



RAICA Getting Started Guide

An action workbook for
faith institutions to take
meaningful action on
climate change



Rochester Area Interfaith Climate Action

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Who is RAICA?

Our mission statement: Rochester Area Interfaith Climate Action is a group of individuals and organizations of faith in the Rochester metropolitan area seeking to create a meaningful response to climate change. We acknowledge our common conviction to care for the earth and its people. Working together we seek to share resources, leverage our strengths and magnify our positive impact.

About Us

The idea of RAICA began to grow in 2018 when a group of **individuals of faith came together** at a climate summit. Despite differences in theology and practice, this Interfaith group found a **common conviction to care for the earth and its people** which forms the foundation for action. However, we also acknowledged facing **many challenges** and constraints particular to faith communities. These include:

- Busy clergy and shifting lay leaders subject to outside obligations
- Limited expertise to know what makes sense to and where to start
- Unaware of incentives and local resources available
- Challenges in navigating legal, organizational and financial hurdles

Fortunately, many of us were making progress and doing great work. We began to imagine what it might be like if we could learn from each other and pool our resources. **What could we actually achieve if we all were working together?** Thus the idea of RAICA took shape.

How we work

RAICA is there to provide Rochester specific resources to support to individuals and institutions of faith :

- We gather and provide **vetted information**
- Provide access to local, state and federal **resources** available to Rochester Area Faith Organizations
- **Share** best practices and lessons learned
- **Connect** individuals with each other to coordinate and amplify our impact
- **Track** and measure our collective impact

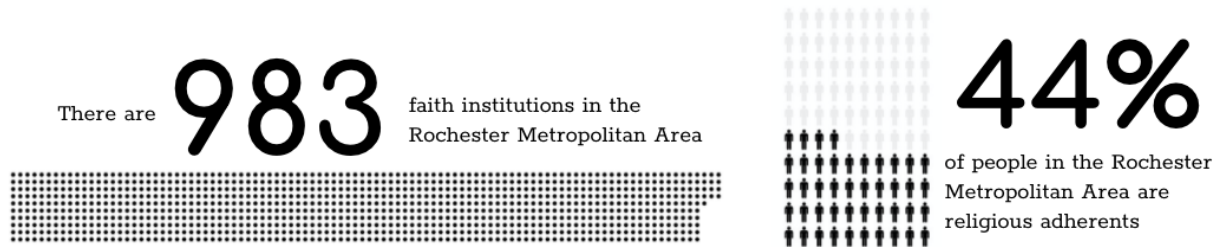


WWW.RAICA.net

Our website acts as a platform for our work. Please check out our latest programs and resources. And become a site member to contribute to our online community.

Why Rochester Area Faith Institutions?

According to the 2010 U.S. Religion Census...



Why is it good for your Faith Institution?

1. Stewardship for the earth and its people aligns with virtually all faith traditions. Furthermore we also know that climate change will affect the poorest and most vulnerable among us. So, Environmental justice = Social justice = Racial justice.
2. Working together is a great way to engage your members and reach new populations. A majority of Americans (more than 7 out of 10) think climate change is a major problem with even higher percentages among those 30 years old.¹ Taking action together is a great source of building community and fulfillment.
3. Many of the actions that Faith Institutions can take also save money which can be used to maintain and expand other operations. So, in addition to fortifying the soul, and strengthening your community, fighting climate change can fill your coffers. Stewardship for your flock, the planet and your institutions.

¹ Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation survey, July 2019

How can Faith Institutions make a difference?

We identified several areas where Faith Institutions can impact climate change:

1. The energy we use
2. How we get around
3. The purchases we make
4. The waste we generate
5. The grounds we keep
6. How we worship and educate
7. How we advocate and invest
8. The supplies we purchase

A three pronged approach:

Our institutions- Changes at a house of worship can have a big impact. Houses of worship often use 10 or more times the resources of a single household. Often they house kitchen space, offices, classrooms and living areas in addition to worship space, not to mention grounds and parking areas. Actions taken at a house of worship also have the added benefit of serving as a role model and inspiration.

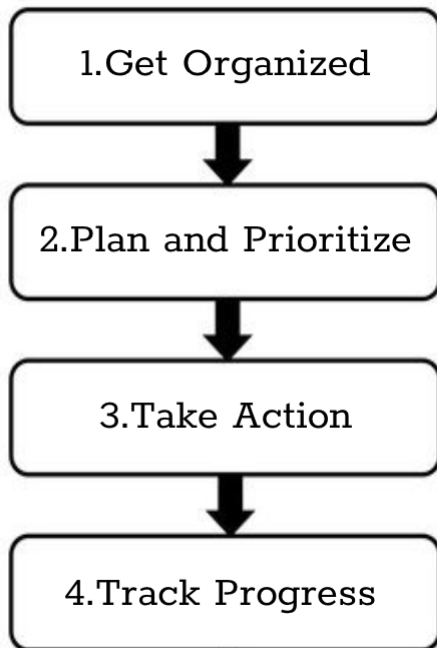
Our members- Whether 10 or 10,000 members, teaching and engaging our members in ways that they can take action in their homes, at work or in their community is a great way to multiply our reach and impact. Our faith community also provides a great support system to individuals making their journey to a more sustainable life more fun and more likely to succeed.

As a collective community- Working together with other institutions within our faith along with our interfaith community makes us a force to be reckoned with. While diverting 1 ton of food waste from one house of worship in a year is great, diverting 1 ton of food waste per year from 10 houses of worship is even better. Also, our collective voice is louder when advocating for policies at local, state and national level.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

If you are a leader or member of a House of Worship (HoW) in the Rochester area, this guide can be used to make a realistic action plan for greening your congregation using the following steps:



Use the next page to **find people** to collaborate with and define your **mission**.

