



## An Historic Church on a New Journey: *The Greening of the Federated Church of Orleans*



The church began in 1646 – That year Pilgrim families from Plymouth Colony moved across the Bay to settle on Cape Cod, and some of the group ended up in today’s Orleans. They quickly established regular patterns of worship and fellowship, and eventually, in 1718, they built their meetinghouse on the site of today’s church – next to the cemetery, on the road to Nauset Beach.

A new chapter started in 1939 – Congregational descendants of the original church were joined by a nearby Universalist group to form the Federated Church of Orleans.

Today – The congregation of about 250 relates to both the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association, with most members identifying with the UCC.

August 2016 – The church started a new green journey. Federated Church’s 10-person Care for Creation Team (aka C4C) began its work. It soon adopted the UCC “Green Congregation Challenge.” Ten months later the church had completed enough environmental-friendly steps in the Challenge’s Level One to be recognized by the UCC Mass. Conference’s annual gathering as a “Green Congregation.”

Now (March 2018) – We anticipate completing enough additional steps to be recognized in June as a Level Two “Green Congregation.” We hope to complete Level Three next year!



# *What are some of the key environmental steps taken so far by the Federated Church of Orleans?*



FCO's Green Congregation Stole: awarded for becoming a certified UCC Green Congregation! (worn by our pastor, the Rev. Sally Norris)

We have deliberately spread these steps over three related areas – raising awareness, changing practices, and finding allies. Here are key examples:

## **Raising Awareness**

*At Sunday worship:* periodic sermons on biblical theme of caring for creation; inclusion of this theme also in prayers, readings, announcements, hymns and mission moments; and amendment of the church's covenant statement to affirm "We covenant to support The Federated Church of Orleans **and to seek the flourishing of God's whole creation.**"

*In adult education:* attention of 5-day Lenten program (2017 and 2018) focused on care for creation theme; showed environmentally themed films (e.g., *A Plastic Ocean*);

*In church communications:* inclusion of C4C reports in monthly newsletter and Web site.;



FCO members at Peoples Climate March (Wash. DC, April 2017)

*In signage:* periodic posters in meeting areas ("BE THE CHURCH, LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, CARE FOR THE CHILDREN, PROTECT GOD'S CREATION"), and long-term hanging of a large outside banner on front of our church building ("BOLDLY CARING FOR CREATION").



## Changing Practices

*In church building:* after energy assessment by Cape Light Compact, installed solar panels and LED lighting (with a subsequent lunch program encouraging members to do the same in their homes); started robust recycling program; confirmed no use of dangerous cleaning supplies and proper maintenance of appliances.

*In Sunday fellowship period & church meals:* switched to Fair Trade coffee/tea; made minimal use of paper and plastic

*In daily life:* C4C organized a network of individual church members to encourage periodic contact with political leaders regarding action on environmentally-important public policy issues.



## Finding Allies

We have:

- Collaborated with *Orleans Pond Coalition* in its annual “Celebrate the Waters” weekend program by showing *A Plastic Ocean* at the church to a packed room.
- Facilitated members’ participation in the April 2017 *People’s Climate* events in Boston, Hyannis and Washington DC.
- Became a member of the *Cape Cod Climate Change Collaborative* (5Cs) and ...
- Played a major role in creating and leading the 5Cs’ *Faith Communities Environmental Network*.



CAPE COD  
CLIMATE  
CHANGE  
COLLABORATIVE



## *Some learnings so far from our green journey:*

With a long history separating Christian faith and practice from appreciation for the natural world, most Christians today need help in seeing that biblical faith leads to comprehensive and sustained action on behalf of God's creation.

It is important for a faith community's environmental committee to have the active support of the pastor as well as intergenerational participation of members.

Although saving a congregation money is not the main intention of an environmental journey like ours, it is important to be able to show that this can be a significant byproduct (as we were able to do with our early conversion to LED lighting and solar panels resulting in an annual energy bill saving of about \$5,000).

Because some environmental practices are easier to accomplish than others, we have tended to start with the easier, more accessible ones, then, when a higher degree of congregational acceptance and affirmation has been reached, move on to others that are more difficult and/or more controversial.

We have found it highly energizing to be in regular contact with other faith communities that also are embarking on a green journey, especially through the 5Cs' Faith Communities Environmental Network.

