

# THREE GREAT LOVES AND CLIMATE ACTION:

A GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED



### THREE GREAT LOVES AS THE KEY TO HEALING AND CARING FOR OUR CLIMATE

The vision of a just world for all guides the ministries of the United Church of Christ. To more fully embody the love of God in pursuit of this vision, a commitment has been made to focus on [Three Great Loves](#): a love of neighbor, a love of children, and a love of creation. These Three Great Loves point to what fundamentally motivates people to address the damage done to our climate. People care about neighbors near and far who suffer from rising sea levels, floods, droughts, and hurricanes. They care about the world their children and grandchildren are inheriting. They care about the natural world around them that is under assault. This guide aims to turn that love into action: climate action.

### THE DIFFERENCE A CHURCH CAN MAKE

We can think of each church as having a web of influence that begins within its walls but can ultimately expand far beyond. Within the walls of the church, we can talk about the critical moral dimensions of climate. We can be caretakers of creation through healthy food choices, wise energy use, and waste reduction. Beyond the walls of the church, we can wield our influence on policy makers by joining together for advocacy and action. When the immense love within a church goes public, it becomes a powerful force for justice.



## PART OF OUR DENOMINATIONAL DNA

In the 1980s and 90s, no other organization played as [central a role in launching the environmental justice movement](#) as the United Church of Christ through our Commission for Racial Justice. In more recent years, we again played a leadership role on environmental issues through resolutions on [fossil fuel divestment](#), societal [transition to renewable energy by 2040](#), and [support for the Paris Climate Accord](#).

## THIS GUIDE

The Creation Justice Churches Program of the United Church of Christ, in partnership with Blessed Tomorrow, offers you this guide to help you live into Three Great Loves through climate action. As a way to get started, this guide focuses on responsible energy use in reducing carbon pollution, and engaging your congregation and community, so that our children, our neighbors, and all of creation might thrive more fully.

## TOWARD A JUST AND EQUITABLE TRANSITION

The commitment to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy is an urgent one and requires an inclusive approach. Some of our congregations and parishioners are more dependent than others on fossil fuels or incomes derived from fossil fuels. This does not mean we cannot achieve a just and equitable transition over the coming years. Those who labor in coal mines and on oil fields need to be at the table when envisioning and enacting the transition currently underway.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### 1. Climate Change

Anyone who has walked into a greenhouse can understand the reality of climate change. Just as a greenhouse traps in heat, the greenhouse gases in our atmosphere trap in the heat that causes our planet to warm. Due in large part to the use of fossil fuels, our atmosphere is trapping in more heat. The result is not only higher temperatures but a change in our entire climate system, so that everything from droughts and heatwaves to floods and hurricanes become more intense, frequent, and unpredictable.

### 2. Climate Justice

We recognize that climate change is a moral, economic, and social issue rather than just an environmental issue. Often, the poor and marginalized around the globe who have contributed the least to climate change suffer its effects the most. Moreover, severe weather events frequently have a more devastating and longer lasting impact on communities already burdened by poverty and racism. Additionally, as the water protectors of Standing Rock reminded us, the threats posed by the extraction and transportation of fossil fuels are also a common manifestation of environmental racism. With love propelling us forward, the church is called to address such critical matters of justice.

### 3. Climate Solutions

We have solutions to climate change. Brilliant people, like the authors of the book [Drawdown](#), have mapped out a way to reverse the destructive direction in which we are currently headed.



## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO (AND HOW TO GET STARTED!)

**Getting Started:** One person, a team, or the whole congregation can volunteer to make and implement a simple plan that moves your church toward a new energy future that stops pollution and saves money. Decide who's going to do it. Here are some great resources:

- [Blessed Tomorrow](#)
- [US DOE Congregation Energy Saving Guide](#)
- [Creation Justice Churches Program](#)
- [Interfaith Power & Light](#)

**Conserve Energy:** 66% of energy goes to waste. The easiest and most important thing to do is save energy and save money by using less. These steps will save you money.

- **Lights:** Replace all incandescent bulbs with LED lights to cut lighting costs by 90%.
- **Insulate:** Windows, doors, water heaters, (walls & ceilings). Save half your HVAC costs.
- **Transportation:** Buy and encourage use of electric or hybrid cars. Carpool and support active transportation (biking and walking) with bike racks.
- **Recycle:** It saves energy and conserves other resources like trees and water.

**Clean Energy:** Energy from solar and wind are becoming mainstream across the United States. Costs are coming way down and options are becoming easier. Once you've saved energy by going energy efficient, meet all your remaining needs with clean, renewable energy.

