

EVERYONE'S WELCOME

Midway Christian Church⁴ Featuring *Pastor Heather McColl*

Spiritual development

Midway Church feels its spiritual development is linked with caring for God's creation and being good stewards of the earth. So, this opportunity has been offered to their congregation through Disciples of Christ Christian Church's Green Chalice program.

The Green Chalice Program is rooted in the denomination's Alverna Covenant, originally introduced in 1981. Pastor Heather McColl said the program "*became really deeply tied to spiritual practice for us – that faith practice of this is God's table and everybody is invited, everybody's welcome.*" As a part of Midway Church's core values as the "*people of the table,*" their focus is to bring their community together at their table to share a meal. They were able to do so by partnering with the local Presbyterian Church that has a community garden. Together, they contacted

nearby restaurants to donate leftovers and their local jail to donate produce they had grown. By involving a broader part of the Midway community, they were able to grow their own food, reduce food waste, and bring people together to share in a meal at "*the table.*"

Finding solutions for funding

To build support for the program, Pastor McColl referenced church values and teachings that aligned with climate action. But, as Pastor

McColl said, "*The biggest hurdle for Midway Church was financial. We just had to take it in small bits and pieces. This can get overwhelming. The projects caused the wish list to become so massive and so huge.*" Limited funds and resources forced the church to get creative in finding ways to reduce its climate impact. Pastor McColl admitted, "*We're not very good at asking for help or looking outside of our church for funding.*" Yet, by doing so, they were able to locate grant money to support their efforts.



Photo Courtesy of Midway Christian Church

Bringing solutions to God's table

The church used their endowment to switch to all LED lighting. The congregation learned that in addition to saving energy, the LEDs also reduced the risk of fire hazards. Through various grants, rebates, and low-interest loans offered through local electricity providers, agricultural departments, and others organizations that are also acting on climate solutions, the church was able to make significant progress. They learned that they could make the planned improvements at a much lower cost. Once they asked themselves how they could do things differently, and opened their minds to partnership, doors to amazing possibilities began to open.

Pastor McColl explained that taking action on climate must begin with a conversation within our communities: *“We can all find a starting place with the conversation about climate change and about ways we’re all affected by this. For me, as a Disciple, it all comes back to God’s table. At that table, we have the wonderful, frustrating ability to say, ‘We agree to disagree, but that does not mean you are no less my brother or sister. I will work beside you because I recognize you as a child of God.’ That’s where our starting place is every single time. People are afraid to have some of these conversations, but I think that’s the number one thing the churches should be doing – creating space at the table, creating space for these conversations.”*

Recommendations

- Start small and then work up institutionally to gain structure and support.
- Be willing to research opportunities within your community that offer grants, rebates, or any financial incentives for “going green.” In the words of Pastor McColl, *“Sometimes we think our vision is so limited that we think if it’s not within our walls, it’s not possible. And that goes against the very gospel and kingdom of God.”*
- Don’t be afraid to start the conversation on climate. One way to do this is with the line, *“We all agree that we need to walk more gently on Creation.”*



Photo Courtesy of Midway Christian Church

Key Metrics

- Midway, Kentucky
- Began leading efforts in Kentucky 7 years ago
- Cost of LED lighting: \$11,800 (32 fixtures)
- Annual savings from switching to LED lighting: \$4,706
- Cost of double paned windows: \$8,294 (savings not calculated)
- Community meals: \$150/month for produce purchased at farmer’s market (the church is working to apply for grants to reduce this cost)
- Rain gardens: minor labor costs and native plants were donated
- Has engaged all 200 members
- Interfaith Power & Light Runner-Up for Cool Congregation Challenge for Sacred Grounds