The guide is broken into chapters that address several areas where Faith Institutions can make a difference. At the beginning of each chapter is a brief **overview** of the area and its impact on climate change. For each one, you will find some **specific examples** of actions that Rochester area Faith Institutions have taken. We call these campaigns because the actions have been vetted, there are resources to support them and in most cases we have some examples of how to be successful.

Use the worksheets on page 25-27 to **make a plan** for your congregation and define specific action steps. Find the fit that works for you or even come up with your own.

The last steps are to **track your progress and celebrate your achievements**. Even the small ones. The best goals are met by taking many small steps.

Please keep us informed of your progress. RAICA ambassadors are here to support you on your journey. We can lend support and connect you to resources. Your work may also help others so please keep us posted so that we can share the learning and build success.

Questions? Email contact.raica.net@gmail.com

Step 1: Get organized

FIND YOUR PEOPLE:

It can be easier and more fun to work with others. Try connecting with others within your faith institution, your broader faith community or the RAICA interfaith community for support, inspiration and motivation.



Some find it useful to begin by praying for guidance as you think about how your faith community can deepen its commitment to care for creation, who can help, and how to approach the planning process.

WHAT TO DO:

It can be easy to feel alone in wanting to make a difference. Bringing individuals together magnifies your impact and lends support

1. Gather a group of individuals interested in making an impact within your congregation. You can start with a few friends or you could seek out new friends in your congregation. Alternatively, join a broader social action group within your congregation and make environmentalism part of the conversation.
2. You can also look beyond your house of worship to find others within your sect or denomination that may be interested in working with you.
3. Go to raica.org/memberforum and search on an action that you are interested to find other individuals that you could work with.



Visit www.RAICA.net/resources to find other getting started guides for more ideas. You can also find links to climate action groups affiliated with many faiths, and denominations.

Sample Bulletin or Newsletter Announcement:

Are you concerned about climate change and want to make an impact? Looking for interested individuals to join our *Creation Care group*? Please contact *your name here*.

Spiritus Christi Church's Mother Earth Community - In the late 1980's, one person started announcing green tips after masses. Gradually, more people became interested and the Mother Earth Community was formed. They planned a special liturgy for Earth Day that included an environmental homily, and "green" coffee hour afterwards with presentations from ROC organizations.

THINK ABOUT YOUR PURPOSE:

Once you've gathered a group, you will need to think about what you will do. Many groups find it useful at this stage to write a mission statement.

A mission statement is a concise statement (1- 3 sentences) that describes the reason that your group exists. It can be useful to get everyone moving in the same direction and also to communicate with others outside your group.



Do not overwork this step or get bogged down in perfect wording. These statements are fluid and can change over time as necessary.

WHAT TO DO:

The following three questions can be a useful guide to formulating a mission statement:

1. Why does our group exist?
2. Who we serve?
3. What we do?

Example: *Spiritus Christi Church's Mother Earth Community*: "We share in the life of the Spiritus Christi Community by cultivating our connections to the Earth and each other. We organize opportunities for environmental action, and bring the community together for outdoor activities that immerse us in the beauty of God's creation. We increase awareness of the interrelatedness of life, further inspiring us to protect the natural world through stewardship, education, and action."

Now you give it a try:

Mission statement draft for _____ :

Extra credit:

Some organizations also find it useful to draft a vision statement. A vision statement describes the clear and inspirational long term goal for your group's work. For example: Rochester area faith organizations will be a beacon of change, demonstrating meaningful impacts to climate change and inspiring faith communities around the corner, across town and around the world.

Step 2: Plan and prioritize actions

WHAT TO DO:

1. Look at your mission, vision, and begin work on the Reflection Chart (p. 24). Have everyone in your group fill in the chart, then get all of your ideas together on one page.
 - Some groups find it useful to rate their current performance to understand areas where they are doing well and areas needing improvement. This also provides a baseline to measure progress.
2. Peruse the action ideas on the following pages (p.10-23) to determine which work best for your community.
 - The RAICA campaigns which have their own pages in this guide and can also be found on our website are a great place to start.
 - Members of your team may value actions differently. Use your mission and vision to guide you. Respect the views and the passions of those in your group. Think about how to make democratic decisions about what initiatives to begin with.
3. Fill in the Plan and Prioritize (p. 25-26) chart to help your group decide what initiatives to start with.
 - Faith Institutions may prioritize actions based upon factors that are unique to that congregation. Some areas may be more impactful than others. Some may be more meaningful to the congregation.
 - Consider actions that are easy to do and have a large impact first but also select some far reaching, high impact goals. Think both short term and long term. Sometimes it's good to start off with a few easy wins to get things going.



Visit www.RAICA.net/resources to find audit forms (e.g. Mission Investment Fund's Checklist) or Impact Calculators (e.g. IPL's Congregations Calculator)

Throughout the workbook we have several examples of Houses of Worship who are already successful in these initiatives. If you'd like to get in contact with them for more details or any questions, please email contact.raica.net@gmail.com and we will connect you.

RAICA is always available and willing to help.

A long term Sustainability Plan for Greece Baptist Church - At GBC, several individuals got together for three meetings and came up with a long-term sustainability plan for the church (see Appendix A). They presented it to the senior pastor and the board of trustees and got approval from both. Since then, they've had countless successful initiatives like a community garden.



Step 3: Take action!

Just get started! Your first step doesn't have to be huge or perfect, but it feels great to actually get the ball rolling and it makes it much easier to keep going.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Once your group has decided what projects to take on, begin working on the Take Action! chart (p. 27).
 - Use the following pages for inspiration. The “What to do” sections might be helpful with creating task lists for big projects.
2. You may need financial support for some initiatives, find out who approves these decisions, and keep them in the loop.
3. Ask for help by contacting RAICA: contact.raica.net@gmail.com.

