EARTH CARE POLICY
Developed by Mt Auburn Presbyterian Church
Cincinnati, Ohio
Earth Care Team

To be prophetic, to become the change we know is necessary, to do the right thing now, we will take steps toward becoming a carbon-neutral and waste-free church. We will seek new approaches to our church facilities that will help the planet rather than harm it. We will take specific steps to transform consciousness through the life practices of both the congregation as a whole and our individual households through informed commitments and faithful actions.

January 25, 2017

By a unanimous vote and acclamation, Session Elders adopted the following policy statement at the regularly scheduled meeting on January 25, 2017:

Green Faith: Our worship and discipleship will celebrate God’s grace and glory in creation and declare that God calls us to cherish, protect and restore this earth.

Green Learning: We will seek learning and teaching opportunities to know and understand the threats to God’s creation and the damage already inflicted. We will encourage and support each other in finding ways of keeping and healing the creation in response to God’s call to earth-keeping, justice, and community.
Green Living and Lifestyle Practices: We will endeavor to manage our personal and congregational economies in a manner that respects and cherishes all life, human and nonhuman, in order to meet our own needs without compromising those of others, or of the future. We will personally pursue environmentally friendly paths in our use of energy, transportation, recyclable materials, and other resources while keying them to our own spiritual practice. As a congregation, we will commit to overhaul our buildings and grounds to use energy and resources efficiently and sustainably.

Green Outreach: Our outreach will encourage public policy and community involvement that protects and restores the vulnerable and degraded earth as well as oppressed and neglected people. We will be mindful that our personal and collective actions can positively or negatively affect our neighborhood, region, nation, and world. We will seek to achieve environmental justice through coalitions and ecumenical partnerships.

ADOPTED BY a Unanimous Vote and Acclamation, January 25, 2017, Mt. AUBURN CHURCH SESSION
HOW DOES A COMMUNITY REACH LOW-INCOME FAMILIES?

A story from the food pantry of The Church of Our Saviour/La Iglesia de Nuestro Salvador

By Nancy Sullivan
Transformations CD
Cincinnati, Ohio

Especially in low-income communities, reliable transportation that can take you where you want to go is essential. Public transportation is essential, reducing pollution, helping enable education.

Often no one asks residents of these communities what they know about the bus system, if they use it, where they particularly need to travel. This often results in major gaps, which in turn lead to poorer health and reduced educational and work opportunities.

Tucked into a hillside in Price Hill, the Westmont neighborhood is a great example. Low-rise, low-income apartments line Westmont Drive and Westmont Lane and as many as 80% are occupied by Central American immigrants. Until recently the closest bus stop was at the bottom of Wyoming Avenue on Queen City, a .7 mile walk down a steep, winding, and narrow road. Students attending Western High School or Dater had to get up extra-early to catch the bus in the dark and often returned in the dark.

Youth and adults were regularly assaulted and robbed along Wyoming. The long walk and the potential danger were often just too much for many immigrant students who ultimately dropped out. Others purchased beater cars to go back and forth to school, but lacked driver’s licenses, etc.
Last summer a curious Metro planner decided to investigate what Westmont residents knew about the bus system and where they might want to go if there were a closer bus stop. Nick Keeling came to a regular Saturday outdoor food pantry offered by Transformations CDC. He didn't come to provide information, but to ask questions: “Have you ever ridden the bus?” “If there were a new bus route, where would you go?”

Despite Metro’s problems recruiting new drivers, etc., Nick advocated for a new route in response to their expressed needs. The #65 bus goes between Northside and Glenway Crossing during morning and afternoon student transportation hours, stopping in front of the two high schools. From a challenging, hilly .7 mile walk they can now hop on the #65 as little as 450 feet from their doors!

This is a great example of responsive planning that will reap many benefits, especially a piece of the puzzle that keeps students

The food comes from the food pantry of The Church of Our Saviour/La Iglesia de Nuestro Salvador, (of which I am a member). During the height of the pandemic, few people were coming to the church pantry, but I knew the Westmont area likely had a lot of food-insecure immigrants. So technically this pantry is organized and run by Transformations CDC, but Cos/Lins is responsible for getting the food from the Free Store.
We serve 20-35 families a week, minimum of 120 people, because many have large families and related adults in the same apartment. We have had the pantry outside, rain or shine, for 12+ months, missing one week because it was in the teens.

We can also provide value-added programming at the pantry because many people are together in the same place. Many of them work two or more jobs leaving little time to attend church. They go to the pantry out of necessity. That creates the opportunity to interact with city leaders like a curious Metro planner.

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YOU TOO CAN HELP RESTORE CREATION

by Susan Fox

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It started with a caterpillar and a child’s question. It grew to a multi-faceted, intergenerational community, learning how to take better care of the earth and then sharing what they’ve learned with others.

There was a caterpillar who had eaten all the leaves off a stalk of milkweed. “What can we do Mommy, so it doesn't starve?” Mommy got quickly found more milkweed. Then, she and the child learned what they could about the greater story of the decline of monarch butterflies and what could they do to help. ‘Youth for Monarchs,’ a service-learning program, was born. Their pilot program was launched at Christ the King Lutheran Church (CtK), in West Chester, OH. They researched and then created a monarch waystation, which serves a whole host of pollinators, and a 2,200 sf prairie.

This was just the beginning for such events at CtK. Next came honeysuckle removal in their two acre forest, replacing the honeysuckle with native plants. People love being in the forest, it’s healing for body and spirit. When people come out to help or tour the forest, they are always told the ‘why’, that God calls us to care for the earth. What CtK learns, it shares with others so it can be replicated, at whatever scale, at their own homes, places of worship, or businesses.
Next, mowing practices were changed so less pollution and better ground for ‘bugs’. And money was saved (who doesn't like that?!). Next, more native plants put around the church – and people told why. Then, their community garden was expanded (all with donations), the work being done by an “older than average” church. Emphasis was made on soil health, nurturing the soil fauna which will in turn feed the vegetable plants and make healthier veggies. A Boy Scout pursuing his Eagle Scout badge, built an amazing compost center, again with education in mind. Neighbors bring us their pumpkins, leaves, and grass clippings. The most recent project, in our fourth year of emphasis on creation care, is a permaculture food forest, built, in part by our neighbors as well as our senior citizen members.

CtK was blessed with eight acres of land. It is still a lot of lawn, and the water flows off property into the storm sewers. We have plans to change these things. Not every house of worship can do what we have done but everybody can do some. From there, it ripples out into peoples’ homes and businesses. You too can help restore creation.