

Tips to start a Creation Care Team in your congregation

by Leslie Sand and Carol Gilbertson, Members of the Care for Creation Network

Since the Churchwide Assembly in August overwhelmingly passed the churchwide goal of reducing its net greenhouse gas pollution 50 percent by 2030 — and the Northeastern Iowa Synod was one of 16 synods nationwide that had brought that goal forward to the whole church — our synod Care for Creation Network is seeking ways to help all of our 147 congregations to work on ways to accomplish that goal in the next eight years. (See Donna Rasmussen’s “Churchwide Assembly memorial calls for climate action” in the October issue of the *Star* newsletter, p. 10, www.neiasynod.org/download/star-newsletter-october-2022.)

The first step for each congregation — large or small, urban or rural — is to establish your church’s Creation Care Team. We have set out some recommended steps for your congregation to follow to do just that:

1. If you are an individual, find two to three like-minded congregation members who will meet with you and talk together about your concerns and goals. Ask your pastor to strongly support your team.
2. If you are a pastor or council member, you can bring the proposal to the church council. If not, your group can present the proposal for a Creation Care Team, or whatever you decide to call it. Make a case to your council by explaining not only the churchwide action on abating climate change, but also our earth’s dire need in this crisis moment. (See, for example, the explanation of the problem in the draft social statement on “Earth’s Climate Crisis” at www.elca.org/climatecare, and the ELCA paper “Climate Change 101” at www.ELCA.org/resources.)

Sample language for Council resolution:

“The _____ Church Council authorizes the formation of the Creation Care Team and encourages congregational participation. The Creation Care Team’s purpose is to help the congregation and members steward the gifts of God’s creation. The team will help incorporate creation care into our worship life, institutional maintenance and improvement, educational programs, our personal stewardship at home and work, and our public witness. The team will help us network with other area congregations, businesses, and organizations, the Northeastern Iowa Synod, the ELCA, and independent groups like Lutherans Restoring Creation.” (from First Lutheran Church, Decorah)

3. After the Creation Care Team is approved, publish that statement in your church newsletter and/or bulletin, preceded by a paragraph like this:

“The church council has passed a resolution to form a Creation Care team at _____, in conjunction with the Northeastern Iowa Synod Care for Creation Network.” More information is posted on the Care for Creation page on the synod website, www.neiasynod.org/care-for-creation. Below is the council resolution and the first Green Tip from the Synod (then include the wording of your church council’s resolution).

4. Consider regular notifications and suggestions in the bulletin and/or newsletter that suggest Green Tips for ecological living as part of caring for creation. Brainstorm some activities that can be accomplished with relatively few resources — promote a walk/bike/roll to church day, give suggestions to limit car/plane trips, reduce food waste, begin composting, plant a tree, conserve water, publicize the rummage sale as a way to recycle, plant milkweed seeds. You can also submit a proposal to Thrivent to get a \$250 gift card for printing costs or supplies, etc. Find out more



at www.thrivent.com/about-us/membership/thrivent-action-teams.

5. Encourage the council or building maintenance committee to have an energy audit done on your church building to discover how it can be made more efficient, and make a goal to implement the resulting recommendations. Educate and encourage members to do the same in their homes and work environments. Effective energy audit providers can be found at Winneshiek Energy District’s website, www.energydistrict.org.
6. Consult the Northeastern Iowa Synod office about possible speakers regarding carbon neutrality, climate solutions, etc. Some speakers are listed here.
7. Ultimately, your congregation could apply to be a “cool congregation.” Visit www.iowaip.org/resources/#cool and www.coolcongregations.org/start-up-kit.
8. A final goal is to aim to reduce your church’s carbon footprint by 50 percent by 2030. Let’s all make that goal a reality for our Northeastern Iowa Synod!

Resources:
[Iowa Interfaith Power & Light Lutherans Restoring Creation ~Congregations](http://www.iowaip.org/resources/#cool)
[LRC Creation Care Self-Organizing ELCA Creation Care Coaching](http://www.coolcongregations.org/start-up-kit)