

Green Church Initiative

2025-2026

A project of the
Environmental Justice Taskforce of the Michigan Conference Board of Justice
&
Michigan Conference Board of Global Ministries

**Green Church Initiative
Michigan Conference
of the
United Methodist Church**

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Introduction

Welcome and thank you for your interest in joining the 2025-2026 Green Church Initiative (GCI)! As a cooperative ministry of the Environmental Justice Taskforce of the Conference Board of Justice and the Conference Board of Global Ministries, we are excited for your congregation to join a community of advocates making covenantal commitments to care for God's creation.

Over this next church year, we are asking you to take steps to build a coalition in your congregation through your own green team, evaluate your ministry to highlight successes in your creation care efforts, and commit to improving your work for years to come. This letter will serve as an introduction to the process of becoming Green Church Certified. For an example timeline, see the [resource page](#).

We ask that your church take the time to pray and discern your creation care goals as well as your congregation's capabilities and strengths. Embarking on a more detailed focus on creation justice is a reaffirmation of our commitment to be stewards of God's creation.

Once you have determined that your congregation will move forward in the GCI, we ask you to form a green team. This will be the core group involved in the evaluation process and will work to deepen your church's creation care efforts. More information on forming a green team can be found on the [resource page](#).

When your green team is formed, we ask that you register with the GCI. You can do so by filling out this [form](#).

After you have registered, your congregation will be assigned a member of our Green Church Initiative group to work with you to support and resource your green team. They will answer any questions you may have, give information on best practices, and connect you with others doing this work.

The final part of step one is to sign the GCI Covenant, committing to this year-long creation care project. Please sign and return the covenant to the GCI team at environmentaljusticemiumc@gmail.com.

Step two is the process of self-evaluating your church's ministry to identify all that you are doing well and where you want to improve in your creation care work. In your first year of the GCI, we ask you to go through this evaluation twice. The first time should be done early in the process to determine a baseline for your efforts. This will be used to measure against an evaluation later in the process to identify your improvements and celebrate them.

You will be responsible for submitting both evaluations to the GCI team so we can help celebrate and track your efforts. For more information on evaluation scoring, please see the [resource page](#).

The second evaluation will be your final submission for this year's GCI. It must be submitted by April 30th, 2026 for your church to be recognized for any GCI awards and/or certification. For more information on the certification and awards, see the [submission and awards page](#).

We are excited to welcome you into our creation justice community and look forward to our work together!

The Green Church Initiative Team

Step One: Becoming a Green Church

Register for the Green Church Initiative:

To register with the Green Church Initiative, your church must fill out the registration form [here](#). Please enter your church's name and address, your pastor(s) and their contact information, the name and contact information for your church's lead GCI person.

Please download a copy of this document for you to add your score and submit the results.

A GCI team member will be paired with your church to answer questions and resource you throughout the process.

Form a Green Team:

Form a Green Team within your church tasked with the evaluation of the Green Church Initiative as well as leading the way in implementing more green practices.

Sign the Green Church Covenant:

Have your lead pastor, trustee/leadership board chair, and green team coordinator sign the Green Church Covenant and submit it by email to the Green Church Initiative environmentaljusticemiumc@gmail.com.

Green Church Covenant

"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for God has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers." Psalm 24: 1-2

The scriptures and United Methodist Social Principles overwhelmingly affirm the responsibility of every Christian to care for God's creation. To respond to God's calling to participate not only in the redemption of individuals and all of humanity but in the healing of creation itself; therefore, ministries that encourage care for God's creation are significant to the mission of this congregation. God is at work bringing justice to the entirety of God's creation, and God calls us to participate in God's mission.

To respond to God's call and to live out our faith as responsible stewards of God's creation, we now covenant to adopt The Green Church Initiative and will, in good faith, complete the requirements of the GCI as soon as possible.

The Green Team of our congregation will review the covenant annually to assess the previous year's work and to consider other ways in which we can participate in God's redemption of creation.

Name of Church

Church Address

Pastor

Trustees Chair

Church Council or Leadership Board Chair

Green Team Representative

Please keep a copy and send this form to environmentaljusticemumc@gmail.com

Step Two: Evaluation

You will be responsible for self-evaluating your church. Please follow the prompts and respond honestly based on what your church has accomplished in the previous year (July 1-June 30). If your church has planned actions for the time after the scoring is due to be reported (April 30), but before the end of the scoring year (June 30), points may be counted in good faith.

You must accumulate the minimum number of points in *each* category to qualify for certification. Please refer to the [resource page](#) for a more detailed explanation and scoring example.