Create SMART goals:

Specific- specify exactly what needs to be done- ex: Hold at least one info night on Community Solar

Measurable-some sort of metric- Enroll at least 10 people

Attainable - something that can be accomplished- sometimes breaking down bigger goals into smaller tasks helps

Relevant- stay focused-make sure it aligns with your mission

Time-bound- set a timeline for achievements- ex: by Summer 2021

Don't forget to take advantage of us and connect with others.

Step 4: Track and report progress

Communicate and build on success.

WHAT TO DO:

- Record progress in the “Notes” section of the Take Action table on pg 27.

Any successful action plan includes efforts to keep congregants up to date on what has been done and what remains. A bulletin, newsletter, or regular update during services can set the tone for climate action as a priority, cultivate goodwill, and demonstrate momentum toward solutions.

Track your SMART metrics to see how you did. What did you achieve? Progress is often made even when you fall short of a goal because of what you have learned and the awareness raised. What can you do next time to build on that success or do even better?

Chapter 1: Energy Use

The burning of fossil fuels is the single biggest contribution to climate change. Electricity, Heating and Cooling make up about 45% of New York State's greenhouse gas inventory.²

The main demand for energy is heating and cooling (which is often done with Natural Gas) and electricity (which provides lighting and powers many appliances).

There are a few approaches that we take to reduce our fossil fuel energy use:

- Improve our Energy Efficiency - Heating more efficiently, eliminating wasted energy and switching to energy efficient appliances
- Shift to cleaner heating and cooling technologies - Beyond increasing the efficiency of appliances that run on natural gas, switching to electricity for heating and cooling allows you to replace fossil fuels with cleaner energy sources on the grid (wind, solar, hydro, etc.)
- Purchase renewable sources of electricity - There are several ways that we can support renewable electricity. These include selecting a supplier that sources clean energy, installing solar or wind onsite or participating in an offsite solar or wind farm (sometimes called Community Distributed Generation).

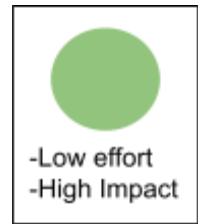
As part of the deregulation of the electricity market, New Yorkers have the power to choose an Energy Services Provider (or ESCO. These companies have the ability to purchase energy (electricity and natural gas) on the open market for its customers, allowing them to act as intermediary between the companies that actually generate the energy and your local utility that brings it to your house. This gives the consumer the ability to obtain specific rates and specific types of energy (such as all wind or wind and solar.)

In addition to the centralized energy sources like utility scale power plants, electricity can also be generated in a distributed manner closer to the consumer. These smaller scale projects can be at residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial or community sites that install solar panels or windmills. There are a variety of ways that distributed projects can be structured. Community Distributed Generation (often called Community Solar) allows consumers to join together and share in the benefits of a local solar, (wind or other renewable energy project.)

² NYSERDA, 2016

COMMUNITY SOLAR (or Community Distributed Generation)

Subscribers to community solar receive credits on their energy bill for their portion of the energy produced by the community solar system. The subscriber is then billed for those credits at a discounted rate saving up to 10% on their energy bill. A House of Worship can subscribe as well as individual households. but they may not participate if they already have distributed onsite generation(rooftop solar). This is independent of Energy Service Company decisions, so you can still have an ESCO and subscribe to community solar.



WHAT TO DO:

There are several options to enroll in Community Solar. RAICA has an arrangement for local Faith Institutions to receive an incentive that we share with houses of worship when they enroll their facility and/or members.

- To sign up your **facility**, contact the person who manages your electricity purchases and let them know about Community Solar through the RAICA program. Follow the instructions on the RAICA website (raica.net) to enroll your house of worship and receive the sign up incentive as a donation.
- **Individuals** can also sign up for Community Solar through our website. If your House of Worship is enabled through RAICA it will receive a donation when you sign up.
- Post a notice in your newsletter or host an info session at your house of worship to **tell others** about the program and how they can participate. RAICA and local partners are available to provide support and materials. For each member that signs up, receive a donation.

Note: the rules governing Community Solar as well as the enrollment procedure are subject to change over time. Please see the our RAICA website for more information

Sample newsletter blurb for bulletin:

We are proud to announce that [HoW name here] has joined over 40 houses or worship and religious institutions in the Rochester area to go solar with Community Solar. By subscribing to a Community Solar program [HoW name here] is supporting local solar energy and reducing our monthly electric monthly bill without any upfront investment. Congregants can also investigate the benefits of Community Solar for their homes or small businesses. For any congregant that chooses to subscribe to Community solar for their household [HoW name here] will receive a donation when they sign up through the RAICA website and select [HoW name here] from the list. Congregants are of course encouraged to research all options available to them and what is best for them. Additional information on Community Solar can also be found at raica.net/communnity-solar-campaign.



Temple Sinai worked with RAICA and Ampion to host an info session as part of the Open House for the Religious School. The Temple saved over \$1000 on their electricity bill in the first year! Plus they earned \$600 in donations that they were able to put towards other greening efforts at the temple

Onsite (or Rooftop) Solar

Solar is growing by leaps and bounds along with other renewable energy projects. Interfaith Power and Light [has a count of 770](#) in the US so far. Onsite projects can be more complicated. Faith Institutions are financing them through a variety of creative options. These options include leasing (sometimes through a program from your Faith such as the Catholic Energies Program), buying the array up front through a capital campaign, engaging third party crowd-funding services that specialize in solar, forming member LLCs to invest in the arrays and selling the power to the congregation at a rate lower than the utility, and more. Joining with community partners to invest in or host a community solar garden is also an option.



