



# *Stewards of Hope*



***Your Congregation's Guide  
to Building a Green Team &  
Creating a Sustainability Action Plan***





## Michigan Interfaith Power & Light

*Connecting Faith and Sustainability*

Michigan Interfaith Power & Light's mission is to inspire and equip people of faith to exercise stewardship of and love for all Creation. We offer practical ways to put faith into action by promoting energy efficiency, renewable energy, and other sustainable practices that lead to a cleaner, healthier, and more just world.

Visit us online at [miipl.org](http://miipl.org).

Stewards of Hope helps congregations express their faith in new ways, create healthier, more sustainable communities, and save money. Use this guide to:

- \* Explore and deepen connections between Creation care and your faith
- \* Form a strong and lasting Green Team
- \* Create a Sustainability Action Plan



## ***Building the Faith Foundation***

The spiritual teachings and foundational texts of all major religions call on their members to care for the interconnected web of life and to love their neighbors. We cannot love our neighbors without also protecting the air, land and water we share—these moral duties go hand in hand. This call to action is especially urgent because the of our accelerating climate crisis environmental distresses we face are serious, and because they disproportionately impact the most vulnerable among us.



***Eat and drink from the provision of Allah, and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption. -Qur'an 2:60***

***We need to live as the Buddha taught us to live, in peace and harmony with nature, but this must start with ourselves. If we are going to save this planet we need to look at the life we lead and then work together for the benefit of all. -Buddhist Statement on Ecology, 1996***

***[Lo tashchit, 'do not destroy', is] “the most comprehensive warning to human beings not to misuse the position which God has given them as masters of the worlds... if you destroy, if you ruin, at that moment you are not a human and have no right to the things around you. I lent them to you for wise use only; never forget that I lent them to you. As soon as you use them unwisely, be it the greatest or the smallest, you commit treachery against my world... you sin against Me ” -Rabbi Shampshon Rafael Hirsch (19th c., Germany), Horeb, sections 397,398***

***The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. -Genesis 2:15***

**As you embark on this process, reflect on (and return to) these key questions:**

- ✳ How does your tradition shape your thoughts about connections between religious teachings and how we relate to Earth?
- ✳ What motivates you to take action?
- ✳ What do you draw on in your tradition (and other personal and communal resources) to persevere?

# Forming a Green Team

## 1. Assess Your Congregation

Assess your congregation to see how sustainability might be incorporated into its existing practices and systems. What is already in place? Where is there room for improvement? The Sustainability Action Areas diagram may be a useful point of reference, for example:

- Worship and celebration (Values & Behavior, Food)
- Education for children and adults (Values & Behavior)
- Facilities/Building and Grounds (Buildings & Energy, Land & Water, Recycling & Purchasing)
- Administration (Recycling & Purchasing, Buildings & Energy)
- Ministries (Values & Behavior, Advocacy)
- Hospitality (Food, Recycling & Purchasing, Land & Water)
- Janitorial services (Buildings & Energy, Land & Water, Recycling & Purchasing)

## 2. Seek Support from Leadership

Discuss the creation of a Green Team with your congregation's leaders and, if appropriate, ask permission. Be ready to explain your intentions:

- What do you want your Green Team to be able to do for the congregation?
- How do you propose to accomplish your goals?
- How can leadership help you and what, if anything, are you asking of other committees or staff?

## 3. Form the Team

Develop a list of potential members for your Green Team. Consider:

- Who is passionate and perhaps knowledgeable about sustainability?
- It might be helpful to have a mix of: people with influence and/or decision-making power, hard workers, people who are handy, good communicators, people who are good social connectors, and people who have enough time on their hands to take on new projects
- Try to recognize and utilize the gifts that each individual brings to the team

Discuss your ideas with the people you have identified and invite them to participate. Make an announcement to the congregation that a Green Team has been formed, and publicize your meetings and activities.

## 4. Manage the Team

As a group, discuss organization and expectations (leadership, roles, logistics). Working together to develop a mission statement helps establish a unified vision and fosters fellowship and personal investment.

