

# ECO-STEWARDSHIP IN FAITH COMMUNITIES

15.972, Sustainability Seminar, 2010

*Love thy neighbor as thyself – even unto the seventh generation*

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*“When God created Adam, he showed him all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said to him: See my works, how lovely they are, how fine they are. All I have created, I created for you. Take care not to corrupt and destroy my universe, for if you destroy it, no one will come after you to put it right.” (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7)*

# Why Eco-Stewardship?

- Based in the central philosophies of all major religions
- Potential for great impact
  - ▣ On the congregations' buildings and land
  - ▣ In the homes and lifestyles of the congregations' members
  - ▣ In gaining advocacy partners at local, regional, and nationwide levels

...God said, Let the waters under the  
heaven be gathered together unto one  
place, and let the dry land appear...

...Let the earth bring forth grass, the  
herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree  
yielding fruit after his kind...  
and God saw that it was good.

(Genesis)

À l'Éternel la terre et ce qu'elle  
renferme, Le monde et ceux  
qui l'habitent!  
(Psaumes, 24:1)

The earth is the Lord's,  
and everything in it.  
(Psalm 24)

It is He Who sends down rain from the sky...He has made subject to you the Night and the Day...

And the things on this earth which He has multiplied in varying colors...

...It is He Who has made the sea...  
And He has set up on the earth  
mountains standing firm...  
and rivers and roads;  
that ye may guide yourselves...

(Qur'an- Surih 17)



But ask... the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.

(Job 12:7-8)

“See my works, how lovely they are, how fine they are. All I have created, I created for you.

Take care not to corrupt and destroy my universe, for if you destroy it, no one will come after you to put it right”

Ecclesiastes, Rabbah 7 (Judaism)

O ye friends of God!  
... exercise the  
utmost kindness  
towards every  
living creature...  
(Bahá'í Writings)

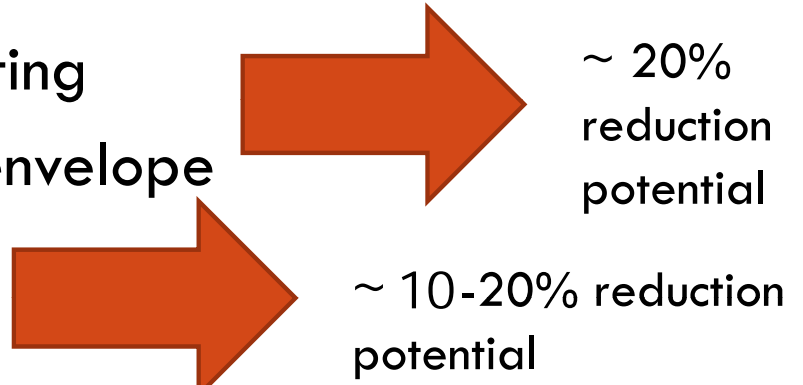
# What is eco-stewardship?

- Eco-Stewardship is a conviction that living in harmony with God is caring for the creation of God – earth and the species that dwell on earth
- Eco-Stewardship is a series of actions that stewards can take in their congregations, in their homes, and in their communities to live with great care to the environment and the earth's resources
- Eco-Stewardship is embraced by Christians, Muslims, Jews, Bahá'í, Hinduism, Unitarianism, Sikhism, Taoism, Buddhism, and in interfaith communities

# Some different vocabulary

- Eco-Stewardship discussions in faith communities are different than in business contexts
  - ▣ Terms we hear when discussing energy efficiency in a faith context:
    - **Covenanting, creation care, moral obligation, conservation, virtue, good works, leading by example, outreach**

# What are the main actions?

- First – focus on congregation buildings
    - ▣ The EPA estimates that savings of 30% or more can be achieved in church and synagogue buildings
    - ▣ These reductions in energy use can be from 4 sources:
      - Updated lighting efficiency
      - Improvements in the building envelope
      - High Efficiency HVAC systems
      - Improved hot water systems
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- The diagram consists of two large orange arrows pointing to the right. The top arrow originates from the first two items in the list: 'Updated lighting efficiency' and 'Improvements in the building envelope'. It points to the text '~ 20% reduction potential'. The bottom arrow originates from the last two items: 'High Efficiency HVAC systems' and 'Improved hot water systems'. It points to the text '~ 10-20% reduction potential'.

# What are the main actions?

- Second – Encouraging congregation members to make efficiency improvements in their homes
  - Volume discounts for energy audits are available
  - Some areas power companies will give efficient light bulbs to groups
  - Encourage members to buy power from utilities that pledge a certain percentage of renewable energy production in deregulated areas
  - Encourage car-pooling, biking to church or temple, gardening, composting, and even shared materials purchasing

# What are the main actions?

- Third – Advocacy
  - ▣ Organize letter writing campaigns
  - ▣ Advocate for zoning that will allow mixed use development and more efficient infrastructure use
  - ▣ Gather with other faith communities to share resources and advocate as a group
  - ▣ Encourage education about energy and climate change in schools, both public and theologically based



# What are good priorities for Eco-Stewardship Efforts?

1. Conservation and behavior change
  - ▣ Change the lighting, install programmable thermostats, use occupancy sensors, bike to church/temple, implement recycling
2. Efficiency
  - ▣ Install more efficient HVAC systems, refrigeration and hot water systems where applicable
3. Renewable Energy
  - ▣ Consider installing solar panels where possible and economically viable

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