North Presbyterian Church in Williamsville NY installed 111 solar panels on their rooftop in 2012. Since then the church has generated 136,000 kWh of clean, renewable electricity, enough to meet about 60% of the church's electricity demand. While environmental justice (reducing air pollution) and climate justice (mitigating the devastating impacts of climate change) were their main motivations, they save a few thousand dollars each year (after lease payments).

WHAT TO DO:

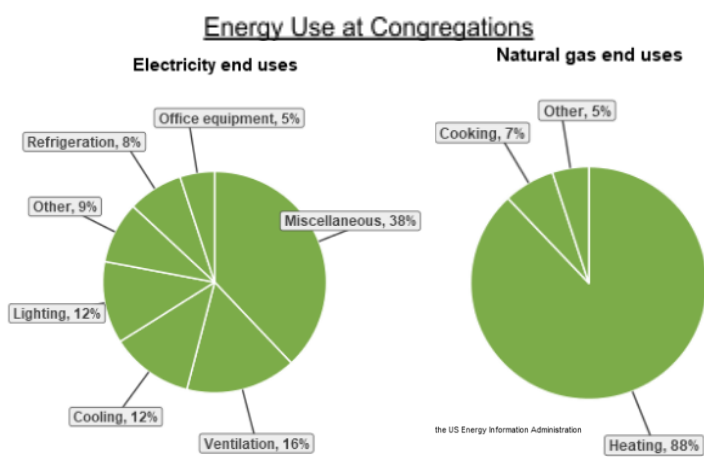
If you are pursuing onsite distributed power or are interested in pursuing a project, RAICA would love to support you. We have a good relationship with local and state developers and can help connect you with at least two local projects.



Don't forget that wind power may also be a good option at certain sites .

ENERGY EFFICIENCY & CLEAN HEATING AND COOLING

Typical energy efficiency efforts reduce energy consumption by **10%-30%**. The typical house of worship spends about \$1/sf annually on energy so energy savings can allow financial resources to be used on other things. Energy efficiency improvements are also linked to additional health, comfort, safety and maintenance benefits.



An Energy Audit of your home or facility is a great first step. You can conduct your own audit but professional energy audits are often available for free or at a low cost. Working with a certified auditor is also a great way to engage with incentives and programs. You can find information about how to connect with local incentives www.RAICA.net.



Visit www.RAICA.net/resources to find checklists for self guided audits (e.g. Energy Audit Card from Climate Buddies or the EPA's Energy Start Guide to Congregations).

Energy efficiency improvements can range from quick fixes like swapping out incandescent light bulbs to longer term investments like adding insulation. **Shifting to clean energy heating and cooling solutions such as air source and ground source heat pumps are great ways to improve efficiency and move away from fossil fuels .**

WHAT TO DO:

Programs and incentives change often so connect with RAICA or check the RAICA website for the latest information.

1. Start with small changes where possible (turn off, power down, maintain equipment, thermostat set points, etc.)
2. Assess your current performance with an **energy audit**. (Tip: Sharing and tracking the data are great ways to get others engaged and involved. Who doesn't like to save money?)
3. Evaluate the recommendations and incentives available and do what you can.



Often there are a few quick payback actions like changing lighting or smart sensors. If heating with oil or if your heating and cooling appliances are old, it's a great time to shift to new, more efficient technology.

Chapter 2: Transportation

Transportation is responsible for 36% of NYS Greenhouse Gas emissions, making it the largest source of emissions (greater than heating or electricity)³. The big culprit here again is the burning of fossil fuels particularly in internal combustion engines, which generates CO₂. (Of course they also emit other air pollutants as well.)

The main ways that we can reduce our transportation impacts are to:

1. Use more efficient modes of transportation:
 - a. Public transit, trains, buses
 - b. Carpools
 - c. Limit flights on planes
2. Shift to cleaner technologies
 - a. Electric vehicles
 - b. (Biodiesel from waste oil, renewable natural gas or other biofuels from waste feedstock can also be part of a solution)
3. Engage in Active transport or cut back on trips
 - a. Walk or bike, meet virtually, pool meetings and events



Carpooling is a great way to build community while cutting emissions

Next, think about how Faith Institutions use transportation. Some Faith Institutions maintain a fleet of vehicles which are direct sources of emissions. This can include a bus, maintenance vehicle or vehicles used by clergy. Some Faith Institutions are involved in the purchase of air travel for mission work, conventions or gatherings. However, for most Faith Institutions the largest source of emissions is the indirect impact due to member transportation to and from our houses of worship.

Here are some actions that Rochester Area and other Faith Institutions have taken to mitigate transportation emissions:

- Shift to Electric Vehicles for clergy
- No Idle Zone at pick up lines and parking lots
- Install Electric Vehicle charging stations
- Purchase Carbon Offsets for air travel
- Post Carpooling notices or an online rideshare app (ROCN Ride, Ride Connect)
- Install Bike Racks
- Group meetings/events back to back to reduce trips
- Bike or Walk to Church/School



A gift of the 2010/11 Temple Sinai Confirmation class to encourage members to Bike to Temple

³ NYSERDA, 2016

Electric Vehicles & Charging Stations



Electric vehicles (EVs) are a major solution in combating transportation impacts, reducing air pollution and fossil fuel dependence. The technology has come a long way with battery ranges increasing, prices reducing and options increasing each year. Many that switch to EVs say they will never go back due to an appreciation of the rapid torque response, quiet drive, reduced vehicle maintenance and often better digital integration and elimination of daily fueling stops.

There have been great incentives at the State and Federal level to help facilitate the transition to EVs that individuals and Faith Institutions can take advantage of. Specific programs are subject to change so check out the RAICA website for links to the latest incentives.