	Emerging Green Church	Green Church Silver	Green Church Gold	Green Church Platinum	Max	Your Total
Worship	<150	150	200	250	370	
Discipleship	<80	80	100	120	150	
Stewardship	<250	250	350	450	570	
Evangelism	<90	90	120	150	190	
Mission	<120	120	160	200	250	

Evaluation

Worship

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
W-1: At least once each year, devote an entire Sunday of worship service(s) to the celebration and honoring of God's creation.	10	
W-2: Pray for God's creation; include prayers that include stewardship and praise of God's creation by both clergy and laity at least three times per year.	10	
W-3: Select hymns that have creation care and creation praise themes for inclusion in the church's music at least three times per year.	10	
W-4: Include a creation-centered anthem, solo, or special music offering at least three times per year.	10	
W-5: Choose scripture readings that include God's creation themes at least three times per year.	10	
W-6: Include creation care themes in children's messages or similar child-focused activities at least three times per year.	10	
W-7: Include creation care and stewardship themes in sermons throughout the church year by clergy or laity at least three times per year.	10	
W-8: Show a video segment that includes creation care at least three times per year. *Consult Environmental Justice Taskforce for recommendations.	10	
W-9: Incorporate liturgical dance, art, or drama that celebrates creation using church members or local artists at least three times per year.	10	
W-10: Include a prayer of confession for your congregation's exploitation, pollution, or neglect of God's creation at least three times per year.	10	
W-11: Include creation care in a mission moment at least three times per year.	10	
W-12: Use communion elements that are locally-made or made with organic materials, including a chalice, bread, and juice at least three times per year.	10	

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
W-13: Use live flowers and plants on the altar, using native and local materials as a priority. This requirement may include native alternatives to Easter lilies and Christmas poinsettias, as well as the weekly altar flowers at least three times per year.	10	
W-14: Include petition prayers for God's creation at least three times per year.	10	
W-15: Conduct a blessing of the animals with the congregation and animals from your community or have a pet-friendly worship service.	10	
W-16: Conduct a blessing for the local harvest.	10	
W-17: Schedule at least one outdoor worship service.	10	
W-18: Use sustainably-grown palm fronds or local materials like pine boughs in place of palm fronds on Palm Sunday. Compost them after use, or incinerate them and use the ashes on the following Ash Wednesday.	10	
W-19: Conduct a blessing of recycling bins and compost containers to incorporate recycling as a part of worship.	10	
W-20: Use only white, 100% recycled paper for church bulletins, utilizing chlorine-free and FSC-certified paper products or go paperless.	10	
W-21: Create or purchase and display a creation care-themed banner or paraments for the sanctuary and/or other worship venues or have your pastor(s) wear vestments with creation themes.	10	
W-22: Use collection plates or bowls made locally and using earthen or fibrous materials.	10	
W-23: Incorporate a "Season of Creation" into your church's liturgical year. For four weeks during Ordinary Time, treat God's creation as a liturgical season like Advent, Christmas, Lent, etc. Celebrate Earth, Water, Air, and Fire as gifts of God.	10	
W-24: On United Methodist Peace with Justice Sunday, highlight communities impacted by environmental injustice in your worship service.	10	

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
W-25: In celebration of baptism or memorial after a death, plant a tree in honor or memory of a church member.	10	
W-26: Include in your Thanksgiving service a litany of thanks for the harvest and the land that produced it (church members might bring food from their gardens or locally grown food to share.)	10	
W-27: Schedule an outside speaker to preach on earth care topics. *Consult Environmental Justice Taskforce for recommendations	10	
W-28: Additional worshipful actions. Please describe and use additional pages, if necessary:	10 points per action up to 50 points total	
Total Points	370	

Discipleship

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
D-1: Hold a training event on how to garden organically and sustainably throughout the year.	10	
D-2: Form a new Sunday school class or small group dedicated to studying the intersection of faith and creation care.	10	
D-3: Organize a creation-centered Vacation Bible School.	10	
D-4: Conduct a retreat for children, youth, or adults with a creation theme to raise awareness of God's creation.	10	
D-5: Host a special study session (4-6 weeks) on a creation care issue.	10	
D-6: Show a video that lifts environmental issues. *Consult Environmental Justice Taskforce for recommendations	10	

