

It's Official! FPC Receives Earth Care Certification

First Presbyterian Church has received official certification as an Earth Care Congregation from Presbyterian Church (USA). The certification recognizes FPC for its environmental stewardship achievements in worship, education, facilities and outreach actions in the life of the church. "Being an Earth Care Congregation is an expression of our Christian commitment to help care for and protect God's creation," says Pastor Will Robinson. "I thank God for the people who worked especially hard to help us attain this significant achievement."

In August 2021, Session voted unanimously to move forward with pursuing the certification process. By voting to proceed, FPC committed to the "Earth Care Pledge" and confirmed that the church's Earth Care Team would complete its work documenting environmental actions and practices in the four categories.

Members of the Social Witness Task Force, chaired by Henry Brown, comprise the Earth Care Team. Working closely with past Associate Pastor Lisa Schrott, the group had completed the initial audit that was presented to Session. "Many of us dedicated time retracing and tracking what had been done in the four areas," said team member Juliana Kim. "We also identified education and outreach as areas in which we needed to take action to attain the required scores."

Last fall the Social Witness Task Force brought back Coffee & Conversation, an in-person program that had not met during the pandemic. Once restrictions were eased and people could return to the church, speakers were invited on Thursday mornings to talk about topics including Hilton Head's Sea Turtle Patrol program, our water system managed by the Hilton Head Public Service District, local recycling programs and more.



Coffee & Conversation returned on Thursday mornings

The Earth Care pledge acknowledges that God calls us to be careful, humble stewards of this earth, and to protect and restore it for its own sake, and for the future use and enjoyment of the human family. We know that caring for the earth means caring for all God's people, and that we cannot find environmental justice without social justice.



Wednesday night programs also focused on the many ways in which we express our care and concern for the earth. Global warming and its impact locally, the damage plastics are doing to the environment, and sharks and other creatures of importance to our eco-system, were topics addressed by guest speakers.



Enjoying fellowship in the courtyard

Last October, 75 people enjoyed an evening in the courtyard at the all-church picnic. After dinner there was a multi-age lantern-making workshop led by artist Juliana Kim, Faith Formation Director Jackie Wilhelm and staff from the Hilton Head Arts Council. The focus was making lanterns representing God's creations. Participants carried their lanterns in the Hilton Head Island Lantern Parade, a community-wide event that has become a local tradition.

Celebrating Creation Care!

From the beginning, FPC exceeded the required points in two of the four areas—worship and facility. On an ongoing basis, our worship and discipleship celebrate God’s grace and glory in creation. And the beautiful tree-covered campus helped FPC excel in the assessment of the physical facility and grounds.



Honey Horn Chapel surrounded by nature

The goal of the Earth Care Program, started in 2010 by PC (USA), is to inspire churches to care for God’s earth in a holistic way, by integrating earth care into all aspects of the church. “By being certified, FPC is one of 292 churches in our denomination that chose to dedicate themselves to intentional care of God’s earth this year,” said Jessica Maudlin, Associate for Sustainable Living and Earth Care Concerns for PC(USA). “This activity and commitment, even in the midst of navigating limitations brought about by COVID-19, brings hope to their community and indeed to the world.”

What will happen now that FPC has received certification? Earth care activities must continue for FPC to retain the certification. On March 19, volunteers, including earth care team member Judy Pizzuti, collected trash along an identified portion of Pembroke Drive and Leg O Mutton Road as part of the Adopt-A-Highway Program. “We’ll continue to be responsible for that section of the road and, in the next few months, a sign will go up stating that FPC is keeping it clean,” said Pizzuti.

In addition, spring beach sweeps and other community events will be coordinated with local organizations, some possibly in conjunction with Earth Day on April 22. The hope is that groups, families, and individuals within the church will plan their own earth care activities, too!

On March 19 FPC volunteers collected litter as part of the Adopt-A-Highway Program. This is one of the earth care activities that will be ongoing. If you’d like to participate or learn more about earth care programs at FPC, contact a member of the Social Witness Task Force!



We are thankful for our moss and tree-lined campus