### Keys to Green Team Durability

- ✱ Have a compelling focus (develop a clear and common vision)
- ✱ Maintain continuity of people and philosophy (train new members as old members leave)
- ✱ Interact regularly (develop communication systems and meeting schedules)
- ✱ Gather support from the wider organization

*Adapted from Julia M. Wondolleck and Steven L. Yaffee. (1997) Sustaining the Success of Collaborative Partnerships. Ecosystem Management Initiative, School of Natural Resources and Environment, University of Michigan.*

# Forming a Green Team: Defining Your Mission

## SUSTAINABLE

*adjective* | suh·STAY·nuh·bul

- : able to be used without being completely used up or destroyed
- : involving methods that do not completely use up or destroy natural resources
- : able to last or continue for a long time

*Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

### Sample Mission Statements:

*As Christians, our faith compels us to be stewards of God's creation. We will, as St. Peter Earth Keepers (S. P. E. K.), demonstrate, educate, and advocate for the conservation, preservation, and protection of God's creation. We seek and welcome the involvement of all of the St. Peter family as we carry out this calling.*

-S.P.E.K., St. Peter Lutheran Church, Battle Creek

*Purpose: To build our CAPACITY to be good environmental stewards, make CHANGES in our parish and homes to reduce our carbon footprint and EDUCATE parishioners on warming trends to strengthen our work on social justice.*

-Sustainability Project, St. Francis of Assisi Church, Ann Arbor

- \* As a group, develop your Mission Statement.
- \* What is your definition of “sustainability”? What does it mean, exactly, to make your congregation or organization more “sustainable”?



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## *Roles of Participants in a Congregational Sustainability Initiative*

### *Green Team*

- Planning and action
- Outreach and education
- Working with the congregation, clergy and staff

### *Clergy/Faith Leader*

- Legitimacy: “Earth care is an expression of our faith”
- Promotion: sermons/religious teachings, encouraging participation, getting buy-in of broader leadership

### *Staff*

- Knowledge: resource usage, how things are done and what can be done differently
- Organizational integration

### *Congregation*

- Participation
- Support: knowledge, volunteers, networks, funds

## ***Developing a Sustainability Action Plan***

Sustainability Action Plans help congregations put their faith into action, become better stewards of the Earth, care for their neighbors, and work for social justice.

1. Choose your area/s of action. Where can you make noticeable progress and build momentum? Where can you plug into your congregation's existing interests and skills?
2. Conduct an environmental assessment of each area. What is already in place? Where is there room for improvement?
3. Select activities to improve sustainability in each area. (The following pages provide some idea starters.)





## Action Area: Buildings & Energy

*In the U.S., building energy use creates 40% of all carbon emissions. And utility bills are one of the most significant expenses in our Houses of Worship. That's why buildings are a great place to begin implementing sustainable—and money-saving—practices.*

### Top 10 Energy Tips for Houses of Worship

1. **Free utility-led energy efficiency programs.** In Michigan, our regulated utilities (DTE Energy, Consumers, etc.) are required to help their customers save energy. So take advantage of those free programs for business customers *first* (congregations are in the “business” category because they occupy commercial, non-residential buildings).
2. **Efficient Lighting.** In a House of Worship, lighting is often a significant category of electricity usage. Lighting upgrades are often straightforward to implement and have a relatively quick payback. LEDs consume significantly less energy and last many times longer than older types of bulbs. So you'll not only be using less energy, you'll also be saving time by replacing them much less frequently.
3. **LED Exit Signs.** An incandescent Exit sign costs about \$25/yr to operate, while an LED Exit sign only costs about \$4/yr to operate and lasts much longer.
4. **Occupancy Sensors.** Install occupancy sensors in rooms with irregular use (restrooms, storage areas and offices). According to the EPA, the average savings produced by occupancy sensors is 60%.
5. **Programmable Thermostats.** Replace standard thermostats with 7-day programmable ones or smart thermostats to adjust heating and cooling according to usage. Be sure to learn how to reprogram the thermostat, so that you can adjust it seasonally and as building use changes. Thermostats that can be controlled from a smart phone are great time savers, too!
6. **Air Sealing.** Did you know that just a 1/4” gap under a set of double doors lets in as much air as a grapefruit-sized hole in the building? Installing door sweeps, caulking and weather stripping gaps, and locking windows for better air sealing reduce energy waste and increase comfort.
7. **Heating & Cooling.** Clean or replace filters as recommended. Consider an inexpensive furnace or boiler tune-up each year for optimal efficiency.
8. **Insulation** (ceiling, roof, walls, basement, outlets on exterior walls). The type of insulation you choose depends on its use, your region's climate, and your budget.
9. **Unplug devices or use Power Strips.** Eliminate “phantom loads” by unplugging electronics (computers, printers, TVs, etc.) when not in use. Standard and the new “smart” power strips make this even easier.
10. **Efficient Appliances.** Look for the EnergyStar label, the EPA's symbol of energy efficiency, to save up to 30% on related electricity bills.

