



FCGG Newsletter

Volume III Issue 1

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Grassroots Advocacy Gaining Power

by Ariel Miller

From rural counties to old industrial neighborhoods, Ohioans are mobilizing in powerful ways to restore sustainability. The Advocacy Working Group is delighted to share action tools shared by the speakers at our January and February Zoom forums and the story-sharing potluck hosted by the Rev. Melissa Stephens and Mimi Rook at Washington UCC in Camp Washington. There's a LOT you can do in April:

1. **Ask your local government to pass a resolution in support of HB 303**, the Community Energy Bill, which would permit community solar projects in Ohio at last. [Click here](#) for a fact sheet and sample

resolution. The bill passed the Ohio House with overwhelming bipartisan support but needs a strong boost to pass in the Ohio Senate. So far, Wyoming, Lakewood, and Columbus City Councils have adopted this resolution.

2. Sign up for the new all-Ohio data center network at policymattersohio.org datacenters to access resources and connect with other people in your area who are concerned about datacenters. Click on "Building Power to Tackle the Danger of Data Centers" [under the Advocacy heading](#) of FCGG webinars to hear how Jessica Sharp mobilized thousands of fellow Wilmington citizens in

a matter of weeks to demand that their elected officials heed their concerns before rushing through approval of a giant Amazon data center project. Their example moved [Cincinnati City Council to vote unanimously in February](#) to pause zoning decisions on data center projects and add extra scrutiny.

There's more! A small team of concerned citizens in two rural SW Ohio counties recently collected 1,800 signatures in just 8 days to submit a proposed constitutional amendment to prohibit data centers of more than 25 megawatts from being constructed in Ohio. The Attorney General has

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Celebrate Earth Day

A message from earthday.org:

Earthday.org's founders created and organized the very first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. Since then, Earth Day Network has been mobilizing over 1 billion people annually on Earth Day, and every other day, to protect the

planet.

The theme for Earth Day 2026 is "Our Power, Our Planet". This Earth Day, people of all backgrounds and generations are called to stand shoulder to shoulder in defense of the only home we share. Join us this Earth Day

for Planet Earth. When we stand together, our planet has a future.

Reminder that small actions—multiplied across millions of people—can have a real impact.



Artist: Miles Wintner

A Tour of Arvin Sango's Miyawaki Mini -Forests by Mimi Rook

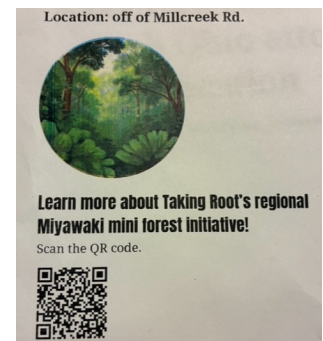
Mimi Rook from the UCC Church in Camp Washington led a group to Madison, Indiana for a tour of the Arvin Sango Miyawaki mini-forests. Arvin Sango manufactures automobile manifolds for Toyota. The company has acres of land surrounding the factory buildings. The plantings began on their property in 2014. Members of the touring group included people from Taking Root and Faith Communities Go Green, Dan Grady, Arvin Sango's Manager of New Projects Production Control, and Donnie Malcomb, Co-owner of Madison's River

City Nursery (which supplied the plants and compost for the mini-forests) graciously hosted the group tour.

The mini-forests began in the 1970s, the brainchild of Akira Miyawaki, an experienced botanist (and a friend to some of Toyota's head management). The tiny forests cool their surrounding area, mitigate urban heat island effect, filter pollution from the air, soak up floodwaters during heavy downpours, and provide a rich habitat for local wildlife. The density allows for more carbon-storage than conven-

tionally farmed trees. The preparation and spacing allows optimal growing conditions for the mini-forests – allowing nearly a century's worth of tree growth in just a few decades.

Before COVID, between 2014 to 2019, Arvin Sango's program planted over 20,000 trees on the property. In 2023 and 2024 - with bare root seedlings, less soil preparation, smaller planting footage, and drought, it was easy for the group to see the difference between the older sites and the sparseness of growth on the new sites.



Green Teams

According to Faith in Place: Green Teams are groups of three or more people from a House of Worship who provide cooperative leadership to educate, connect, and advocate for healthier communities.

Green Teams:

- Meet regularly
- Set goals for their House of Worship
- Connect spiritual traditions with Earth care and justice for our neighbors
- Plan activities and educate to encourage eco-friendly behaviors

- Connect with the community at large to expand impact
- Advocate for Earth care policies
- Measure benchmarks
- Celebrate accomplishments

A Green Team keeps consciousness about Earth care and justice for our neighbors at the forefront in your House of Worship. A group of people working together to build a healthier and more sustainable community will accomplish far more than anyone trying to do this alone.

Faith Communities Go Green (FCGG)

recently held a workshop for those who have already started a Green Team as well as for those who are interested in starting one in their House of Worship. Those who responded to a recent survey conducted by FCGG in the Cincinnati area indicated that there are currently 33 Houses of Worship who have Green Teams.

The UN Faith for Earth Initiative offers an excellent publication entitled "**Guidelines on Green Houses of Worship**" which is available to download for free at : <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/guidelines-green-houses-worship>

Advocacy cont'd

just certified the petition language, the first hurdle to reaching the ballot. The rural campaigners are confident they will be able to collect the 413,000 signatures needed to put the measure before voters. To learn when petition circulation starts, follow Ohio Residents for Responsible Development on [Facebook](#). Ohio legislators of both parties - whose constituents are clamoring about soaring electric bills - are working on bills to rein in the rapid expansion of data centers.

