

Ideas for Starting a Parish Green Committee

(Prepared by St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Green Committee – updated Feb 19, 2016)

St. Francis Pledge

Pray and reflect on our responsibility to care for God's creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.

Learn and educate others about environmental stewardship.

Assess how we contribute to environmental degradation.

Act to affect positive change

Advocate for the principles of Catholic Social teaching especially with regard to our environment.

- Read Laudato Si' On Care for Our common Home.
- Meet with the Parish Council about setting up the team.
- Coordinate with your parish Human Concerns and Building Maintenance committees. Their members often overlap Green Committees.
- Place notices for Green Committee members in bulletins or ask individuals directly.
- Set up monthly meetings and start them with the St. Francis Pledge or a stewardship prayer.
- Distribute the St Francis pledge at a Mass and ask for pledges.
- Incorporate prayers of the faithful with an environmental focus.
- Publish a Green Corner with environmental tips in your weekly bulletin.
- Have Green Committee sign up sheets at all parish events for new members.
- Join Catholic Climate Covenant <http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/act>
- Calculate your parish carbon footprint. You will need access to the utilities account.
- May use <http://www.epa.gov/climateleadership/center-corporate-climate-leadership-simplified-ghg-emissions-calculator>
- Do a parish energy (and water) audits to identify potential savings.
- Take steps to reduce parish carbon emissions – control thermostat settings, keep church doors closed during colder months.
- Set up a recycling program and use reusable or compostable materials for parish events. Adopt a zero waste culture.
- Investigate potential for solar power at your parish.
- Use the strengths of the Green Committee members as each person has different talents, experience, and knowledge to bring to the team.
- Set up free-cycle at your parish picnic.
- Promote biking and walking to church. Provide bicycle racks at all church sites.
- Promote use of public transportation.
- Invite guest speakers or show films with follow up action brainstorming discussions.
- Identify and encourage advocates to petition elected officials for policies to reduce carbon emissions.
- Write letters to the editor of local newspapers. The effect is beyond our local community. Legislators assign their staffs to read letters to the editor to learn about their constituents' interests.
- Consider offering the JustFaith (JustMatters) module on the environment – last updated in 2012.
- Regularly (every 6 months) report to Parish Stewardship Council about the work the Green Committee has accomplished or needs assistance. (A good format is to structure it along the 5 statements of the St. Francis Pledge.)
- Start with small steps to build confidence. Some actions can be done in series, don't lose courage.

The Green Committee of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, on behalf of the parish community, works to advocate for Catholic principles and priorities in environmental issues and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable. The committee works to inspire the parish community to discern and act in ways that reflect our duty to care for God's Creation.