- \* The EPA ENERGY STAR Action Workbook for Congregations is a comprehensive guide to energy stewardship and savings. Download it from our website at: [miipl.org/energy-resources](http://miipl.org/energy-resources)
- \* Michigan IPL member congregations are eligible for discounts on energy efficient appliances, products and related services. Details at: [miipl.org/membership\\_faqs](http://miipl.org/membership_faqs).



## Action Area: Advocacy

***Implementing sustainable practices is important, but getting involved in advocacy broadens your impact by helping create systemic change.***

1. **Sign up for Michigan IPL Emails** at [miipl.org/joinus](https://miipl.org/joinus). We stay on top of energy-related news and policy discussions and will send you occasional emails when advocacy opportunities arise. Share our advocacy opportunities with members of your congregation's Green Team to maximize the impact. A group of just 20 letters advocating for a common cause is enough to get your lawmaker's attention.
2. **Write a letter to your elected officials and encourage your fellow congregants to sign.** Your letter should identify your perspective (e.g., "As Muslims, we are concerned by..." or "As members of St. Sebastian Church, we see the human consequences of poverty every day..."), be concise (not more than 1 page), focus on a single issue, and ask the lawmaker to take a specific action or position ("please vote Yes on Bill..." or "please support strong regulations on carbon emissions"). Telling a relevant personal or community story can be an especially effective, memorable way to convey your concerns. You can send the letter by mail or by email.
3. **Influence public opinion by submitting Letters to the Editor (LTEs) and Op Eds to your local newspaper.** Successful LTEs (often 200 words or less) and Op Eds (about 500 words) are focused, timely, locally relevant, and come from a specific perspective. They may respond to an article recently published in the newspaper or to a current event. For example, a Jewish author might talk about their tradition's mandate to "not destroy" as the legislature prepares to vote on approving a new industrial project. A mother might ask members of her City Council to block a proposed industrial project because she sees firsthand the toll pollution already takes on her children's health. Working with your religious leader to submit an Op Ed with their signature can be especially impactful because of the clout and moral authority their role confers in your community.
4. **Visit your elected officials.** You don't need to be an issue expert to have an effective legislative visit. You just need to talk about what issues are important to you and why. Speaking from the heart and telling your story is a great way to make a lasting impression and begin to develop a relationship with your elected officials. Lawmakers want to meet with their constituents and hear about the issues that matter to them. Michigan IPL can help you set up meetings (in-district or in Lansing), put together talking points, and even accompany you on your visit to discuss environmental stewardship and issues that matter to you.
5. **Encourage leadership within your congregation and/or denomination to prioritize sustainability.** This might mean a Peace & Justice ministry commits to devoting its energy to environmental issues for the coming year. If Earth care is a part of the identity of the congregation, this may mean going public about your commitment on your website—telling the world and your congregation what you are doing to live more lightly on the Earth. It could mean proposing that the topic of Earth care be covered at your denomination's next regional gathering or conference, or even joining the growing movement among faith organizations to divest from fossil fuels. Measures like these support advocacy work by creating a culture of commitment to sustainability in your congregation.

## Action Area: Land & Water

***The Great Lakes are a national treasure: they are habitat for hundreds of species of birds, fish and other wildlife; they support our livelihoods and wellbeing; and they contain 85% of all fresh water in North America. We as Michiganders have a special duty to protect these waters. Reducing our water waste and use of chemicals are important ways we can protect our lakes, rivers and streams.***

