

## **Spirit Audit**

### Area 1 – Worship

#### **1. Worship services**

*Worship is at the heart of the life of religious communities, and offers an important opportunity to deepen your members' awareness of Creation and its Creator. The following questions are designed to help you think about ways that your house of worship can integrate environmental themes into your services of worship in a manner that is suitable for your particular setting.*

Greenfaith Question: Do your worship services:

Take place outdoors during any time of the year? Please describe. If not, does your institution's location provide opportunities to do this?

- A. Outdoors: We often worship out of doors though usually not for the whole service. We have a 5-acre natural habitat that is right behind our building (north) both sanctuaries have an unrestricted view of this habitat during worship.



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When we have worshipped outside, particularly for a full service, it has been to dedicate some outside activity or progress we have made in our conservation/restoration of our natural habitat.

### 1.Full services

a. Dedication of detention pond. (2002) After we paved part of the parking lot we were required to do remedial detention in a two stage pond that matched the whole footprint of our building and parking lot. This was built at the lowest point of the property and at the northern property line. The pond was constructed to fit the contours of the property and planted with native grasses. Both congregations (St. Aidan's and our sister congregation, Northside Presbyterian) gathered (along with portable sound equipment and musical instruments) at the edge of the pond to appreciate and bless the new area. Our designer, Leigh Thurston, made a presentation about the environmental protection offered by the detention pond and the type of native grasses that were planted there. The first picture is the site of the service. The second, the grasses.



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b. Weddings/Funeral: We have had a number of weddings and funeral's in natural settings. In particular we have used some of the settings along the Huron River in Ann Arbor.

c. Good Friday Procession (Hour 1 of Tre Ore):



Each year, during the first hour of our 3-hour service on Good Friday, we participate in a long procession through our neighborhood during which we pray 14 contemporary stations that include prayers for the world, conservation, poverty, health, justice, education, the beauty of the earth, and spiritual connection. Particularly Station # 2 which is at Traver Creek concentrates on conservation of our water resources. Each year one of our members gives a lesson on water conservation at this station.





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Station 13 (The woods behind the church) concentrates on the Beauty of the Earth and our care for it.



- 1) Written liturgy (see appendix A) For the past two years there has been an accompanying contemporary stations with music (St. John's Passion by J.S. Bach) and visuals for those who do not choose to make the long walk. (Appendix B – power point)

d. Good Friday Traditional Stations – Occasionally the third hour of the Good Friday Tre Ore service is the traditional stations of the cross. This is usually observed corporately in the church. Several people choose to use the posted stations in the woods for a private devotion on the stations of the cross.

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### 2. Partial services

a. Rogation days: On Rogation Sundays (the Sunday before the Ascension) we always have an outdoor service of prayer and planting. During this service a procession is made to different gardens and prayers and psalms offered to accompany plantings. To support his service a booklet has been made that includes all the prayers and psalms (including the Great Litany) suggested in the Book of Occasional Services (BOS 19. TXT 1994 Book Of Occasional Services (c) 1995, Church Pension Fund). We have found that for most rogation days, a simpler service such as the one we have developed (from the same BOS) for Home and Garden use is sufficient. (Appendix C) During the restoration blessing of the Children's Chapel in the woods, the whole Great Litany was used with a special blessing. (Appendix D) In 2010 and 2011 the Rogation Plantings have been part of a hardwood restoration project in the wildlife habitat.

(The first Eco-Service for our GreenFaith commitment was experienced on Rogation Sunday, May 29, 2011. This was a full service concentrating of preservation of our natural resources)



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b. Palm Sunday: Each Palm Sunday, we experience the first part of the liturgy from Book of Common Prayer (BCP, Church Hymnal Corporation, 1977 p. 270-272) outside in the front yard of the church. Both congregations (St. Aidan's and Northside Presbyterian) join together for the service of Palms. A procession into the church (or churches) follows with the Passion Liturgy for the day.

c. Blessing of Memorial trees: At the Conclusion of our 2000-2003 accessibility project, there was an outside blessing of the parking lot followed by a blessing of 26 Memorial Trees. Many of the native hardwood trees were placed in our natural habitat where acres of invasive species were removed to make room for the new planting. The tree blessing followed the rogation blessing format. The blessing of the parking lot can be found in Appendix E.



d. Other blessings of plantings: We try to move outside to bless any special plantings or new gardens that are developed during the year.