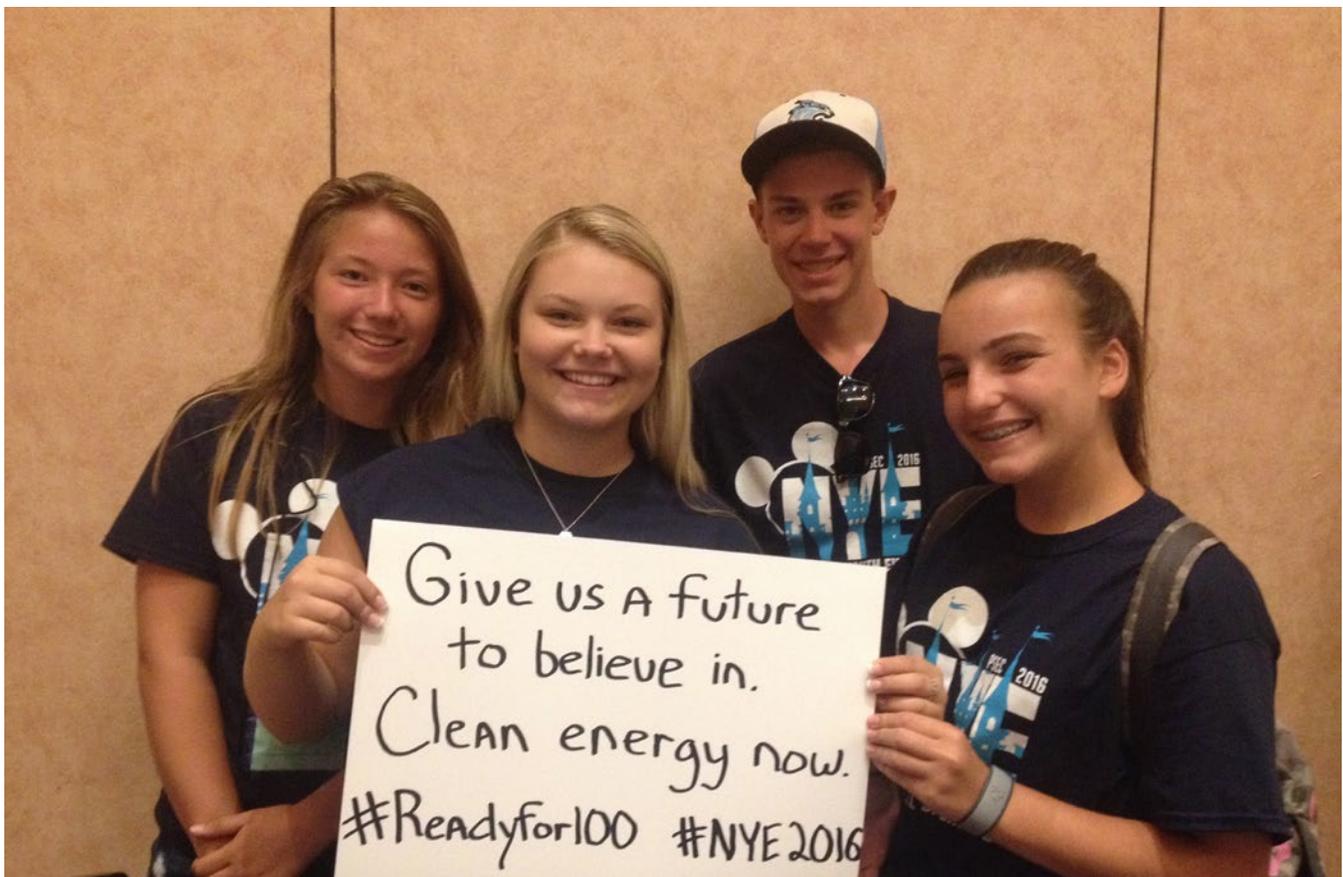
- **Make:** You can meet all your churches energy needs with solar power and battery storage. Costs vary, but in the end, you'll save money and create a sanctuary that cannot be disrupted by the grid. Go solar! Geothermal and wind may also be options.

- Buy: In many places you can buy clean energy for just a bit more than dirty energy. Check with your local utility or green group.
- Offset: If you can't buy clean power from your local grid, substitute. Buy renewable energy credits to cover your energy usage.

**Beyond Energy:** Burning toxic fossil fuels is the biggest problem we face, but solutions go beyond energy use. There are many other things you can do to create a healthy community.

- Nature: Plant trees, create natural areas at your church and in your community.
- Go net zero: Eliminate all waste. Recycle and compost.
- Food: Grow food on your property, eat locally, and eat less meat products.

**Going Climate Positive:** Create or buy more clean energy than you use to offset your congregation's use of toxic fossil fuels.



## ENGAGE YOUR CONGREGATION AND COMMUNITY

### Engage Congregants:

- Create a [Green Team](#).
- Incorporate [creation care into worship](#) through prayers, liturgy, sermons, hymns.
- Educate your congregation about the [sources of local energy](#) and whether pollution from those sources has a disproportionate racial or economic impact on particular communities.
- Highlight benefits of your Green Team activities (e.g. utility bill savings) in your newsletter.
- Put creation care on your church home page.

### Engage Other Congregations:

- Encourage other congregations to join you in caring for creation. Share ideas and resources.

### Engage Your Community:

- Host a community presentation to inspire others.
- Participate in a community solar program.
- Create a community garden/host a community dinner.
- Collaborate with other ecumenical partners and faith traditions to share information and best practices.
- There are a number of ways to [connect with the broader movement](#) for change.

### Engage Society:

- Let your elected officials know you want policies that expand your clean energy choices.
- Encourage members to take the [Creation Care Voter Pledge](#) so that they consistently vote and prioritize caring for creation.
- Write letters, op eds, engage in social media.





#### OTHER RESOURCES:

- How It Works: [The UCC's Creation Justice Churches Program](#)
- [Sign Up](#) for The Pollinator: The UCC's Environmental Justice Newsletter
- Ideas, Tools, and Messages: [Blessed Tomorrow](#)
- [Interfaith Power and Light](#): Network of people of faith
- Carbon Neutral [Web Resources](#) for Congregations
- Energy Efficiency Tools and Initiatives: [EPA Energy Star Program](#)