1. **Install faucet aerators** (and shower heads, if applicable) to reduce water use in sinks, especially if your fixtures date to the early 1990s or before. Faucet aerators give the feel of a robust flow by accelerating and adding air to the water stream. In bathroom sinks, you probably won't even notice the difference!
2. **Install efficient toilets.** Toilets make up a significant portion of your indoor water usage. Toilets made in the early 1990s or before use 3.5-7 gallons per flush, while toilets manufactured after 1992 use <1.6 gallons per flush. A dual-flush model allows you to customize your water use: .9 gallons for a small flush and 1.6 for a larger flush. EPA EnergySense-rated toilets use pressure-assisted flushing technology and modified bowl contours to perform even better than first-generation low-flow toilets. Upgrading an older, 3.5 gpf toilet to a newer 1.6 gpf model will save you nearly 7,000 gallons of water per year (assuming just 10 flushes per day). Check with your utility provider for available rebates on high performance water-saving toilets. You can also convert your existing toilet to a low-flow or dual flush system with inexpensive D-I-Y kits. Toilets that are always "running" or that have leaks will also waste a great deal of water, so don't wait to take care of these issues.
3. **Run your dishwasher when full** instead of hand-washing your dishes. It may seem counterintuitive, but modern dishwashers are likely to use less water than hand-washing. EnergyStar-rated dishwashers use less water and less energy than standard dishwashers.
4. **Grow less grass and more native plants to use less water.** Turfgrass lawns require a lot of water to stay green. You can use less water by changing the plantings: having less lawn, more shrubs and more drought-resistant native perennials can not only make your landscaping more interesting, it can also make it lower maintenance and less resource-intensive. In Michigan, purple coneflowers, red columbine, feathery grasses, and so many other plants are not only beautiful and easy to grow, they also support essential pollinators (like bees) and do a better job of reducing runoff (which can overpower sewer systems in a storm) by soaking up rainwater.
5. **Stop using chemical pesticides and herbicides.** Unlike turfgrass, plants native to your area thrive naturally and thus don't require extra chemicals. Runoff from chemical fertilizers ends up in our waterways, where it produces algal blooms and reduces oxygen levels, creating "dead zones" where fish cannot survive. Children and pregnant people are also especially vulnerable to the effects of pesticide and herbicide exposure: a study published by the Journal of the National Cancer Institute found that pesticide use can increase the risk of childhood leukemia by nearly 7 times. Pesticides have also been linked to asthma, developmental delays, behavioral disorders, and disruptions in the endocrine, reproductive and nervous systems. The EPA estimates that over 90 million pounds of herbicides are applied to American homes and gardens each year.

## Action Area: Food

***The food we eat is not merely a matter of basic sustenance, but of environmental sustainability and social equity. Pursuing sustainable living by making conscientious choices about food and food systems also brings into focus the web of relationships between our bodies, our communities, and the health of all forms of life on earth.***

1. **Eat less meat (or go vegetarian).** According to a recent study, eating less red meat can be more environmentally beneficial than giving up your car! (Yes, you read that correctly.) Beef production entails 11 times more land, irrigation water, and greenhouse gas emissions than poultry production, and 28 times more than dairy (Eshel, et al., 2015, Proceedings from the National Academy of Sciences). Eating an exclusively plant-based diet shrinks the footprint even more. Eating animal products is also a matter of health and ethics. With the vast majority of all meat coming from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), which are heavy users of antibiotics and growth hormones, eating less meat is also likely to mean better human health. Industrial-scale factory farms are designed to maximize yield; with weak legal protections, this system has little regard for animal welfare. Baby animals' beaks, teeth and tails are routinely clipped (without anesthetic) and animals are raised in confined quarters—sometimes without even enough space even to turn around or lie down. If we see animals as parts of God's Creation, sentient and worthy of respect, we must also take into account the ethical considerations of our dietary practices.
2. **Buy organic food when possible.** This is not always easy to do because of where we live, the stores we have access to, and the budgets we need to stretch. But the benefits are significant. You'll protect your health by ingesting fewer chemicals, and you'll also support an agricultural economy that does not poison the Earth. Conventional farming practices rely heavily on chemical fertilizers, which are typically derived from natural gas and create greenhouse gas emissions. The nitrous oxide released by nitrogen fertilizers is especially powerful and traps more heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide. Fertilizer runoff ends up in our waterways, where it kills fish and can contaminate groundwater. The toxic algal blooms that hit Lake Erie in 2014 are believed to have been caused in part by such agricultural runoff.
3. **Eat food that is locally-grown and in-season.** This will not only help ensure that your produce is flavorful and vitamin-rich, it will also help support local growers. What's more, because it involves less transportation, it is likely to have a lower carbon footprint than produce shipped from thousands of miles away. Growing some of your own food can be a great way to achieve this.
4. **Support local hunger programs or programs run by your religious tradition.** Many congregations and religious bodies have programs designed to address local and global hunger. Getting involved in this work is a good way to address food issues—which are a problem of distribution rather than supply, a matter of justice rather than production—systemically, and to help care for the most vulnerable members of society.
5. **Plant a garden as a congregation.** Gardening is a great way to get people involved in congregational activities, promote intergenerational relationships and knowledge-sharing, to build fellowship, and to have fun. It can help address inequity by providing food for the community. As a public symbol of your congregation's activities and priorities, it can offer people outside of your congregation a way to plug into your activities, and it can also be a good "on ramp" for individuals to become engaged with other