WHAT TO DO:

1. **Buy Electric Vehicles:** Check out the latest incentives, then visit your local car dealer
2. **Install Vehicle Charging Station:** Contact NYSEERDA to find out the latest incentives and for help getting started (link provided at the RAICA website above). In many cases the incentives can cover all or most of the installation costs. While most electricians can install Charging stations, there are several that specialize locally. (Tip: If you are planning to do work on or put in a new parking lot it is a great opportunity.
3. **Encourage members to buy Electric Vehicles:** RAICA and local groups can help you host an info session or test drive rodeo.



The Rochester Zen Center installed 4 charging stations at their Arnold Park location (shown left) and 4 charging stations at their Chapin Hill Retreat Center in Batavia in the Spring and Summer of 2020. They received rebates from NYSEERDA which they expect to cover the full cost of the project. They also acquired leases for three EVs for use by staff and clergy. This work supports the Zen Centers plan to convert their fleet and take action to reduce emissions. Vehicles park at the chargers and receive a charge to send them on their way when they are done at the Centers. For the full story

see our RAICA Idea Exchange under Transportation on the RAICA website.

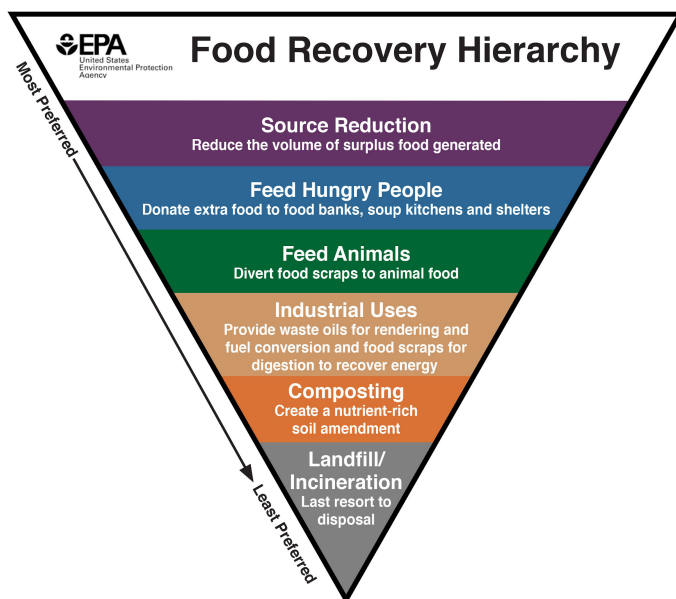
Chapter 3: Food Choices & Food Waste

Food systems contribute 21% to 37% of global greenhouse gases, and are significant contributors to deforestation, biodiversity loss and declining water tables. Our food also has social and ethical implications. Some Faith's already incorporate deep thought about food choices but for others this is an opportunity area.

Choices around the food that we eat can have a big impact.

- **Eating a plant rich diet** is Project Drawdown's⁴ #3 solution
 - *If 50-75 percent of the world's population restricts their diet to a healthy average 2,250 calories per day and reduces meat consumption overall, we estimate at least 43-68 gigatons of emissions could be avoided from dietary change alone. Eating plant based also improves health*

How we use our food is also important. It is estimated that 40% of food cultivated for consumption goes to waste. The food waste hierarchy (below) provides a good framework for thinking about solutions.



- Preventing food waste has the greatest impact because it saves the energy, water and changes to land required to produce that food.
- Donating excess or unsellable food to those in need is the next best thing. About 1 in 4 Rochesterians are food insecure.
- Feeding animals or industrial uses still allows some value to be retained and hopefully displaces crops grown for feed.
- Composting whatever is left recycles that food waste and returns nutrients to the soil.

⁴ Project Drawdown® is a nonprofit organization, based upon the book *Drawdown*. Project Drawdown conducts an ongoing review and analysis of climate solutions—the practices and technologies that can stem and begin to reduce the excess of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. This ranking is based upon the latest list (Scenario 1).

FOOD WASTE PREVENTION EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

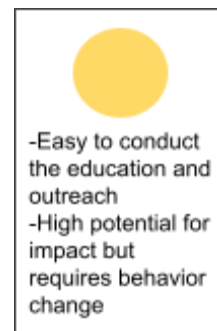
Preventing food waste **is the #1 solution** on the Project Drawdown list.⁵ The US EPA has developed a program called *Food Too Good to Waste* that discusses some of the motivation to prevent food waste and provides useful strategies. These include:

- Know how much food you waste;
- Shop mindfully;
- Prep and freeze food to make it easy to use;
- Store food to prolong freshness and don't be fooled by date labels;
- Making and serving the right amount
- Eat what you buy by serving the right portion size, using up what's in your fridge and eating leftovers
- Share what you have extra with others (or animals)
- Compost what cannot be eaten

This program has been adapted and implemented by many municipalities and organizations around the US. RAICA and the LETTUCE sub-group of the Pachamama Alliance of the Rochester Area (PARA) have developed a presentation and food waste awareness challenge that can be shared with individuals, groups and congregations.

WHAT TO DO:

- **At your House of Worship:** Host a presentation. (Maybe have a low food waste potluck with a discussion before or after?)
- **At home:** Look over the resources page (on the Idea Exchange under Food and Food Waste at www.RAICA.net). Then try to track and reduce your food waste.
- **Spread the word:** Post pictures or stories about your journey to reduce food waste on RAICA's Facebook page or on our Idea Exchange under Food and Food Waste. Share posts with friends, parishioners and family.

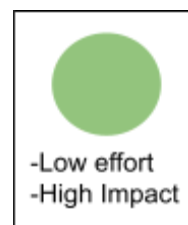


⁵ Project Drawdown® is a nonprofit organization, based upon the book *Drawdown*. Project Drawdown conducts an ongoing review and analysis of climate solutions—the practices and technologies that can stem and begin to reduce the excess of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. This ranking is based upon the latest list (Scenario 1)

FOOD SCRAP COLLECTION

Food waste that decays in a landfill generates methane which is a greenhouse gas (GHG) approximately 25-36X more powerful than CO₂.