### 3. Celebrations

a. Habitat celebration: On May 3, 2009, we held a dedication ceremony for the St. Aidan's/Northside Presbyterian Natural Habitat. This habitat was recognized as a national wildlife habitat after our children did a natural features analysis on the 5 acres of woodland behind our church building. The celebration included a thanksgiving for a new path (done as an Eagle Scout project), greetings from the Mayor and our State House Representative, a dinner on the lawn, premier



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performance of an original musical composition (In the Garden by Janet Lamb and Stephen Eddins of St. Aidan's), and a blessing service through the woods.





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Habitat 2010: The second annual Habitat Celebration included a public lecture and a field lecture by noted Environmental Scientist, Burton V. Barnes. Professor Barnes presented on the natural habitats present in this 5 acre plot and presented us with an analysis, both historical and environmental, for this land that borders on one of Michigan's original Native American trails. Appendix F is a copy of his analysis.





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c. Dedication of Memorial garden: On All Saints' Sunday, Nov. 4, 2007 we, along with Northside, joined after our 11:00 am services to dedicate our newly developed memorial garden. On the site of our original invasive species removal, ironically done (at that time anyway) more for visibility than ecological concern, the memorial garden was designed by Landscape architect, Susan Bryan Hsieh. It is planted with native (deer resistant where possible) plants around a granite baptismal font. The ceremony was simple with two prayers (Appendix G), a hymn, and plantings by members of the congregations.





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d. Groundbreaking ceremonies: (Elevator and Parking lot) The BOS of the Episcopal Church has a curious service for groundbreaking. We have had occasion to use it twice outside, of course. The first time it was to consecrate the elevator and its housing that was the beginning of our accessibility project, the second was the groundbreaking for the parking lot (with 1/3 paved – the rest gravel for better percolation) The largest challenge, for accessibility purposes, in the parking lot was the steep slope. This was made lower, provided eventually a place for our labyrinth, and much safer for winter foot traffic. The groundbreaking ceremony for the parking lot is Appendix H. The first ceremony was similar though scaled down for the smaller size of the structure.





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- d. Blessing of Furnaces (inside): We tend to bless all sorts of accomplishments at St. Aidan's. The new 95% fuel efficient furnace that replaced the relic we have had since the building was built in 1968 was a huge accomplishment for both our congregations. Our Building Committee (joint) did an analysis of the fuel efficiency, environmental impact, and eventual savings to convince the congregations to spend the money now even though the old system was still operable.



### Boiler Upgrade

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#### B. Environmentally oriented prayers.

1. Prayers of the People: Over time, we have used a number of prayers but over and over we return to the prayers of the people in Supplementary Liturgical Texts, Church Hymnal Corporation, 1996. In the last section (SLT05.Txt.) it offers prayers of the people that encourage the worshippers to claim their place as stewards and servants. Appendix I

2. Cantic of Creation On pages 63 and 102f of A New Zealand Prayer Book (Harper Collins 1997), there are two different Canticles of Creation, each is wonderful for evoking creation. Since the one on page 63 uses species specific to the South Pacific, we have sometimes replaced these with species found in our northern habitat.



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3. Grail prayers: A number of years ago a retired member of our congregation who spends several months each year in England brought back with him "The Grail Liturgy ( Appendix J.)," which is used extensively in his Church of England congregation there. Since the use rights are very liberal, we have used components of it in many of our seasonal liturgies. Throughout the liturgy, and particularly in the Eucharistic Prayer it calls on creation and our relationship to it. Symbols of the Spirit, Air, Water, Fire and Earth (Rock) are presented with thanksgiving at the beginning of the service. While we have often used the Eucharistic Prayer for seasons at a time and have used some of the prayers at other times, we have only once, in a Rogation celebration (Appendix K) , used the whole service. The whole package with its permissions and explanations are here in Appendix J.(It is not a very good copy but the contact information is here if one wants a better copy.