## Action Area: Transportation

*Transportation is one of the first things many of us think of when it comes to sustainable living. But the prevalence of low-density communities and disinvested public transit make it difficult for many of us to rely on bicycles or busses to get around. Still, there are numerous practical measures we can take to reduce our transportation-related footprints.*

1. **Don't speed.** While each vehicle reaches optimal fuel economy at a different speed, in general, efficiency drops rapidly at speeds higher than 50 mph. The Dept. of Energy estimates that reducing your speed by 5 to 10 mph can increase your fuel economy by 7 to 14%. And unless you're going a very long distance, reducing your speed may have less of an effect on your travel time than you'd think. For example, on a 150-mile trip (or about the distance between Detroit and Grand Rapids), going 75 mph will get you to your destination just 8 minutes faster than going 70 mph.
2. **Check your tire pressure monthly and make sure it is at recommended levels.** This not only saves gas, it also means your tires will last longer, and you'll have a lower risk of highway blow-outs. Also note that seasonal temperature changes affect your tire pressure (as air molecules expand with heat and shrink with cold). If you're not sure what the right pressure is, check the sticker on the inside of your car door, the imprint on your tires, or your owners manual.
3. **Car-pool when possible.** To incentivize ride-sharing at your house of worship—whether to promote sustainability, help elders attend services, or to deal with an overflowing parking lot—set up reserved priority parking spaces for carpoolers and a whiteboard for connecting drivers and riders. As parents know, sharing transportation duties can also be a great time-saver. And sharing rides a great way to strengthen relationships and promote fellowship.
4. **Minimize idling.** Contrary to popular belief, it is actually more efficient to turn your car off and then restart it than it is to idle for 10 seconds or longer. Not only does idling waste gas, it also causes smog and greenhouse gas emissions. So when you are waiting in the drive-through at the bank, or picking your kids up from school, turning the engine off will protect your pocketbook and the air around you. Busses routinely idle for hours a day. In a school setting, a fleet of busses idling in one place creates an invisible but potent cloud of toxic air, which is especially harmful to children. This not only wastes gas and dollars, it also leads to poor air quality that damages children's cardiovascular health.
5. If you live in an area with good public transportation or safe passage for pedestrians and bicycles, **challenge congregants to use these alternative means to come to services** and to meet their daily needs. This activity could easily be made into a fun contest to get people active and build awareness about non-fossil-fuel-based modes of transit. You could encourage people to pledge to reduce their driving by (x) miles a week and organize a friendly competition.
6. **Be an advocate for public transit.** Poor public transportation infrastructure places significant burdens and restrictions on the lives of people who don't own cars or who cannot drive—limiting their education and employment options, and making it difficult to get groceries, see the doctor, and do many other everyday things. By encouraging expanded public transit in your area, you help bring about positive environmental *and* social outcomes.

## Action Area: Purchasing & Recycling

**Remember the 3 R s? First, Reduce: don't consume more than you need. Second, Reuse: creative repurposing and upcycling is not only all the rage, it's also environmentally savvy. Finally, when you must throw something out, Recycle it responsibly.**