Composting food waste does not produce methane and is close to carbon neutral. Plus Compost has additional benefits including enriching and restoring soil health, reducing fertilizer use and improving soil water retention.



RAICA has partnered with a local organic waste hauler to offer food scrap collection services for institutions or households.



Composting on site is not as hard as you would think. Cornell Cooperative Extension is a great resource for information and workshops. Find a link to them on our Composting campaign page at www.RAICA.net

WHAT TO DO:

- **Compost food scraps at your House of Worship.** If you don't want to do it onsite enroll in compost collection services.
 - Launch your program with an announcement and/or educational night or school program
 - Clearly label compost bins with what can go in them and trash cans with what can not .
 - Involve members and youth to help monitor trash at events and build
- **Become a drop off site** for members or your congregation to bring their food scraps for composting collection
- **Sign up for household service** if you can't get a broader program going and you aren't ready to compost at home



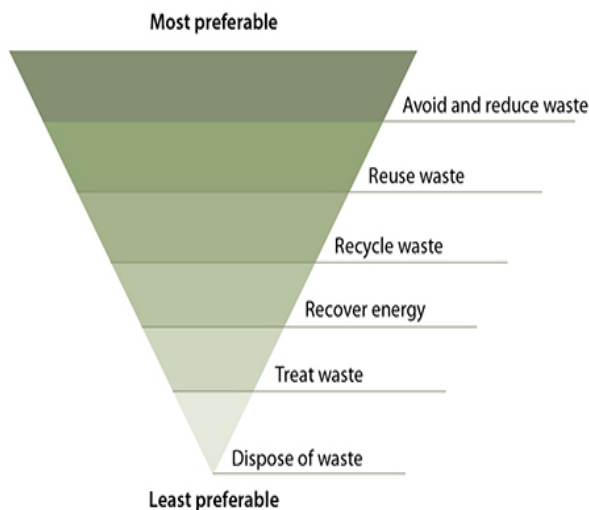
The "bucket exchange at Temple Sinai". Subscribers drop off their bucket of compost when they come to Temple on Sunday morning and take home a clean one for the next week provided by Impact Earth.

Chapter 4: Materials Management & Waste

Faith institutions are consumers, responsible for a myriad of purchases including:

- Supplies used in our worship
- Office and classrooms purchases
- Cleaning Supplies
- And more (we already covered appliances under energy efficiency)

Each purchase is an opportunity to reduce the energy, water and land use that went into making the products that we buy. (And don't forget that many products also have social impacts on communities around the world.) The choices that a Faith Institution makes about what to purchase and use has the added impact of influencing and inspiring its members.



The other side of our purchases is what happens to a product after it is used? Most faiths have a moral aversion to waste and see waste prevention as a virtue. Follow the waste hierarchy and ask yourself:
Did we really need it in the first place?
Could we reduce how much we use? Can others use what I can't?
Can what is left be recycled?
If it must be disposed of, are there special considerations to keep from harming others?

Some actions the Faith Institutions can take:

- Purchase “green cleaning supplies”
- Purchase shade grown, fair trade coffee
- Purchase paper with recycled content, Make duplex your default print mode, etc.
- Use scrap materials for projects in your school
- Avoid single use plastics, use reusable dishware and mugs
- Have recycling bins in offices, classrooms and kitchens



Recycling works best for metals, glass and paper, plastic jars, jugs, bottles and tubs. Avoid purchases in plastic trays, clam shells or polystyrene foam and cutlery.

Chapter 5: Grounds and Gardens

Church grounds and gardens are an opportunity to cultivate healthy plants and soils that sequester carbon and to engage with and connect with nature. Natural landscaping could educate the congregation and passersby about, using native plants, avoiding pesticides, and eliminating invasive species. Could your church also support a vegetable garden? Food grown at your Faith Institution could serve members, community helpers, soup kitchens, or even supply a roadside stand. Surplus food from members' off site gardens could also be used. On site composting is easier than you would think and a good educational opportunity for adults and children.

Is there a helpful gardener in your group? Local experts also have valuable experiences.

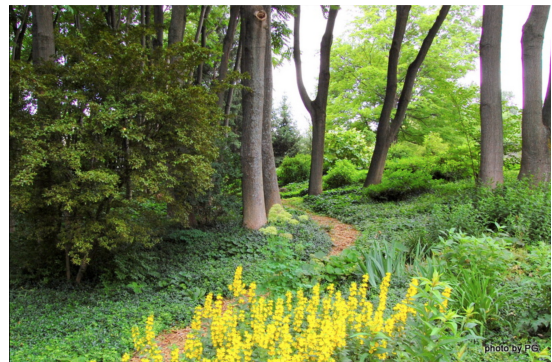


St. Mark's and St. John's Episcopal Church E.D.E.N Gardens: In 2012 the church's leadership decided to stop praying for their own institutional survival and start praying that God would direct their hearts, minds and hands to make their neighborhood a place more reflective of God's dream for all of us. So we stopped attending meetings and literally started digging. Now their 7 Urban Gardens have produced thousands of pounds of vegetables. Their community composting turns the neighborhood's food waste into fertile soil and the kids growing club has

engaged kids in fun and educational activities

“Together we are changing the world - one tomato at a time”.

First Unitarian Church of Rochester has acres of land, with individual gardens and also a community garden. Their grounds have native plants and are pesticide-free. Megan Meyer chairs the Landscape and Memorial Garden Committee, and also is active in Color Penfield Green which among many other activities is promoting a Healthy Yard Campaign.



Even small plots can attract insects and birds.

Chapter 6: Education & Worship

Some Faith Institutions have traditionally focused worship and education on the human relationship with God and human relationships with each other. However, most faith's are also replete with elements of God's relationship with all of creation and with our human relationship with creation (and with God in creation). As the climate crisis intensifies people of Faith are increasingly turning to their Faith for guidance and grounding.

