

Green Team 2014 Report

In its first year of existence, the Green Team has made some progress in its efforts to improve Grace Church's environmental impact and pursue GreenFaith Certification. The Green Team is deeply indebted to the many other ministries, groups and individuals who have worked so hard to make Grace a greener church.

So far, we have established our Green Team with over 20 members. We have completed the GreenFaith required audits of our church's spiritual practices, physical plant and environmental advocacy. Based on those audits we have developed an action plan to guide our efforts to achieve certification.

Thanks to the work of the Capital Campaign, the HVAC committee and the renovation committee the church has significantly reduced its energy consumption. By replacing the AC units in the Nave as well as the boiler in 2013, we took major steps toward energy reduction. As part of the renovation, new efficient LED lighting was installed in the undercroft, new LED Exit signs were installed throughout the building and a new efficient hot water heater was installed. All of these items have further reduced our overall energy consumption. Low flow water fixtures in the restrooms and kitchen have reduced our water consumption as well. In the coming months, the Green Team hopes to be able to document those water and energy savings.

Through the efforts of our Junior Warden and former Parish Administrator, the church now buys wind generated electrical power for the church and parish hall. With this change the church further reduces its carbon footprint and hopes to enjoy some cost savings because the electrical rate is locked in for the length of the contract.

Thanks to the work of the Coffee Ministry we have been enjoying fair trade coffee throughout the year during coffee hour. At the end of the year, the coffee ministry improved our coffee offerings by serving up Blessed Coffee. This coffee is produced by a co-op owned by Ethiopian growers and distributed in the area by a B-corp that reinvests a share of its profits in community building activities in our area. The end result is coffee that is better for the environment, the growers and our community.

With the help of dedicated volunteers, Grace Church has been able to reduce the use of disposable plates, glasses and flatware to only a few events a year. From coffee hour to the Bazaar to the annual meeting we utilize reusable dishes and flatware to reduce our overall waste output. The Green Team will be working in the future to help improve our recycling efforts which are often hampered by poor signage and information.

With hundreds of volunteer hours logged so far, the church is rebuilding our playground into a sacred play space designed for the use and enjoyment of all generations. In keeping with the Parish's green goals, the Playground Committee is making use of materials that are naturally rot resistant and wherever possible makes use of recycled and reused materials. In the end, Grace will have a low maintenance space that will have a minimal impact on the environment.

Working with the Buildings and Grounds committee, the Green Team was able to utilize greener cleaning products in the annual fall parish clean-up. We will continue to improve our cleaning product choices. The Green Team was also able to spread the word about greener cleaning by offering a bucket of greener cleaning products as part of the Silent Auction at the Bazaar.

In addition to these physical activities, Grace Church has also begun to raise a green consciousness through educational efforts. Under Andrew's leadership, the parish participated in the Global Climate Change Preach-in in the spring. This fall has included two environmentally themed Adult Forum sessions. The first explored the plight of marine mammals and the second, the origin and work of Blessed Coffee.