

## Earth Stewardship at Montreat Presbyterian Church

*O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth!  
Thou whose glory above the heavens is chanted.* (Psalm 8:1)

Montreat Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) takes seriously our charge to be good stewards of God's Creation, both as a congregation and as individuals, in our place of worship, in our homes and in the global community. We are recognized as an Earth Care Congregation of the national denomination. Many of our efforts toward the "tilling and keeping" of the garden are facilitated by the Earth Ministry Team of the church. On these pages we offer information to educate, inspire and equip.



### About the Earth Ministry Team

The mission of the Earth Ministry Team of the Montreat Presbyterian Church is to lead, enhance and enable the congregation's involvement in responsible stewardship of God's created Earth. The team functions as a part of the Mission and Outreach Committee yet works with and on behalf of all the Session committees to facilitate their efforts. The Team aims to (1) reduce the environmental footprint of the congregation, (2) provide leadership and education to the greater community (on the local and the global level) on ways that respect the Earth and all inhabitants, and (3) foster awareness and action with related organizations as appropriate concerning environmental subjects. The Team was formally organized in April 2010.

Beyond the immediate life of our century-old congregation, the Earth Ministry Team is working with partners in the community of Western North Carolina (WNC), across the nation, and lately overseas in addressing what it means to be an "eco-congregation" in spiritual and everyday matters. It is in regular contact and collaborates, for example, with colleagues within the *Presbyterian Church USA Environmental Ministries*<sup>1</sup> office, as well as with *Presbyterians for Earth Care*<sup>2</sup> and with other religious faiths. On this webpage we selectively list materials and organizations that offer rich resources to assist our environmental journeys, especially in a Christian context. Geographically, our particular local focus is on the Blue Ridge Mountains and the ecosystems of the western Carolinas, eastern Tennessee and Kentucky, and southwestern Virginia.

### Highlights of Earth Stewardship at Montreat Presbyterian Church (USA)

Many facets of the life of the congregation are included in our Earth stewardship efforts, and we are working on the others! Thus, there are sermons on Earth care during the year (and not necessarily on Earth Day), adult education classes about care of Creation, and service projects to conserve and renew outdoor areas. The process of applying for and renewing the status of *Earth*

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pcusa.org/environment/> (Note to Josh: Once the hotlinks to the footnoted websites are created, then footnotes can be eliminated. Sorry to state the obvious!)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.presbearthcare.org/index.html>

*Care Congregation*<sup>3</sup> has provided a very effective sort of “glue” to organize and unify the work. Many of the efforts sort into three major categories:

- **Inspiration:** Worship, Evangelism and Mission—Montreat Presbyterian Church may be the very first congregation in the denomination to have an *Earth Stewardship Theologian* serving its members, as we seek to glorify God through efforts to sustain natural and human resources of the planet. Meanwhile, preaching and sacred music in our services regularly feature Earth and its beauty, and we outreach to individuals and the community to assist and enhance their particular interests.
- **Education:** Bible and Environmental Literacy—The mini-course on “*Creation as the Theater of God’s Glory: Clues for a World on the Edge*” was perhaps the best attended of any offering in our weekly adult Christian education program, drawing attendees from the larger community. It led to invitations for our Earth theologian to teach at two local churches and at a Presbytery-wide leadership event. Also, we follow a complementary track whereby literacy concerning environmental issues draws from science-based information and experts, including scholars at local colleges.
- **Participation:** Earth Stewardship Practices—From fostering awareness of how to increase household recycling, to reducing use of disposable paper and plastic products at potluck dinners, to encouraging use of fair trade and locally sourced foods and reaching out in community projects for environmental conservation, Montreat Presbyterian Church takes seriously the need for personal responsibility in sustaining resources of the Earth. Members are given opportunities to put their faith into hands-on action, living out Jesus’ commandments. We partner with several organizations in the area.



### **The Earth Care Congregation and You**

Montreat Presbyterian Church is certified as an Earth Care Congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA). To achieve this, the Earth Ministry Team has coordinated the efforts of several committees and many members of the congregation to conduct efforts listed on an audit score sheet provided in the denomination’s booklet of best practices, “*Earth Care Congregations: A Guide to Greening Presbyterian Churches*”<sup>4</sup>. The Session is on record as having endorsed the “*Earth Care Pledge*” as part of this process.

Earth Care certification involves earning points for successfully completing activities concerning worship, education, outreach and facilities of a local church. This format was highly useful at MPC as it was launched in the denomination at about the time that the Earth Ministry Team was established. It gave us a roadmap for planning programs. Certain “low-hanging fruit” were easy to record, such as recycling paper bulletins and having an electronic weekly newsletter.

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/earth-care-congregations/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/environment/earth-care-congregations/>

*Earth Care Congregation status renewal for 2014-15 was awarded to Montreat Presbyterian Church by Jane Laping (right), creator of the denomination's national program. Accepting on behalf of the congregation were Rev. Keith Grogg and Clerk of Session Martha Campbell.*



### **The Origins and Future of Presbyterian Environmental Ministry**

To learn more about the Presbyterian “heritage” in this area, see the denomination’s 1990 General Assembly report, *“Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice”*<sup>5</sup>. It profiles environmental issues and crises, with biblical affirmations and ethical norms for response by the church. The Presbyterian Church (USA) states that *“the church has powerful reasons for engagement in restoring God's creation, including:*

- *God's work in creation is too wonderful, too ancient, too beautiful, too good to be desecrated.*
- *Restoring creation is God's own work in our time, in which God comes both to judge and to restore.*
- *The Creator-Redeemer calls faithful people to become engaged with God in keeping and healing the creation, human and non-human.*
- *Human life and well-being depend upon the flourishing of other life and the integrity of the life-supporting processes that God has ordained.*
- *The love of neighbor, particularly "the least" of Christ's brothers and sisters, requires action to stop the poisoning, the erosion, the wastefulness that are causing suffering and death.*
- *The future of our children and their children and all who come after is at stake.”*

The Environmental Ministries office of the PCUSA gives the denomination a focus on issues such as environmental quality and stewardship, eco-justice, food security, and climate disruption,

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/environment/information-and-advocacy-links/>

among others. A recent major document to guide our future is ***[“The Power to Change - U.S. Energy Policy and Global Warming”](http://www.pcusa.org/resource/power-change-us-energy-policy-global-warming/)***<sup>6</sup>. This General Assembly policy “offers moral guidance and provides practical steps individual Presbyterians, groups and communities may take to change unhealthy energy practices to ensure that there is an abundant supply of God’s good energy for future generations of the whole creation to enjoy.”

The present moderator of the denomination’s General Assembly, Heath Rada, continues to address global change issues, including climate warming and eco-justice, both in word and deed, such as in travels to Peru for a climate change action forum.



---

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/power-change-us-energy-policy-global-warming/>