D-7: Sponsor a creation care fair in which you invite outside organizations to do displays or booths that will help raise your awareness. *Consult Environmental Justice Taskforce for recommendations	10	
D-8: Invite an outside speaker with expertise in faith/creation to present to a group or groups within the church; optionally, involve neighboring congregations. *Consult Environmental Justice Taskforce for recommendations	10	
D-9: Connect with another church in your area with an active creation care ministry to learn from them some things they are doing (or share what you are doing at your church).	10	
D-10: Create a display, bulletin board, or webpage lifting up creation care issues, and describe what your congregation is doing to raise awareness of creation care.	10	
D-11: Include a creation care tip in each weekly bulletin or each monthly newsletter (either printed or electronic).	10	
D-12: Additional discipleship actions. Please describe and use additional pages, if necessary:	10 points per action up to 50 points total	
Total Points	160	

Stewardship

Z-Stewardship: Zero Waste

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
Z-1: Develop a system to recycle paper, plastic, cans, and glass.	Mandatory	Mandatory
Z-2: Recycle electronic waste, including compact fluorescent light bulbs.	10	

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
Z-3: Publicize local opportunities to dispose of toxic chemical waste properly. Coordinate with your local waste management authority or local government.	10	
Z-4: Compost food scraps and other compostable items in a bin or designated pile.	10	
Z-5: Establish a zero waste action plan.	10	

P-Stewardship: Paper

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
P-1: For church publications, use paper labeled “chlorine-free” and a minimum of 30% recycled fiber content. Display the recycling and chlorine-free logos on the publication. (100% post-consumer waste is the goal.)	10	
P-2: Purchase bathroom tissue, facial tissue, paper towels, and paper napkins made from 100% recycled paper.	10	
P-3: Purchase paper cups/ plates/ bowls/ napkins/ utensils that are compostable. Or phase out paper products in favor of reusable dinnerware.	10	
P-4: Reduce the amount of office paper your church consumes by at least 10% per year. Do an audit of paper used weekly and explore ways to reduce usage. Engage youth and other groups in the church in making this happen.	10	
P-5: Produce electronic newsletters instead of, or in addition to, paper copies.	10	
P-6: Minimize the use of the Sunday morning bulletins; show the order of worship electronically.	10	
P-7: In the office, set printers and copiers to default to duplex, black and white, and/or if possible, reduced ink printing.	10	
P-8: Print on the back of one-sided “waste” paper.	10	

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
P-9: Make paper that has been printed only on one side into scrap pads for use in the church.	10	
P-10: Provide training for staff and laity on how to conserve paper.	10	
P-11: Stop junk mail/fax. Identify junk mail/fax that is regularly received, and ask to be taken off the list.	10	

E-Stewardship: Energy

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
E-1: Carry out an electric energy audit for your facility. Reduce electric energy usage by at least 10%.	10	
E-2: Buy “green power” for your church, where available. Most electric utilities now offer consumers the opportunity to purchase “green power” certificates. Contact your utility to learn the details.	10	
E-3: Have renewable energy account for at least 10% of your electricity usage.	10	
E-4: If you plan to expand, remodel, or build a new church facility, become LEED-certified. Contact the local Green Building Council or seek architects, builders, or LEED engineers certified for more information.	10	
E-5: Install renewable energy systems(solar, wind, etc). Especially when considering renovations or new construction.	10	
E-6: Provide documentation that at least 10% of your members have reduced their home energy consumption by at least 10% over the previous year.	10	
E-7: Install motion-sensing switches for indoor lighting and provide training for those who are responsible for turning heat, A/C, and lights on and off on how they can contribute to saving energy.	10	

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
E-8: Replace at least 80% of incandescent lighting with LED lighting, intending to replace all incandescent lighting.	10	
E-9: Install or maintain a bicycle rack.	10	
E-10: Implement “walk, bike, bus or car-pool to church” Sundays at least four times per year. Get youth involved in organizing this activity.	10	
E-11: Install or maintain EV charging stations in church parking lots and/or parsonages.	10	

T-Stewardship: Trash

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
T-1: Conduct a trash audit. Learn what you could be recycling and how to reduce what you send to the landfill. Recruit a volunteer committee to monitor the waste for a set period and identify the recurrent materials going to the trash bin.	10	
T-2. Use reusable plates, cups, and utensils at church dinners and fellowship times. Alternatively, use compostable dinnerware.	10	
T-3. Use cloth or recycled paper napkins at all church meals.	10	
T-4. Organize an annual rummage sale.	10	

W-Stewardship: Water

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
WA-1: Reduce the turf area at your church by at least 20% by replanting it with native plants, gardens, etc., to attract wildlife and reduce stormwater runoff.	10	
WA-2: Replace your roof with a green/living roof during new construction or renovation.	10	
WA-3: Reduce your annual water consumption by at least 10%.	10	