3. Join other vital projects! At our story sharing potluck, Nikki Vandivort of Cincinnati's Office of Environ-

ment and Sustainability offered to help congregations put together a consortium to achieve cost-savings on solar projects. Email her at nicole.vandivort@cincinnati-oh.gov. Colleen McSwiggen, founder of Cincinnati Recycle and Reuse Hub, shared plans for Sustainability Central, a new and far more comprehensive project proposed for part of the land which has been used for generations as the Cincinnati Police Firing Range, which is being moved due to longstanding and passionate environmental advocacy by residents of Lincoln Heights. Sustainability Central will include large-scale food recovery

and safe storage, composting, a factory to turn plastic waste into construction material, and community gardens. Contact Colleen at sustainabilitycentralcinti@gmail.com to find out more.



Jim Vogt at Washington UCC

Taking Root Plants the First Miyawaki Mini Forest in Cincinnati

by Becca Desai

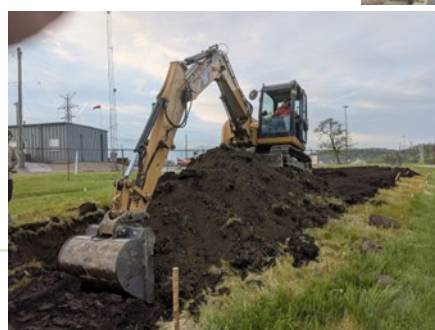
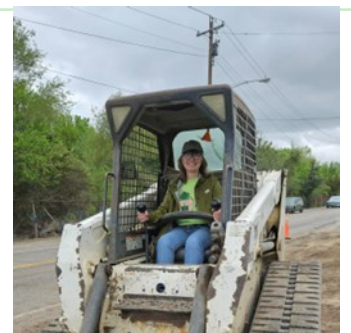
Taking Root, a local non-profit, is on a mission to inspire and empower all to conserve and improve our Greater Cincinnati region's unique and threatened tree canopy. Its newest initiative in strengthening the area's urban tree canopy involves a totally new approach to reforestation - the planting of Miyawaki mini forests.

Careful amending of the soil prior to planting, along with some minimal care and watering during the first

three years, means these small forests can transform degraded and underused urban land into ecosystems that can help to heal the planet.

These Miyawaki mini-forests, which can be planted in an area as small as a few parking spaces, are essential in cities like Cincinnati for rapidly creating self-sustaining, biodiverse ecosystems that fight heat islands, improve air quality, manage stormwater, and provide a rich habitat for local wildlife.

These ultra-dense, native, 1,000+ sq ft forests mature 10x faster than traditional forests and require no maintenance after three years. With approval from City of Cincinnati to plant two such these mini forest in the Camp Washington neighborhood, and with funding from the Bell Charitable Foundation and the Cincinnati Parks Foundation, Taking Root was ready to plant its first mini forest on the Mill Creek Road on 18th April!





To learn more and join Faith Communities Go Green, a Green Umbrella and EquaSion collaboration, go to: www.fcgg.org

Join a Working Group

Advocacy:

Contact Ariel at

Advocacy@fcgg.org

Facilities:

Contact Ken at

Facilities@fcgg.org

Education/Lifestyles:

Contact Becca at

Education@fcgg.org

Membership Engagement:

Contact Donna at

fcggmembers@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

Faith Communities Go Green (fcgg.org)

- May 27th: Ted Burgh leads a book club discussion on *Against the Machine: On the Unmaking of Humanity* by Paul Kingsnorth. Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91012020000>
- June 14th: In-person Guided Tour of Gorman Heritage Farm and Potluck Fellowship from 3-6 PM. Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91012020000>

EarthConnection (scearthconnection.org)

- April 23rd: Untangling Plastics: The Missing Link in Mitigating Climate Change” with author Bob Gedert - Webcasts at 1:00 and 7:00 PM (same both times)
- May 21st: “Sustainability Central: A New Concept in Recycling for Cincinnati” with Colleen McSwiggin—Webcasts at 1:00 and 7:00 PM (same both times) Register for either or both at www.scearthconnection.org

Green Umbrella (greenumbrella.org)

- June 12th: Midwest Regional Sustainability Summit at Sharonville Conference Center

EquaSion (equasion.org)

- August 2nd: The Cincinnati Festival of Faiths at Xavier University

Toolkits cont'd

The Education and Lifestyles Working Group provides an online Toolkit Introduction which provides resources to support your faith community's effort to educate and act in addressing the current state of the poor health of our environment and degradation of our air, water, and soil. The toolkit gives you tools to bring your congregation's leadership and membership together to address the environmental crisis facing humanity. Every small action multiplies when every faith community participates.

A Toolkit is also available for the Facilities Working Group which provides information on how to help congregations improve the energy efficiency of their buildings as well as multiple resources from Interfaith Power and Light, the EPA and other sources. It also includes denominational re-

sources.

The Advocacy Working Group toolkit provides information on how to follow legislation and committee meetings at the Ohio legislature, how to get the quickest possible notice that a bill will have a hearing, and how to follow committees as well as multiple other resources available to download from other Advocacy sites including Innovation Ohio, the Ohio Environmental Council, the City of Cincinnati Office of Environment and Sustainability .

Three working groups, Education and Lifestyles, Advocacy and Facilities collaborate to offer monthly webinars. These webinars are available on our website under the Media tab.

A number of these webinars are accompanied by individual toolkits to offer further resources and ideas on

how to adapt and implement the suggestions in the webinar for your congregation.

For more information and to download a toolkit go to: fcgg.org.

To contact a specific working group you will find the information on leaders of each group followed by their emails above.

