

FOOD & FAITH CONVERSATIONS

Sustainability Efforts - Midway Christian Church

By: Elizabeth Abbey, PhD, RDN, CDN ~ RMIG Newsletter Editor

Small but mighty describes the sustainability efforts of Midway Christian Church (MCC) in Midway, Kentucky. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ [DOC]) congregation, MCC lies in a bedroom community of Lexington that is at the boundaries of suburban and rural. With a weekly church attendance of about 60 people, MCC is proof that a strong commitment to creation care isn't just for large congregations with abundant resources. After several members attended a regional denominational meeting in 2010 on caring for the earth, they were inspired to make MCC a Green Chalice congregation.



Preparing a community meal at
Midway Christian Church

The Green Chalice Program is a mission of the Christian Church (DOC) in the United States and Canada. It has two tiers—the first level is to become a Green Chalice Congregation/Assembly, and the second level is to become a Certified Green Chalice Congregation/Assembly. For the first level, congregations form a green team, sign a Green Chalice Covenant, and then make three changes that will move their congregation toward better caring for God's creation. To become Certified, congregations up their level of commitment by taking action in each of the following areas: building/facility; grounds/property; worship and office practices; and education/outreach/justice.

MCC started by focusing on their energy usage, switching to LED lights, and replacing drafty windows. Next, they evaluated their current programs and found ways to integrate them with creation care principles. For example, they use locally produced ingredients at their monthly community dinners whenever possible. MCC pastor Heather McColl explained that a key aspect of the DOC theology is to be people of the table, hence Communion is celebrated each week and church meals are frequent, integral components of church life. In the summer, the community dinners are vegetable-focused suppers that use produce purchased from the local farmer's market. In the fall, they glean fruit from a local orchard to be used in the meals and to donate to local food pantries. Community dinner attendees have learned new ways to utilize seasonal produce, local businesses are supported, and food miles are minimized. McColl also shared that she "didn't anticipate the other need this meal met—people coming around the table to meet their neighbors." MCC became a Certified Green Chalice Congregation in 2015 and has continued to expand its work. In 2017, they partnered with Kentucky Interfaith Power and Light to

install solar panels on their fellowship hall. Not only did this decrease their electric bill, it aligns with their goal to be carbon neutral.

Creation care is not just something that MCC “does” but is integrated into the fabric of worship every Sunday through prayers, songs, and liturgies. They hold an Earth Sunday Celebration each April and have hosted many conversations about the environment in conjunction with church potlucks. Moving forward, McColl wants MCC to focus on not only recycling but reducing consumption. Changes in the global recycling market made her realize that, “it is not just about the recycling, but we have to figure out how to reduce our use of single-use plastic.” If the past 10 years are any indication, MCC will continue to find creative approaches to address this issue and live out their call to care for the Earth.

“...See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth, I give all the green plants for food. And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good....” Genesis 1:29-31