

GreenGrace Chattanooga Mission and Intent
February 2022
This is always a work in progress. Please join us.

I. Mission. GreenGrace is a faith-based coalition to love, protect, and defend the Earth, as God's Holy Creation. It is designed to present a menu of large and small actions from which congregations may pick and choose in accordance with their strengths and interests. GreenGrace goals are--

- Based on Creation Spirituality, maintaining that Creation enjoys God's original blessing per Genesis 1: 31. "... and God saw everything that he had made, and that it was good, very good." See also Psalm 24:1 "The Earth is the Lord's..."
- Ecumenical and inclusive. Engage with kindness, tolerance, and cooperation.
- Bridge economic, racial gaps.
- Action oriented.
- Local/regional.
- Science based; faith based.
- Increase time and exposure in Nature.
- Save species on site: build an ark at church and at home.
- Provide a range of solutions, large and small.
- Encourage the faith community to address politicians and policy-makers for environmental and food justice.
- Integrate with other local efforts.
- Share, model, teach each other.

II. Outreach and Scope. We look for other people of faith who are called to take action, *be it large or small*. We firmly believe that anything is better than nothing. Ultimately, we hope to align with like-minded members in other faith communities in our region.

III. Approach. GreenGrace is organized around 4 areas of action, both internal and external to any given congregation. They are (1) Green Grounds, (2) Green Buildings, (3) Green Neighbors, and (4) Green Justice. Many of these overlap.

- Over time, we hope to assemble theological resources as well as practical checklists, technical advice, and references and contacts.

1. Green Grounds: Internal to any congregation, no matter how small or urban: establish a 'green witness'. Demonstrate Biblical principles of caring for the Earth; embody Creation Spirituality. This in addition to providing a welcome and calming sanctuary and respite not just for people, but also birds, pollinators, and all possible urban wildlife.

- Deliberately increase/restore habitat for urban wildlife through structured plantings, retention of leaf litter, and attention to habitat requirements. Provide a permanent water source. Protect, build species on site.
- Increase tree cover and maintain care for existing trees.
- Retain maximum stormwater runoff on site: slow, calm and absorb it. Address erosion. (plant trees!)
- Install nest boxes and pollinator gardens, patches, containers.
- Build food gardens.
- Establish certified gardens, with instructional signage. This includes pivotal certification of grounds as National Wildlife Federation urban wildlife habitat, providing food, permanent water, cover, and a place to raise young.
- Convert conventional non- native plantings to those native to our region
- Reduce lawns; mow less. Water less (plant native plants!).
- Eliminate pesticides, reduce herbicides.
- Urban churches: establish food gardens and pollinator gardens in containers, on asphalt, and in whatever space is practical for each congregation.
- Reduce/build over asphalt, as possible.
- Engage citizen science and teaching events to instruct and demonstrate.
- Host workshops and instructional events, as desired.
- DELIGHT THE EYE, heal the soul, refresh the spirit.
- Other ? _____

2. Green Buildings: Lower the church's energy and carbon footprint in an array of actions, large and small. Exemplify how small choices add up. Instruct congregants on how do the same in their own homes and businesses. This includes not just building improvements but practices such as recycling and eliminating the use of plastic water bottles.

- Local power company energy audit
- Light bulbs and fixtures, modernize
- Improve recycling; hold 'hard to recycle' drives.
- Check cleaning products
- Weather stripping
- Solar??? It's expensive: how?
- Windows. It's expensive: how?
- Improve stormwater runoff, retaining more on site. How? Many solutions.
- Eliminate, reduce plastic water bottles, reduce plastic. It's hard. How?
- Reduce light pollutions: spotlight and parking lot lighting (and add some when needed!), as possible.
- Other ? _____

3. Green Neighbors: Act as a resource to neighbors, the city, and to other churches on the care of creation by incorporating fellowship, hospitality, seminars, and celebrations.

- As possible, add benches and outside gathering places: picnic tables, swings, benches. Pavilion? Labyrinth? Performance venue/series? Etc.

- Free food gardens, as possible (build on asphalt).
- Connect church to public walkways.
- Food pantry; Alternative: build a small, on- street free food cabinet?
- Farmers market, build or support one.
- Quarterly or seasonal plant exchanges, home grown food drives.
- Education tables, clinics and swap/giveaway events (schools clothes, coat, sock drives).
- Present educational workshops, classes, seminars for the public.
- Open meeting space to community groups.
- Interface, as possible, with schools, neighborhood centers? Garden mentors/helpers?
- Arboretum and other community projects, seminars, celebrations.
- Coordinate joint action/practices with other churches, in and out of our denomination. (how?)
- Coordinate, advertise collections for hard to recycle items: batteries, glasses, medicine, home chemicals, other.
- Clothing/coat swaps?
- Celebrate public Earth Day and creation reservation seasons and observances.
- Other? _____

4. Green Justice: Environmental justice is social justice. Campaign for politicians to care for the Earth and advocate for environmental justice and equal access to parks and green spaces. Inform and interpret how government actions at state and local levels effect citizens. This includes zoning laws, traffic regulation, and land, waste and water protection. Advocate for increased tree canopy to cool poor urban neighborhoods, and better access to parks and nature. Safe walkways. Litter abatement. Serve as an advocate for improving neighborhood habitat. Address heavily polluted neighborhoods, and their access to remediation.

- Participate—start? – ecumenical forums and clean-up efforts locally.
- Network with other churches to exchange information, alerts.
- Contact political leaders *as appropriate* so that the faith community has a voice in policy. Subjects—brownfields; flash flooding, sidewalks, waste exposure, surface, air, watershed pollution.
- Fresh food access: inform, exchange, swap. What’s realistic?
- Neighborhood/waterways cleanups, focusing on underserved areas (Citico Creek, Chattanooga Creek, South Chickamauga Creek, Mountain Creek. Other heavily littered roads/corridors).
- *What do underserved neighborhoods want. How?* [Tree plantings? Parks? Less/slower traffic, restricting semi-trailer traffic on residential streets? Litter control? Safe walkways/sidewalks?]
- Other ? _____

IV. Contact: greengracechattanooga@gmail.com.