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
WA-4: If tap water is safe to drink, serve no bottled water at any church function.	10	
WA-5: Plant a rain garden to reduce stormwater runoff and retain water for groundwater recharge and natural filtering of surface pollutants. (Consider permeable paving systems in new constructions or renovations)	10	
WA-6: Eliminate lawn irrigation systems on church and parsonage grounds.	10	

TH-Stewardship: Toxic & Hazardous Materials:

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
TH-1: Purchase and use only non-toxic, environmentally-friendly cleaning products. Engage your church trustees, janitors, or others involved with the selection and use of cleaning materials. Look for Green Seal Certified products.	10	
TH-2: Use no chemical herbicides, pesticides, or chemical fertilizers in your landscaping.	10	
TH-3: Use only “green” (non-toxic) cleaning products, especially in children’s areas, to clean carpet, paint, adhesives, toys, playground equipment, etc.	10	

F-Stewardship: Food

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
F-1: Use locally produced food for church meals whenever possible.	10	
F-2: Provide vegetarian options at church meals. Consider having all-vegetarian pot luck dinners and other meal events.	10	
F-3: Host a farmers’ market. Consider conducting in cooperation with neighboring congregations or non-profit organizations.	10	

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
F-4: Grow vegetables in a church garden. Create a garden space for your church and organize a volunteer committee to oversee the garden's planting, care, and harvesting. Decide who will receive the food production.	10	
F-5: Act as a drop-off site for CSA (Community/Church-Supported Agriculture).	10	
F-6: Host a plant sale/swap.	10	

O-Stewardship: Other

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
O-1: Encourage your stewardship committee to include stewardship of God's creation, as well as stewardship of financial and other resources, as part of its programs. Make the connection between economic and environmental stewardship.	10	
O-2: Include on your creation care ministry team the person responsible for purchasing supplies at your church, or train all staff and those using the building in eco-friendly practices.	10	
O-3: Purchase recycled printer and recycled copier toner cartridges, or refill your cartridges, if appropriate. Recycle your cartridges as well.	10	
O-4: Establish a church policy to purchase supplies with reduced packaging.	10	
O-5: Plant or maintain a fruit tree at your church and or parsonage.	10	
O-6: Host a recycling drive (scrap metal, paper, bottles, appliances, etc.)	10	
O-7: Plant and maintain butterfly and bee friendly plants.	10	

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
O-8: Additional Stewardship actions. Please describe and use additional pages, if necessary:	10 points per action up to 50 points total	
Total Points	570	

Evangelism

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
EV-1: Give each guest a “green” gift (examples: LED bulb, reusable shopping bag, etc.), publicizing your church’s creation care work.	10	
EV-2: Use barrels to collect and distribute rainwater. Host a rain barrel making event.	10	
EV-3: Install and maintain waterless urinals and dual-flush toilets.	10	
EV-4: Plant and maintain a community garden on church property.	10	
EV-5: Install renewable energy systems that provide alternative power to your church and visible to the public.	10	
EV-6: Host and publicize a weekly farmer’s market in your parking lot.	10	
EV-7: Invite secular non-profit environmental community groups to meet in your church.	10	
EV-8: Offer classes and other study opportunities that allow people in the community to connect faith and the environment.	10	
EV-9: Become a recycling drop-off point for e-waste (techno-trash).	10	
EV-10: Invite a secular environmental expert to do a community presentation.	10	

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
EV-11: Provide documentation that at least one family or individual has joined your church because you have demonstrated a concern for God's creation.	10	
EV-12: Publicize your efforts to care for God's creation on social media, your congregation's web site, the Michigan Conference website, another denominational website, your local newspaper, or other media.	10	
EV-13: Designate a portion of your church/parsonage property as a wildlife area. Get Certified with the National Wildlife Federation. Encourage parishioners to do the same with their properties.	10	
EV-14: Commit your church to become a drop-off site for local community-supported agriculture (CSA) cooperative, and publicize its availability in the community.	10	
EV-15: Additional evangelism actions. Please describe and use additional pages, if necessary:	10 points per action up to 50 points total	
Total Points	190	

Mission

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
M-1: Donate energy-saving devices to the organizations that work with low income community members (insulation, programmable thermostats, LED's, etc.).	10	
M-2: Plant a church community garden to support a local food bank or those in need.	10	

