

FLAGSTAFF FEDERATED COMMUNITY CHURCH

CHRISTIANS FOR THE EARTH

2010

Mission Statement. The mission of CHRISTIANS FOR THE EARTH is to celebrate God's creation and participate in the restoration of the interconnected natural world, grounded in our belief in the wholeness of God's creation and with faithful commitment to ecological stewardship.

Background. Christians for the Earth, an organization founded and supported by members of Flagstaff Federated Community Church, is a denominationally inclusive study and activist group concerned with environmental and ecological issues. Christians for the Earth first began meeting at Federated in 1995 and we are now a partner church with Eco-Justice Ministries of Denver, Colorado and have been recognized as a Greening Congregation by Earth Ministries of Seattle, Washington. We are a member of Arizona Interfaith Power and Light. Our membership has grown from an original group of 4 or 5 to over 30 people who regularly attend meetings, and with much larger numbers attending our events.

Our objectives are consistent with the objectives that God decreed for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden: to have "dominion" over all living things, meaning the caring relationship with creation that God seeks with humankind. Being created in God's image, we believe that we are to reflect God's love in our relationship with the natural world that God has declared is good. Following the example of Christ, we believe that any mastery of this good creation must be achieved by service.

We welcome people of all faiths to join us as we explore our relationship with God and the creation. Learn more about us on the church website under "Programs" at www.flagstafffederatedchurch.org.

Past Activities.

Workshops and Study Groups. Christians for the Earth has met regularly since its inception to study, to discuss and to open ourselves to the large body of knowledge documenting the escalating destruction of God's good creation, and to explore the Christian response that will define our ecological actions to fit our faith. We have used both workshops and study groups to learn about environmental issues and share ideas on faith-based solutions.

Workshops:

- "Step It Up 2007." Over 136 people attended our first annual day of climate justice. This community-wide event was part of a national effort by more than 1,400 churches to urge Congress to cut carbon emissions 80% by 2050.

We heard from renewable energy advocate, David Spence, and also from City of Flagstaff Sustainability Manager, Nicole Woodman. As a result of this event, we mailed over 100 signed postcards to Congress demanding climate justice.

- "'Tis a Gift to Be Simple." In April 2006 we sponsored a community-wide workshop, "'Tis a Gift to Be Simple: A Faithful Exploration of Simple Living." Rev. Peter Sawtell of Eco-Justice Ministries led the workshop. Rev. Sawtell described simple living as "a path toward a joyous, centered and responsible life. It encourages us to live in healthy and rewarding relationships with our families, our communities, the Earth and with God." During the workshop we remembered how simple living is deeply rooted in our faith and saw how it is an expression of global justice and environmental stewardship. We explored a wide variety of specific things that we could do to simplify our lives and tread more lightly upon the earth.

Study Groups:

- Beginning April 2007, class on *The Cry of Creation: A Call for Climate Justice* led by Mick Henry
- Viewing Al Gore's movie, "An Inconvenient Truth" as a group and meeting for discussion and suggested action
- Study and group discussion of the book, *Food and Faith: justice, joy and daily bread*, compiled by Michael Schut
- Class led by Rev. Mike Brown based on the book, *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life*
- Brown bag lecture on recycling by Tammy Bishop, City of Flagstaff Program Assistant for Commercial Recycling
- Guest speaker Helen Yard, avian ecologist, speaking on the impact of commercial coffee operations on avian ecology
- Talk on organic architecture and building in harmony with nature, by Jay McCormick and Joel Baillere
- Five series program by Dr. Arne Hassing and Dr. Max Oelschlaeger titled "Christianity and Sustainability" based on upcoming book
- Lessons from Dr. Arne Hassing on centering prayer as part of his class on "A Spirituality of Caring for Creation"
- Guest speaker David Sholin, with information on Presbyterians for Restoring Creation

- Meeting for lunch at a local restaurant to discuss the book, *And the Leaves of the Trees are for the Healing of the Nations*, by Dr. Carol Johnston
- Review and discussion of the book, *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*, by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Outreach to the Church and the Community. The work of Christians for the Earth is an important part of the identity of Federated and of the community of Flagstaff. We have established a reputation as Flagstaff's "green" church. People from other churches in the area, as well as people from other walks of faith, routinely attend our events. Our numerous volunteers are active supporters of the following outreach activities:

Church Activities:

