with their friends, too.
- The key to social media announcements is to be brief with catchy phrases – and to post often. Facebook, for example, is like a flowing river and what is in the news stream at 1 pm is nowhere to be found at 5 pm when everyone gets off work. So post frequently to reach more people.
- Your congregation’s Facebook page has the ability to have several posts scheduled days in advance, so that you sit down once and schedule your posts for the coming weeks or even months.
- Leverage the Facebook pages of your project partners such as IPC, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Watershed Stewards Academy, Blue Water Baltimore, and others. Ask these project partners to repost your feed, or tag your partners in your posts so that they share them with their followers as well. The more traffic, the more likely someone will see it, like it, and share it.
- Ask other volunteers who worked on the project with you to share the Facebook posts on their personal feed to reach more people.
- Organize a tour with other nearby congregations who have done similar projects so that visitors can observe a variety of examples. Any of the partner organizations would be happy to help you organize such an event.
- Let your “light shine” about your project! Use your project as an opportunity to educate the passerby, visitor, and others, encouraging them to “go and do likewise.” Install signs on your
property explaining what and why you have installed this project on your grounds.

- Table or present your story at local community events (concerts, movie-in-the-park, secular green festivals).

**OPENING DOORS / HOSTING COMMUNITY**

- Call nearby congregations and invite them to your groundbreaking or dedication liturgy. After all, they are in your watershed community – and seeing your project firsthand may inspire them to walk in your footsteps.

- If you do not know who your neighboring congregations are, you can do a search on google maps, or contact Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake for assistance. IPC has access to a GIS database of most places of worship in Maryland, searchable by radius around a selected location. Contact anyone at IPC for assistance with such a search.

- Find maps and reports on congregations in your region at the website of The Association of Religion Data Archives. You can search their database by denomination, city, county or state: [http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/](http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/)

- There may be local groups of eco-minded congregations that come together on their own to synergize. One example is the Chesapeake Interfaith Environmental Group in Annapolis ([http://www.chesapeakeieg.com/](http://www.chesapeakeieg.com/)). A google search with a few key words may identify such groups, or contact IPC for ideas.

- Ministerial associations/ pastor network groups may exist in your area and could lead you to nearby congregations eager to collaborate across denominational lines.

- Contact your denominational office for a list of nearby congregations of your same denomination.

- Reach out to your denominational administrative office and inform them of your project. They may wish to showcase your project in their communications to the rest of the denomination.

- Host a grounds tour after your project is completed to teach others the value of this project and how to get it done.

- Invite your partner organizations to present at such a tour to help answer questions and to introduce your visitors to organizations that can help them achieve similar success.
ENGAGE YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Especially when not in session, local and state legislative officials may be interested to know about your project in their jurisdiction.

- If they are a representative who has supported environmentally-friendly legislation in the past, thank them for their leadership and invite them to witness firsthand some of the outcomes of their hard work. Host a potluck dinner and round table discussion of the issues your project aims to address.

- If they have not supported such legislation in the past, invite them for a respectful conversation about why you feel this work is critical, and a tour of the finished project.

- If you successfully convince elected officials to visit your project, this is newsworthy. Explore the possibilities of a press release based on their visit.

Putting It All Together On One Calendar

In summary, there are numerous opportunities to make the most of your project milestones to raise awareness, inspire a change of hearts and minds, and lead others by example. In fact, there are so many opportunities, that you may lose track of them.

- Make a master calendar of the various milestones you wish to leverage, and what activities you plan for each milestone.

- Identify support you need from your congregation or other volunteers for these various milestone events, and delegate tasks to make sure important items don’t slip through the cracks.

- Identify print deadlines for your congregation bulletin as well as the local papers, etc.

- Send your whole calendar of events to your elected official and ask them which event works best for their schedule for them to join in the celebration.
Section TWO

INSPIRE ENGAGEMENT:
Build Involvement within the Congregation
Worship Resources

Worship serves as both a source of inspiration and information. Utilize these resources to integrate stewardship of the Earth into the worship life of your community.

SPIRITUAL RESOURCES FROM IPC’S MENU FOR ACTION

Spiritual Resources/ Prayers/ Litanies/ Liturgy for many religions are constantly being added to IPC’s Menu for Action. Navigate to this site, www.interfaithchesapeake.org/menu_for_action then select “Click here for the Menu for Action.” At the top, select “Spiritual: Educational Resources” and browse the growing list of ideas and materials.