4. *Common Worship* Eucharistic Prayer Eucharistic Prayer G, from The Church of England Prayer Book (©The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England, 2000-2002.) Begins with references to creation and evokes creation images several times. We have used it in several seasons when we are calling attention to the care of the earth. Appendix L.



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5. Stewardship liturgies: Fall of 2010 Stewardship of the Environment. On this Sunday, we emphasized the part of our vision that focuses on care for the environment. There was an introductory slide show set to two traditional hymns set by John Rutter, "For the Beauty of the Earth," and "All Things Bright and Beautiful." (Pictures are in Appendix M) There was a homily by the rector and a presentation on Eco-Theology and Eco-Justice by John Paul Board, MD. (Appendix N)

6. Advent blessings – Advent of 2010 began with a challenge to "prepare the way" for environmental restoration. In addition to a sermon on the topic and appropriate prayers a Slide show was presented to the music "Prepare Ye the Way,"(from Godspell-Stephen Schwartz) "All Things Bright and Beautiful"(setting by Rutter) (Pictures are in Appendix O)

### C. Sacred texts on environmental themes.

#### 1. Biblical Texts:

a. Psalms: So many of the psalms use creation imagery in their praise of God. Several examples can be found in 24: 1-2; 33:6-9, 65:9-13, 89:11, and 147: 8-9. Psalm 104 is a psalm of creation.

b. Job 38f: This tour of God's creative work and cosmic knowing has been the subject of both sermons and study at St. Aidan's.

c. Genesis 2 – Most of our sermons that speak about eco-theology come from the creation story in Genesis 2. Here the human is given the job description to care for garden (œabad, to serve or worship) and (shamar, to guard or keep). In addition the story gives a great example of the importance of each species in the wonderful tale of trying over and over to create another human out of the earth and failing time

God  
after time.  
it must generate  
DNA."

This creates a message, even God cannot create a species once it is lost,  
from itself, "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, DNA of my

#### 2. Hymns/music on environmental themes

a. Stephen Eddins' *Creation* piece. One of the most effective and dramatic liturgical pieces that dramatizes God's creation is composer, Stephen Eddins' "Tohu v Vohu." This piece, performed by 4-5 musicians on "found" instruments and several narrators. The impact of this auditory experience is profound as the congregation experiences the sounds of creation all around them. For information on how to get access to this piece contact: [jseddins@comcast.net](mailto:jseddins@comcast.net)

b. Stephen Eddins joined poet, Janet Lamb to compose "In the Garden," for the 2009 Natural Habitat Dedication. Composed for Guitar or Piano accompaniment, it is an up beat (almost camp song acc. to composer Eddies) piece for choir and congregation. Appendix P. For permission contact: [jseddins@comcast.net](mailto:jseddins@comcast.net)



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c. John Rutter's (& other hymns settings) – "All Thing Bright and Beautiful," "For the Beauty of the Earth"

d. *St. Patrick's Breastplate*

### 3. Local flowers/greenery in sanctuary

a. Sunday Altar flowers harvested from small garden directly outside sanctuary.

b. Garden is tended by members as a ministry.

### 4. Plants/animals in service

a. Rogation blessings

b. St. Francis Day Blessing of the Animals

c. St. Aidan- St. Aidan is always depicted with a stag representing his commitment to understanding God in all things. Auditory sermon. (14 STE 001)

d. Regular prayers/concerns

i. Prayers of the People always address care for earth.

ii. Individual intercessions may feature prayers for seasonable weather (thanksgiving or intercessions), accommodations for the homeless/those who have trouble w/ heating bills, environmental issues being considered by city government, and global concerns – prayers after disasters, re: climate change.

e. Environmental –themed services – how well received?

a. There has been little feedback about our services. Seeking this feedback will be an area of growth.