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
M-3: Organize a local Community Supported Agriculture program to provide culturally-appropriate, local, organic food for those in need.	10	
M-4: If your church houses a free medical clinic or facilities for those experiencing homelessness, give away local or organic food to patients/guests, along with education about healthy food choices. Or contribute to organizations who do this work.	10	
M-5: Calculate the carbon footprint of your church mission trips for the year and offset them.	10	
M-6: Train your mission volunteers on environmental issues specific to the places to which they will be going.	10	
M-7: Provide at least two direct service opportunities per year for your congregation to be in service to God's creation. Consider participating in the Michigan Conference Earth Day of Action.	10	
M-8: Advocate for local, state, and national policies that will reflect better care for the planet. Consider participating in the Michigan Conference Advocacy Day.	10	
M-9: Use fair-trade and shade-grown organic coffee, tea, and chocolate.	10	
M-10: Sell fair-trade coffee, chocolate, cocoa, tea, etc.	10	
M-11: Utilize the United Women in Faith's 13 Steps to Sustainability when planning events for your church. See https://uwfaithresources.org/prodDetail.cfm?productID=9876&catid=2236	10	
M-12: Participate in United Women in Faith's Just Energy 4 All webinar series: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2VGSkIV9zE70XXHJmpUOpkDPsWM4O_aB	10	
M-13: Provide annual financial support to a United Methodist organization focused on creation care.	10	

Actions	Possible Points	Points Awarded
M-14: Enter into a covenant relationship with a United Methodist missionary engaged in creation care work.	10	
M-15: Partner with other area organizations to work together to care for creation.	10	
M-16: Participate in a gleaning project.	10	
M-17: Participate in an international General Board of Global Ministries project that includes caring for God's creation.	10	
M-18: Provide scholarships for children to attend a summer camp. Encourage the local congregation to send kids to summer camp.	10	
M-19: Partner with a local indigenous population to do a project that benefits God's creation.	10	
M-20: Volunteer a group in your church to monitor/adopt a local stream, park, or section of highway.	10	
M-21: Additional mission actions. Please describe and use additional pages, if necessary:	10 points per action up to 50 points total	
Total Points	250	

Step Three: Submission and Awards

Submission

After completion, send a copy of your total final evaluation (pages 7-20) to environmentaljusticemumc@gmail.com by April 30th of each year for review and certification. We suggest downloading a copy of this document (File> Download) to fill out the appropriate pages for review.

Green Church Certifications

Emerging Green Church

Minimum score in each category on the evaluation is in the emerging green church range.

Green Church Silver

Minimum score in each category on the evaluation is in the green church silver range.

Green Church Gold

Minimum score in each category on the evaluation is in the green church gold range.

Green Church Platinum

Minimum score in each category on the evaluation is in the green church platinum range.

Annual Church Awards

Green Church of the Year Award

The church voted by the GCI team to have exemplified what it means to be a green church. Factors include evaluation scores, innovative actions, and commitment based on local context.

New Green Church Award

The church voted by the GCI team who has implemented meaningful changes from their initial evaluation to their final submission in their first year. Factors will include evaluation scores, innovative actions, and commitment based on local context.

Future Annual Awards

Most Improved Green Church Award

The church voted by the GCI team who has implemented meaningful changes from their previous years evaluation to their current submission. Factors will include evaluation scores, innovative actions, and commitment based on local context.

Resources

Green Church Initiative Registration Form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeTzbeqwCQtkTonaKypeo4O6uT8iLg8W2DKhEwYnUQP3ScVYA/viewform?usp=dialog>

Suggested Timeline for the First Year:

July - August: Form Green Team, Register for GCI, Sign GCI Covenant

September - October: Complete Initial Evaluation, Begin Making Improvements

November - March: Continue Making Improvements

April: Submit Completed GCI Evaluation

May - June: Receive Certification and Awards

Green Team Resources:

<https://umcreationjustice.org/green-teams-resources/>

Evaluation Scoring:

Each action is worth 10 points. You will receive points if you have completed the action within the past year. You may see actions that are similar or repeated in different categories. This is a reminder that our actions encompass many parts of our ministry. You may score points in all categories.

Tally up all points in each category and mark them in the scoring chart. To qualify for your church's overall certification, ALL categories must reach the minimum points needed. See the below chart for an example.

Example:

	Emerging Green Church	Green Church Silver	Green Church Gold	Green Church Platinum	Max	Example Total
Worship	<150	150	200	250	370	220
Discipleship	<80	80	100	120	150	120
Stewardship	<250	250	350	450	570	260
Evangelism	<90	90	120	150	190	160
Mission	<120	120	160	200	250	170

Even though this example church reached the platinum level for discipleship and evangelism, because stewardship was silver, their overall certification will be Green Church Silver