LITURGY, PRAYERS, SONGS

- Many Christian and Jewish liturgical resources have been collected and posted on IPC’s website: www.interfaithchesapeake.org/materials
- Stewards of the Bay: A Toolkit for Congregations in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed is a publication that offers worship resources, action ideas, sermon starters, and bible studies in the Christian tradition. Contact IPC for a print or electronic copy.
- Other resources are available on IPC’s website or the Menu for Action at www.interfaithchesapeake.org/menu_for_action
- A community-powered collection of readings on faith and the environmental in the Islamic tradition can be found at www.greenmuslims.org/greenscripture/
- The Alliance of Religions and Conservation have gathered sacred texts from many global religions, which can be found here: http://www.arcworld.org/arc_and_the_faiths.asp
- Songs/hymns about Creation can be found at http://www.interfaithchesapeake.org/materials
- Search the web for inspiring quotes on caring for the environment, environmental justice, earth stewardship.
- Invite members of your congregation to share their favorite quotes about care for the natural world.
- Prayer cards with the interfaith prayer “Water Unites Us All” can be obtained from Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake. Both sides of the Prayer card can be used as a prayer or pledge of commitment.
Water Unites Us All

Water flows through veins of earth and body, arteries of rivers, sustaining life. Everything—
insect, bird, tree, fish, flower, human, strands in an intricate web of life—
Sing praise for our Creator.

These hands, our hands,
may they be instruments of healing to the whole web of Creation;
may we be vessels of peace and protection for the sacred waters that unite us all;
may our choices reflect love for all life around us.

Source of blessings,
open our minds and hearts to heal our disconnect from the sacred waters of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed;
free us to live, grow, flourish, and sustain abundant life for all, upon this Earth, our shared home;
empower us, call us forth, walk with us on this journey to mend the web of life.
LITURGICAL YEAR / SEASONAL HOLIDAYS
(Adaptable to your particular denomination)

Use religious holidays, other special observances of your faith group, as well as seasonal changes as a prime opportunity to develop worship focused on care of God’s Creation, Earth stewardship, and environmental justice.

- Religious Holidays / Special Days – Examples: Tu B’Shvat, Sukkot, Feast of St. Francis (Oct. 4) or other saints like Native American Kateri Tekakwitha (July 14), World Communion Sunday (1st Sunday in October)
- Seasonal Changes – 1st day of Spring (March 20), 1st day of Autumn (Sept. 22), Harvest
- Secular Holidays – Earth Day (April 22), Arbor Day (April 24), World Water Day (March 22), World Oceans Day (June 8)
- Birthdays of Environmentalists – like Rachel Carson (May 27)

PLEDGE / COMMITMENT / COVENANT

Many congregations have chosen worship as a time to express their commitment to loving and caring for Creation by adopting a declaration, variously described as a “covenant,” a “pledge” or a “minute for mission.”

- Various denominations that offer “green certifications” may already have a covenant or pledge developed in your faith tradition. Contact your denominational offices to inquire.

Pledge of Commitment
(Adaptable to your particular denomination)

We have come to renew our covenant with God and with one another in Christ Jesus,

We have come to help protect God’s Creation.

We have come as followers of Jesus to commit ourselves anew to one another and to heal injustice and poverty.

We have come to stand together against all threats to life.

We have come to discover some new beauty every day in God’s Creation: the sunrise and sunset, birds, flowers and trees, rainbows in the sky, the stars, the many forms of life in the forest.

We have come to listen to the “music of the universe” – water flowing over rocks, the wind, trees bending in the wind, raindrops pattering the roof.

We will remember always that God speaks to us through the beauty of Creation, and we will try our best to answer God’s call to reverence all that has been created.

From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Example: from Presbyterian Earth Care Congregations Program

**EARTH CARE PLEDGE**

Peace and justice is God’s plan for all Creation. The earth and all Creation are God’s. God calls us to be careful, humble stewards of this earth, and to protect and restore it for its own sake, and for the future use and enjoyment of the human family. As God offers all people the special gift of peace through Jesus Christ, and through Christ reconciles all to God, we are called to deal justly with one another and the earth.

1. **OUR WORSHIP** and discipleship will celebrate God’s grace and glory in Creation and declare that God calls us to cherish, protect and restore this earth.

2. **IN EDUCATION**, we will seek learning and teaching opportunities to know and understand the threats to God’s Creation and the damage already inflicted. We will encourage and support each other in finding ways of keeping and healing the Creation in response to God’s call to earth – keeping, justice and community.

3. **OUR FACILITIES** will be managed, maintained and upgraded in a manner that respects and cherishes all Creation, human and non-human, while meeting equitably the needs of all people. In our buildings and on our grounds we will use energy efficiently, conserve resources, and share what we have in abundance so that God’s holy Creation will be sustainable for all life and future generations.

4. **OUR OUTREACH** will encourage public policy and community involvement that protects and restores the vulnerable and degraded earth as well as oppressed and neglected people. We will be mindful that our personal and collective actions can positively or negatively affect our neighborhood, region, nation and world. We will seek to achieve environmental justice through coalitions and ecumenical partnerships.
Inspiring Audiences Within Your Congregation

Faith based education is at the core of engaging your congregation in action. Offering opportunities for congregants to deepen their understanding about the rich resources within your faith tradition on care for Creation, Earth stewardship, and the sacredness of water will inspire action.

