

How Many Light Bulbs Does it Take to Change an Episcopalian?

The Episcopal Diocese of Ohio is changing attitudes about global warming by helping churches change light bulbs. Bishop Mark Hollingsworth and intern Andy Barnett are leading a campaign titled “How Many Light Bulbs Does it Take to Change an Episcopalian?” The program provides up to \$250 per church to all 95 churches throughout the diocese to replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). “Almost any bulb under 250 watts has a CFL equivalent—even candelabra bulbs, reflector bulbs and floodlights,” according to Barnett. “We’ve been able to replace almost every type of bulb a church uses.” In addition to replacing bulbs at church, members are challenged to change five or more light bulbs at home.

Churches are also encouraged to provide recycling stations for CFLs. Participating churches receive a box, instructions for safe handling, and information on where to take the bulbs. (<http://earth911.org/recycling> offers a recycling search tool to find the nearest CFL recycling location.) Barnett notes that regardless of whether or not the bulbs are recycled, less mercury goes into the environment when one uses CFLs. “Powering an incandescent bulb with coal-based energy for five years puts 10mg of mercury into the environment,” he said. “The coal required to power a CFL for five years only emits 2.4mg of mercury, and the bulb itself contains 4mg.” Recycling can recover 95 percent of the mercury in the bulbs.

This campaign is a means of raising broader awareness of stewardship in the diocese, according to Bishop Hollingsworth. “Churches have a responsibility to set the bar and model what we understand to be faithful living,” he said. “How we respond to the environment has everything to do with our fidelity to God, and it has everything to do with how we give ourselves to God.”