



PRACTICAL HOPE: Living with Respect in Creation

From the Environmental Working Group, Maritime Conference of the United Church of Canada

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Educational Events to Note:

"The Heart of the Human Project: Our Contemporary Vocation" with Stephen Bede Scharper at Tatamagouche Centre May 11-13, 2009

<http://tatacentre.ca>

"Several of us from the Conference attended a workshop with Stephen Scharper last July. It was great food for the mind and soul. I would highly recommend it! - Laura

ASTE "Elemental Faith:

What is a Green Enthusiast?

More than 70 United Church congregations in Maritime Conference have named a **Green Enthusiast**, someone who will be the "point person" to receive and share information to help us, as individuals and as a church, lighten our burden on God's Creation.

Leading up to Earth Day 2008, Maritime Conference's Environmental Working Group launched a project called **Practical Hope**. Its intention is to encourage local congregations to take visible, practical, hope-filled actions in their local communities. Establishing a network of Green Enthusiasts is the key component of this initiative.

Green Enthusiasts will:

- receive resources, stories, and inspiration
- encourage local awareness and action
- make connections with others working for change
- send stories of actions, encouragement, or challenges to be shared with others

All this in order to help address our environmental practices in and through our church communities – in our worship, in our education and study, in our daily lives, in our buildings and property, and by our actions beyond church walls.

The time has come to challenge how we think about our relationship with the earth; to transform our understanding of the environment from 'an issue' or an annual commemoration day to a fuller awareness that we are an indivisible part of nature and thus what we do to the earth, we do to ourselves and to others.

Spread "Practical Hope"! Names and contact information of Green Enthusiasts can be sent to Laura Hunter at the Conference Office, lhunter@marconf.ca.

Developing a Green Team in Your Congregation

Most of us are now aware of the climate change challenges we face and we want someone to do something about it. Let it be us! It only takes a few individuals working together to make things happen.

Congregations can invite people to be part of a change process that they can relate to, believe in and feel good about.

Here are some steps to follow:

earth, air, fire, water
Truro NS
June 7-12, 2009

<http://www.astes.ca/>

Where to find education,
action, and worship
resources:

<http://www.marconf.ca/cia-ewg.htm>

www.united-church.ca/ecology

www.seasonofcreation.com

Stories Needed !!!!!

We are looking for stories of Practical Hope to share. If your congregation or group has taken action, let us know. Send pictures and a description by email to:

Laura Hunter,
lhunter@marconf.ca

Mark your calendars

- Earth Hour 2009 ,
Mar 28, 8:30 pm

Find out more...

www.EarthHourCanada.org

- Earth Day, April 22

Action and worship
resources for Earth Day

START WITH SELF. Commit yourself to actions you personally can take- change a habit, become more knowledgeable, encourage others.
TALK WITH LEADERS. Engage decision-makers and others in your congregation, and get any endorsements needed to empower a small group of volunteers/concerned people to listen to each other and to work together to develop a 'green agenda' - more sustainable ways to act as a faith community, as individuals, and in community with the rest of creation.

BUILD YOUR TEAM:

- ❖ Start with a core planning group of 6-8 interested and enthusiastic people.
- ❖ Choose activities and make plans (short, medium and long term)
- ❖ Find resources and coordinate people
- ❖ Keep everyone aware of what's happening
- ❖ Work with clergy, committees and other church, community and environmental groups.
- ❖ Develop a larger network of supporters to be called upon to help with specific events and activities.
- ❖ Encourage youth and young adults to be part of planning, organizing and creative eco-events.
- ❖ Involve more people by personally asking them to do something – beginning with something small, acknowledging and thanking them for their contribution, and later, as they are comfortable, inviting them to do more.

What does a Green Team do?

Educates:

- a) Re the problems
- b) Re the solutions
- c) Emphasizing the solutions / encouraging people to respond to what they learn

Advocates:

- a) Church advocacy: begin with addressing policies of your faith community;
- b) Political advocacy: work to change government policies at the municipal, provincial and federal levels;
- c) Corporate advocacy: work to influence corporate behaviour using shareholder actions, negative publicity, and/or boycotts;

Facilitates Action:

Plan changes/projects that will make a difference in your community

- a) **Plan:** set goals and figure out how to reach them; meet to listen to people's ideas on what's most needed, what's most 'doable', and what they'd like to work on immediately; decide what success looks like;
- b) **Do:** Begin with small actions that you can accomplish (i.e.: plan a worship service, an eco-resource fair, a speaker or workshop, a recycling program/community clean-up, building energy or waste audit). ♦ Be sure everyone agrees on the activities, knows what to do, and when, and that needed resources are on hand. ♦ Communicate what



to be featured in the next newsletter!

Watch for it in early March!

NEW DVD resources from AVEL:

Three new DVDs at AVEL from the *Simple Living Network*. Of interest to all who are thinking about how to participate in walking gently on the earth

Radically Simple DVD, 35 minutes

The Ecological Footprint DVD, 30 minutes

Simply Enough DVD, 71+ minutes, plus Study/Action Guide

Contact AVEL:

506-364-1990;
avel@marconf.ca;

success would look like. ♦ Host friendly, task-focused meetings to motivate and support group members.

- c) **Reflect / Review:** after every action or event, take time to reflect on the experience: what happened? what did it mean in terms of faith and action? what went well and what can be improved? Celebrate accomplishments and learn from problems. Keep records to indicate savings and results of changes

Networks:

Building good working relations with other churches, community groups, organizations, and media are helpful – to get info / help, to share news / accomplishments, to coordinate activities and to learn from each other, to help all of us accomplish together more than we can do alone.

More on this topic available in downloadable file from

<http://www.faiith-commongood.net/docs/greenteamguide.pdf>

Fall Workshops Helped Make Connections

Green Enthusiasts and other interested people attended introductory workshops in Truro, Baddeck, and Cornwall (PEI). Participants enjoyed the time together and went home with new ideas about moving forward with action plans for their congregations.

Here are some of the actions we heard about that are happening in congregations around the Conference!

Recycling – composting

Fair Trade + Local Produce

Energy audit

Youth Skit

Meals – smaller helpings - no disposables

Windows – stained glass – plastic covered

Environmental worship

Furnace modifications – reduce consumption

Winter services in local Legion: seasonal use of church sanctuary

Screening of environmental films, etc

Thanks for sharing your “Enthusiasm”!!! Can’t wait to hear more!