## **Priorities**

- Gather feedback – what should we emulate & build upon in upcoming services?
- Mine & expand resources for environmentally-focused materials – interfaith texts, hymns, liturgies
- Plan Total-Outside services – w/ accessibility (at church or elsewhere)
- Develop accessible outdoor chapel for outdoor worship



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### Area 2 – Religious Education

1. Religious education specifically on environmental teachings
  - A. Adult education
    1. Workshops on environmental living (recycling)
    2. Low Carbon Diet, A 30 day program to lose 5000 lbs, by David Gershon was the manual used in a month long Sunday morning Christian Education program for adults. <http://www.empowermentinstitute.net/lcd/>
    3. Spirituality of Environment (Lent). A variety of presentations including keeping a nature journal, Images of Job 38, and a presentation about the affect of Nature on Cognitive ability.
    4. Education about desertification and tree planting restoration in Africa.
  - B. Teens/Children
    1. Analysis of 5-acre woodland to qualify for National Wildlife Habitat designation.
2. What worked well?
  - A. Carbon Diet
    1. Many reported they were able to use this practical guide in their own lives and families
3. Education on local/regional/global issues?
  - A. Environmental degradation in Africa
    1. Nigeria
    2. Eritrea
  - B. Preservation & restoration of our woods. We have had several programs about native grasses, methods of managing a healthy forest, and eco-system preservation.
  - C. Progress on transfer of Betty's land for preservation & use. We are making a historic partnership with a local land trust (Legacy Land Conservancy) to preserve 10 acres of lakeside wetlands.
4. Local environmental leaders?

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- A. Burton Barnes' lecture introduced us to a leader in the whole field of ecological preservation as well as helping us understand our own land.
  - B. Solar Shingle appraisal for roof (local lecture). Before we put a new roof on our buildings, we consulted local experts and had education programs about solar shingles and other methods of using alternative energy production.
  - C. (*Buildings & Grounds Committee*) a forester from our local Leslie Science Center consulted with our B & G committee about how to manage invasive herbaceous species.
5. Tools for members to measure individual consumption?
- A. The Carbon Diet study helped us individually.
  - B. Participants were encouraged to go on line and measure their carbon footprint.  
<http://www.carbonfootprint.com/individuals.html>
6. Issues published in newsletter/website?
- A. Not yet. –This is a place for growth
7. Religious-environmental education for ordained and/or lay leaders?
- A. Hands-on training in forest management.
  - B. Jim Barber/Janet Lamb attended a local conference on organizational challenges to climate change.

## Priorities

- Point 6 – communication & articles
- Children's Ed.
- Connections to local environmental communities



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### Area 3 – Spiritual Practice

1. Retreat, reflection/meditation day?
  - A. We have a whole retreat ministry that encourages spiritual retreats at our facility particularly because of the beauty of the setting. The first actual “Nature Spirituality” retreat is a part of our first year GreenFaith commitments.
2. Encouragement for outdoor prayer/meditation practice?
  - A. Labyrinth. We have a Labyrinth on the gravel part of our parking lot. This is the only flat part of our property.
  - B. Woods. There is a chapel in the woods. We have created two beautiful and easy to use nature trails in our 5 acre habitat. In lent it has 14 stations of the cross for Lenten meditations.
  - C. Nature Spirituality Center – We are developing a spirituality center on the 10 acres of lakeside wetlands.
3. Intergenerational/Interfaith activities?
  - A. Not yet

## Priorities

- Nature Spirituality Retreat
- Develop Spiritual Center at Betty's land
- Interfaith Connections
  - A. UU
  - B. Islamic Centers
  - C. Jewel Heart
  - D. Synagogues
  - E. Churches
  - F. Baha'i
- Environment Group Connections

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- Good Publicity Practices making Eco-Justice connections.