Ways to re-integrate care for the earth and its people into worship and religious education include:



Visit www.RAICA.net/resources to find resources on:

- Religious texts, liturgy and holidays
- Religious education curriculums

Search the Idea Exchange for prayers and poems

1. Incorporate thoughtful connection to creation into everyday worship through hymns, readings, liturgy, sacraments and songs.
2. Many of our festivals and rituals are tied to the earth's cycles and seasons. These can help us realize our interconnectedness and give us an opportunity for mindfulness.
3. Review religious education curriculums to include important environmental teachings and opportunity to process and reflect on the current crisis.
4. Include environmental texts and teachings in Bible study groups or have a dedicated series on the environmental teachings of your faith.
5. Provide adult education. This can range from weekly or daily tips to an environment or a book discussion group.
6. Engage youth. Many teens and older feel a particular sense of urgency and projects around the environment can engage and motivate this group.

Green tips of the week at Greece Baptist - For 10 years now, Cheryl Frank of Greece Baptist Church has shared a weekly green tip in their bulletin and other avenues. She keeps a list of them and repeats them on the same week each year, supplementing also with current ROC events. Many of them can be found at raica.net/forum/green-tips.

RAICA youth - This interfaith climate youth group formed in spring 2020 and had to meet via Zoom, but they were also able to work at St. Mark's and St. John's community garden, attend BLM fundraisers, and create a call-to-action YouTube video for people of all faiths to get involved in the climate movement ("[Turning Faith Into Action](#)").



Chapter 7: Advocacy & Public Action

Faith leaders have the power to engage congregations, communities, and policymakers to advance just climate solutions within houses of worship, in our community and in local, state, and national arenas. Engagement can include public actions to raise awareness and bear witness to an issue or lending our voices to call for action from our legislators and administrators.



Visit www.RAICA.net/resources to find links to Climate Focused Organizations for various Faiths and Denominations. Go to the Idea Exchange under Community Bulletin Board to find out about local events and calls to action

- Know how your faith tradition supports you. Most faith groups have national or state advocacy programs with dedicated staff who provide programmatic support to congregations on many issues. Visit their websites to learn more.

- Check with RAICA (at www.raica.net and on Facebook) for local issues relating to Faith and the Climate. We are in touch with other local groups such as the Climate Solutions Accelerator and Citizens Climate Lobby as well as Faith based groups such as NY Interfaith Power and Light and we can share events and suggest actions from you also.



Rochester Zen Center, Declaration of Climate Emergency

The Rochester Zen Center declares a Climate Emergency, and supports the global community's committed efforts to address climate change and climate justice. From our location on the ancestral lands of the Onöndowa'ga (Seneca) nation of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy, we affirm our interdependence with the ecosystems around us, and join countless Sanghas, communities, and nations around the world in vowing to serve and live in harmony with our planet and all its beings. (excerpt)

A public declaration can inspire others, provide a clear path of action, and establish accountability for the efforts that you undertake.

An annual RAICA event is a tree planting event to spread awareness and also add CO2 breathing trees to our community. This one was in 2020 in memory of Daniel Prude and in support of racial justice.

Climate and Community Investment Act Letter Campaign

In March of 2021 RAICA joined NY Interfaith Power and Light's Faith Day of Action and NYRenews to promote a letter writing campaign to encourage the Governor and State Legislators to fund this important piece of legislation.



See Appendix B for information on How to Contact your Elected Officials.

Reflect

Now that you've read through the guide, take some time to think about what efforts your congregation is *already doing* to be green and some areas that maybe need to be improved. This may help you prioritize what actions should be taken.

Things our congregation is already doing to be green (ex: using compostable plates/bowls at events)	Areas that could be improved (ex: bathroom lights are always on)

Plan and Prioritize

Now, determine which initiatives would be most meaningful and feasible to start with.

Things to think about: What kind of an impact would it have? (One-time event that gets people thinking about the environment, changing something about the facility itself?) What are possible obstacles that might be faced in trying this initiative? (e.g. Reluctance of parishioners to accept new ideas, financial or time constraints) Finally, what steps can be taken to overcome those issues?

Circle one or two actions that seem best to start with and use them on the following page.

Action	Pros	Feasibility (Possible obstacles)	How to overcome obstacles
Community Solar			
Onsite Solar			
Energy Audit			
Other energy efficiency initiatives			
Electric Vehicle initiatives			
Other Transportation initiatives			
Education initiatives			

Worship initiatives			
Food Waste Prevention			
Composting			
Gardens			
Low-impact landscaping			
Supporting Green Legislation			

Take Action!

Once you have chosen one or two actions to start, begin making a plan to get it done. Pick an objective (ex: Sign up for community solar and get 5 households to sign up), and set step by step tasks (ex: 1. Contact RAICA at contact.raica.net@gmail.com to get an info session). Designate specific people with deadlines in order to get it done.
Objective: _____

Task	Who	Deadline	Notes
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Inspiration

“Let us all stand in solidarity, all people of faith, united for the preservation of the Earth and the bounty and beauty it was created to sustain.”

— Rev. John C. Dorhauer, President of the United Church of Christ

“If we are not willing to lead on climate change, then we are not willing to lead a world that is the best for our children.”

— Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker, Chair, Social Action Committee, African Methodist Episcopal Church

“If we really truly rejoice in the splendor of God’s creation; if we mean it when we say The Earth is God’s and the fullness thereof; if we truly believe we have been enjoined to be stewards of the Earth — then atone we must. For human activity has led to a warming of our planet, a rising of the seas, a poisoning of our soil, seas, and air.

— Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Director, The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

“This is not secular do-goodism, this is the Jesus movement. As followers of Jesus, we care for God’s world because God cares for God’s world, and this means that we care about climate change.”

— Rt. Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop, The Episcopal Church

“Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”

— Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*

“Presbyterians believe that all people are beloved by God and deserving of a healthy, bright future. We want for our children to breathe clean air and drink clean water. We do not desire for lives and churches to be consistently disrupted by natural disasters caused by climate change.”

— Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

“The challenge of climate change is a call for us to pursue personal, social, and civic righteousness.”

— Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary, The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society

“Climate change requires change in behavior. Let’s do it. Let us preach, let us teach, let us leave a world for our children better than the world we found.”

— Imam Mohamed Magid, All Dulles Area Muslim Society Center

(Compilation borrowed from the Moving Forward Guide: Blessed Tomorrow and ecoAmerica)

Appendix A

I. Greece Baptist Church Sustainability Plan

The GBC Sustainability Plan Task-Force has met three times, once per month in March, April, and May, 2020, and we are presenting the following GBC Sustainability Plan to the Board of Trustees for review and approval.

Over the past several years, we have taken many steps to live closer in harmony with God's creation, so this Sustainability Plan is a continuation of the values already established by our membership. By having a plan in place, we have a reference point when making decisions that impact the environment and the sustainability of our church. This plan applies to all groups that use our church building and property. The sustainability committee will appoint liaisons to each group to communicate the plan.

Our plan has six categories: Education, Practices, Buildings and Grounds, Purchasing, Transportation, and Advocacy.

1. Education

The committee will

- *Educate the congregation and building users about action on the individual, family, local community, and global community levels.
- *Designate and maintain a bulletin board for environmental education and communication.
- *Write a "green" column for the monthly builder.
- *Focus on specific environmental topics during various seasons of the church year, including forums, minutes for mission, book groups, preschool projects, etc. (For example, Advent 2020 will focus on reducing plastic use; Lent 2021 will focus on carpooling and transportation)

2. Practices

- *Have church outside once or twice per year.
- *The committee will create a policy to allow only compostable or reusable place settings at church, including outside groups using the church. The policy will include resources for compostable place settings, and proper use of church dishwashers.
- *Have fewer lights on during meetings, since the LEDs are brighter.
- *Turn computers and monitors all the way off when no one is using them.
- *No idling policy. We would like to put a friendly No Idling Zone sign outside the Dean Hall door.
- *Invite people to put extra gift bags, newspaper and wrapping paper on the swap table for people to use for holiday time.
- *Replace plastic communion cups with compostable ones, and make sure they go into the compost.
- *We would like to ask the trustees to phase out church investments in fossil fuel companies over the next three years, or by 2023.

3. Buildings and Grounds

- *The committee is securing a free energy audit through RIT for the fall. We will ask the trustees to review the audit for suggestions to improve the energy efficiency of our building.
- *Continue to install more efficient LED lights.
- *Look into fewer light fixtures since LEDs are brighter.
- *Purchase low-flush toilets when they need replacing.
- *Review the lawn mowing schedule: can we mow less often to save fuel?
- *Choose the most efficient options when installing new insulation and windows.
- *The committee is looking into more eco friendly fertilizers and pesticides.
- *Look into installing light sensors to shut off if no motion.
- *In anticipation of the expensive day when we will need to replace heating equipment, the committee is looking into grants for geothermal and electric air-source heat pumps. We would like to see the church set aside funds, including savings from energy efficiency, and the community solar earnings, for future purchase of high efficiency boilers, geothermal, or heat pumps.

4. Purchasing

- *Buy only 100% recycled office paper, unbleached toilet paper, and paper towels.

- *Instead of buying plastic utensils and styrofoam cups, purchase bamboo and biodegradable alternatives, and make sure they go into the compost.
- *As they become available, purchase products that contain biochar.
- *Encourage local, organic, plant-based foods for events.
- *Consider local, repurposed, or sustainably sourced products when buying larger items or quantities.
- *Purchase eco-friendly cleaning products.
- *Buy (tinted) compostable instead of plastic communion cups.
- *Purchase energy efficient equipment.
- *Dispose of electronics properly.

5. Transportation

- *The committee will continue to look into grants to install an EV charging station.
- *Continue to have people attend some meetings online once we resume.
- *Carpool for Lent, 2021.

6. Advocacy

- *80% of greenhouse gas emissions come from 200 oil/coal companies. Therefore, advocacy is the MOST powerful thing we can do.
- *The committee will provide opportunities for congregation members to sign petitions and write letters, visit lawmakers at least annually, and participate in rallies related to creation care. We follow the goal set by the national interfaith climate organization, Blessed Tomorrow, of helping our congregation members and church building to achieve 100% clean energy by 2030. This will include buying carbon offsets, through vetted organizations such as the local Rochester Area Community Foundation (RACF) RENEW program, or Blessed Tomorrow carbon offsets. It also includes native plantings through our Give The Gift of Nature program.

This Sustainability Plan will be reviewed as needed, but at least every three years.

Melissa Chamberlain, Rev. Cheryl Frank, Helen Frank, Rev. Joanne Gilbert-Cannon, Melissa Johnson, Tiffany Krause, Jim Poole, Tom Richardson

Appendix B:

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

	Writing	Calling	Email
White House	The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW Washington, DC 20500	Call Comment Line, 202-456-1111	whitehouse.gov/ contact
Congress	Find your US Senator or Representative house.gov senate.gov	Call Capitol Switchboard to be transferred to your US Senator or Representative 202-224-3121	Find your US Senator or Representative house.gov senate.gov
Governor	Look-up contact information at usa.gov/state-governor		
State Legislature	Look-up contact information for your state legislators at congress.gov/state-legislature-websites		
Local Government	Look-up your local government officials at usa.gov/local-governments		