- Sustainable Coffee Shop. The first Sunday of each month we hold the Coffee Shop in our fellowship hall, selling shade-grown coffee and other earth-friendly products such as tea, cocoa, nuts, greeting cards, ceramic mugs and canvas tote bags.
- Earth Sunday Celebration. Christians for the Earth works with the minister and the Worship Team to plan our church's Earth Day celebration. We have also sponsored the Blessing of the Animals for many years.
- Environmentally Friendly Gift Baskets. We make gift baskets for new members joining our congregation, for guest speakers and to acknowledge other special occasions. The gift baskets include Equal Exchange coffee, tea or cocoa (along with information explaining these environmentally friendly products), a church coffee mug, a book on the history of Federated, a Christians for the Earth bookmark and cookies. We believe that the gift baskets are a way of connecting with others and introducing them to sustainable products.
- Compostable Tableware. We supply compostable tableware for church events, including the Back-to-School Picnic, Vacation Church School meetings and the Fellowship Hour. Additionally, we often arrange for locally grown food to be featured at church events.
- Church Recycling Program. Our group of volunteers implemented a church-wide recycling program, furnishing recycling bins for rooms throughout the church, along with informational signs. We published articles in *The Belltower* and sponsored Moments for Mission to help the congregation understand the new program.
- Increasing Energy Efficiency of the Church. It is our goal to ensure the most efficient methods for heating are used throughout the church. We installed programmable thermostats for the ice-melting cables on our roofs and for the 13 furnaces that heat the church. We have replaced regular incandescent light bulbs with CFLs where possible. (Some rooms currently have florescent tubes, and the sanctuary chandeliers are on a dimmer. Both of

these rooms may not be switched to CFL's, because CFL's may not be workable substitutes with our budget. For these rooms we will seek other more energy efficient alternatives.)

- Installing a Bicycle Rack. To encourage people to use their bicycles to get to church we installed a bicycle rack on the church grounds to accommodate 12 bikes.
- Installing a Cup Rack in the Fellowship Hall. Christians for the Earth has already added a cup cupboard for ceramic mugs in the fellowship hall. The current cupboard holds 24 mugs. It has become a popular alternative to using disposable paper and styrofoam cups. We plan to install two additional cupboards for ceramic mugs, to hold 48 more cups.
- Good Steward Tips. Christians for the Earth submits "Good Steward Tips" to our church newsletter, *The Belltower*. We also provide *The Belltower* with other articles covering environmental issues and Christian responses to the ecological crisis. Our members reach the congregation with thoughtful "Moments for Mission."
- Cultivating Native Gardens. Our group initiated the program "Adopt a Plot" to help beautify the church grounds, and later organized the first "Work Day for Church Grounds." One of our members spearheaded the effort to replace exotic plants with native species.
- Church Environmental Policy. Christians for the Earth drafted an environmental policy for the church and presented it to the Board of Trustees. It was adopted in 2009 and will guide the church in future decisions as they involve environmental issues.

Community Activities:

- We sponsor "Nature Walks with God" leading people on local hikes into nature, featuring a meditation on God's creation.
- We participated in the Northern Arizona University Society of Environmental Communicators' annual "Respect Your Mama Earth Day" in 2008.
- Last year we created the Shared Earth Network, a city-wide faith-based environmental activist group, with the motto "Shared Earth, Shared Abundance." There is a link from our church website (www.flagstafffederatedchurch.org) to the Christians for the Earth page, and from there a link to Shared Earth Network to learn more about this mission.
- Our group organized the local "Step It Up" event in 2007 and participated in 2008. "Step It Up" is a national effort to urge Congress to reduce carbon emissions.

- In 2006, 2007 and 2008 we recycled telephone books as a joint project with the church youth group. In 2008 we took 660 telephone books to the recycle center.

- Christians for the Earth maintains a working relationship with Community Supported Agriculture and A Bar H Farms to provide locally-grown produce and hormone-free, humanely raised beef for as many events as possible.

- Christians for the Earth has supported the Forest Service effort to recover from the 1996 Side Fire by helping to plant 600 new ponderosa pine trees on the fire site.

- In 2003 we helped to improve habitat for antelope and other animals by working with Arizona Game and Fish Department to cut small junipers on Anderson Mesa that were encroaching on native grasslands.

- Our volunteers did observation work for Game and Fish at the black-footed ferret reintroduction site at Aubrey Valley.

- We have disseminated information important to the community on bark beetle infestation, mountain lion management, household hazardous waste, water issues and other timely topics.

- Our financial support has assisted the causes of Second Chance Center for Animals, Animal Defense League of Arizona, Greyhound Rescue, Northern Arizona Riding Association for the Handicapped, Ironwood Sanctuary and Americans for National Parks. Our members have also collected needed items for the chimpanzee rehabilitation mission at Coulston, New Mexico's Center for Captive Chimpanzee Care.

- We have organized letter writing campaigns to protect local open space as well as national parks and wilderness areas.

"Mindful choices for the environment are spiritual acts."