1. **Reduce the amount of stuff you buy.** Some of the Action Area lists in this guide suggest products to buy to become more sustainable and lessen your environmental impact in the long term. But, to be clear, we cannot shop our way out of our most serious environmental challenges. When it comes to the non-essentials, consuming less costs less and is the best way to reduce our waste.
2. **See if you can borrow what you need instead of buying new.** The “sharing economy” isn’t just the latest fad, it can also be a great way build fellowship, use fewer resources, and save money. Just think of how many items we own that we use once a week or less—from lawnmowers to ice cream makers. This might also be a way of redistributing resources within your congregation.
3. **B-Y-O-B: Bring Your Own Bag AND Bring Your Own Bottle.** Single-use plastic bags and bottled water are two key contributors to plastic pollution. Such plastics are resource-intensive to produce and transport and often end up in landfills, where they will take hundreds of years to biodegrade. What’s more, the quality of bottled water is notoriously unregulated and has often been found to be no more “pure” than standard tap water.
4. **Choose environmentally-friendly products,** from biodegradable cleaning supplies, to recycled office paper, to body wash that doesn’t contain carcinogens and plastic micro beads. The Environmental Working Group ([EWG.org/Consumer-Guides](http://EWG.org/Consumer-Guides)) has rated hundreds of thousands of products according to their health, environmental, and social impacts to help you purchase cleaner, healthier, more values-aligned products. As a congregation, when you regularly purchase several specific items, create a purchasing protocol to guide (and take the guesswork out of) routine purchasing decisions.
5. **Compost your food scraps** to reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfills. Believe it or not, food waste doesn’t decompose well when buried in a giant pile of trash, because it doesn’t get enough oxygen to break down properly. To compost, you don’t need any special equipment, just a container with a loose-fitting lid to collect the food scraps. (You may be surprised at how easy and non-smelly it is.) Empty the scraps into a larger bin or simply a pile outside. Add grass clippings and leaves, and turn with a pitchfork from time to time, to cultivate a rich, fertile soil your plants will love.
6. **Recycle what you can.** Again, avoiding overconsumption is the first course of action. Recycling is a better way to dispose of trash than sending it an incinerator or landfill, but it is still a process that consumes energy, water and other resources. If there is no curbside recycling program in your area, redeem cans and bottles for cash at grocery and party stores. Post information about community recycling days in your congregational newsletter. These will often collect items that you can’t toss into the trash or standard recycling bin (including paint, batteries, and electronics). Your Green Team can investigate local options for responsible disposal of such items and designate a collection box in a visible place at your House of Worship.



## Action Area: Values & Behaviors

*Changing our behavior—whether we want to eat better, exercise more, or take up meditation—is hard work. But it’s also worth our while. In congregations, Green Teams can promote sustainable behavior by encouraging reflection on our faith values, by communicating with the congregation as a whole about their activities, by providing education on sustainability-related topics, and by modeling sustainable practices.*

1. **Engage your fellow congregants and one another in conversations about the connection between your faith tradition and Earth stewardship.** You could form a study group or a book club, invite a guest speaker, or host a movie and discussion night. Visit [miipl.org/resources](http://miipl.org/resources) for links to interfaith environmental study guides, suggested films, and more.
2. **Ask your faith leader to speak about sustainability from the pulpit.** This might mean preaching about Earth care or simply announcing your team’s activities to demonstrate and build support for your efforts.
3. **Communicate about your Green Team’s plans and accomplishments.** This is not (just) about tooting your own horns! Communicating about your work is a vital part of your team’s work: it helps you build group membership and encourages participation from the congregation in your upcoming activities. There are many ways to share the good news: you can write newsletter columns, place announcements in service bulletins, create an eye-catching display in the foyer, post items on the bulletin board, and ask for space on your congregation’s website or Facebook page.
4. **Educate the congregation about sustainability and provide clear instructions on sustainable practices.** Use your group’s activities as teaching moments. Let’s say your Green Team has recently done an energy assessment. In that process, you learned about easy and low-cost efficiency upgrades that will save your congregation energy and money. You could then use this knowledge base to host a workshop on at-home energy efficiency. This is not only a service that directly benefits the members of your faith community, it also expands your team’s impact exponentially by multiplying the number of people who are living more sustainably. Educating through newsletter articles, films, study groups, guest speakers, and even integrating teachings about sustainability into religious education (for children and adults) are other highly effective ways to enlighten your community and expand your impact beyond the walls of your congregation.
5. **Make sustainability a visible norm.** This could mean putting up a sign at social hour that reads “This congregation uses washable plates and silverware,” and a positive message like “This year, we kept (# estimate) of paper plates and (# estimate) plastic utensils out of landfills!” Research shows that lifting up positive sustainability role models can also help establish new social norms and shift behavior. When people see a person like themselves doing something, they may assume that the behavior is a norm and be inclined to follow suit. So you might organize a highly visible activity to model a sustainable practice (e.g., planting a garden, or swapping out old, inefficient lighting), or you could publicly recognize a individual who has made your house of worship greener (e.g., an administrator who reduced paper waste by 25%).