YOUTH CURRICULUM AND ACTIVITIES

Youth are excited to take part in hands-on direct experience with the natural world of God’s Creation. They need interactive, participatory education that engages their whole body, mind and spirit – and adults can enjoy these too if you plan an intergenerational learning activity.

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake posts updated resources helpful in engaging youth at the website: www.interfaithchesapeake.org/materials

- Sunday/Sabbath School curriculum entitled “Children’s Program on Care for Creation”
- “Tend and Keep” video
- “Faith-based Watershed Stewardship Activities” – a list of various activities to engage children and youth in reflection on the interconnectedness of all life and our stewardship responsibility
- “Web of Life Activity” – Game which illustrates how trees are an integral part of the web of life impacting all life within a watershed.

Lesson plans exploring the spiritual and environmental significance of water with children and youth: God’s Blue Earth: Teaching Kids to Celebrate the Sacred Gift of Water by Suzanne Blokland and Randy Hammer

Available from other sources:

- Jewcology is a wealth of materials for religious education on care for the environment. http://jewcology.org/
- “Water is Life” Jewish Teen Lesson Plan from GreenFaith www.greenfaith.org/

Actions/Exposure – contact IPC or your local watershed group to learn about when and where to find these opportunities:

- Local creek stomp/clean up
- Tree plantings and contextualization
- Green art, rain barrel art, drain stenciling
- Film and video (including making your own)
- See also “Field Trips” (page 8)

St. Matthew Catholic Church, Baltimore, Maryland
ADULT SMALL GROUPS

You don’t have to be an expert or clergy to lead a bible study! Here are some ways to lead a Bible Study:

• Each small group (2-4 people) is given one of the scriptures selected from “Scriptures on Trees and Water” resource (www.interfaithchesapeake.org/materials), or use your own selection. Use Bibles or copies of the scripture on paper. Ask all the groups to read their assigned scripture together and answer: “What is the action or quality of God expressed by the passage, depicted by the Trees and/or Water?”

• Invite each small group to offer a skit or movement to express their scripture with or without words.

• Lectio Divina Bible Study Method: Lectio divina combines a sensing/intuitive and thinking/feeling approach to scripture. This prayerful way of approaching scripture works well in small groups but can also be practiced by individuals. The classic form of lectio divina has four steps:

  1. Reading (lectio) – Read the passage you have chosen or listen to it being read. Try to experience the text as if you were there. Imagine the scene. Use all your senses.

  2. Meditation (meditatio) – Read or listen to the text again. Try to understand the context and the connection made in the text. Read it a third time, and wrestle with the text, or chew on one small portion of it. Listen for a word or phrase that “shimmers” with meaning for you.

  3. Prayer (oratio) – Respond to God through prayer. Pour out to God an honest expression of whatever you are feeling, whether it is contentment, grief, joy, or confusion.

  4. Contemplation (contemplatio) – Place yourself receptively before God, making yourself available for whatever God desires or is saying to you.

Robert Mulholland, who wrote “Invitation to a Journey” suggests adding two steps, one at the beginning and one at the end: Silencio and Incamato. Silencio means to begin your time of reading, reflection, and prayer with silence. Give yourself time to center down and focus on seeking God’s will. Incamatio means to reflect on what God is seeking to do in you. In other words, as a result of the previous steps, what does God need you to do or stop doing? How can you express the word God is speaking to you? Is there an action you are feeling called to take?

• Scripture sources on IPC’s Resources/ Materials webpage (www.interfaithchesapeake.org/materials):
  o Scripture Themes on Care for Creation
  o Scriptures on Trees and Water in the Bible
BUILDING'S AND GROUNDS

Your Buildings and Grounds Committee (or equivalent) will be key to shepherding any project aimed at improving the environmental impact of your congregation’s grounds. Here are some ways to motivate them to take this action:

- Bible study on being stewards/trustees of the land
- Sponsor an event: e.g., an Earth Day Celebration, World Water Day, Water Carnival featuring Stormwater best management practices (BMP’s) for congregation members
- Walking meditation to experience God’s presence on congregation’s grounds
- See also “Field Trips” (page 8)

Closing Blessing and Sending Forth

Congratulations and thank you for choosing to answer the call to restore God’s Creation through your watershed stewardship! Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake is here to assist you in magnifying your impact and facilitating your success. We hope that this Toolkit has offered both inspiration and information to equip you in this significant restorative work.

We are holding you in prayer. We pray that:

- you are strengthened in body, mind and spirit
- your actions are fruitful
- your stewardship will inspire more people like you to take the steps needed to heal God’s beautiful Creation.

Through your dedication and commitment we are all creating a ripple effect!

Rain Garden Blessing, Cathedral of the Incarnation, Baltimore, Maryland