

## St. Aidan's Joins GreenFaith Certification Program

GreenFaith (founded in 1992) is an interfaith environmental coalition that inspires, educates and mobilizes people of diverse religious backgrounds as environmental leaders. GreenFaith offers a two year certification program that helps diverse religious institutions put their beliefs into action for the earth. From eco-themed worship services and religious education to 'green' facility management and environmental justice advocacy, GreenFaith provides a unique variety of resources and opportunities for religious-environmental action.

This seemed a natural fit for St. Aidan's since, in our last visioning process, we discovered how important our stewardship of the natural environment is to our mission, particularly the wildlife habitat on our campus. In addition to years of work trying to restore this woodlot to a healthy Michigan forest, both congregations have been systematically engaged in environmental upgrades to our building through insulation in the attic (the worst volunteer job imaginable), change to fluorescent light bulbs and 7 day/24 hour programmable thermostats for our three zones of heating, and the purchase of our 95% efficient furnace. In addition, we are committed to

buying fair trade coffee and unbleached coffee filters, as well as using china or environmentally sound paper products for our hospitality. We have partici-



ipated in educational sessions or series on recycling, assessing our carbon foot-print, going on a carbon diet, and the spirituality of the environment. For years we have liturgically celebrated our connection with the earth in our Rogation processions and plantings, our special blessings of our natural improvements, and our recent celebrations and educational programs about our wildlife habitat.

We are the first congregation in Michigan of any type to participate in GreenFaith, and one of the first recipients of the national Episcopal Church scholarships. Meetings of the Green Team began in January. The leadership team consists of Lark-Aeryn Speyer

[coordinator], Alan Vayda, Jim Barber, Karie Harrison, Marian Laughlin [P], John Board, Michael Earle, Deb Davies [P], Ruth Strang, Stephen Uche, and Susan McGarry [staff].

GreenFaith has discovered in its 13 years of experience how important it is for the environmental commitment to touch everyone's life. It isn't enough for an energetic leadership team to take the ball and run with it. This needs to be something that helps everyone and inspires extensive cooperation throughout the congregation. The certification program requires constant

O children of Adam, eat and drink, but do not be wasteful.

Allah does not like wastefulness!

-Koran, Sura 7:31

communication both within the congregation and throughout the community. It requires the congregation to make

relationships with and participate in community and international environmental and ecological justice programs and advocacy. The emphasis on communication in the community and participation with community advocacy will help us with our visibility and will contribute to our evangelism. Though we as a congregation have the core purpose of discipleship, our special emphasis right now is our ecological stewardship, given the natural setting we enjoy and foster. We see this commitment as central to our outreach and growth potential. There are many people in the community who see God first in the natural world and who would like to join a community dedicated to the stewardship of God's natural world. They need to know we exist. GreenFaith's discipline of extensive communication should help us.

Finally, this program will help us cooperate with something that is fundamental to our Anglican tradition (inherited from Celtic spirituality) and central to the practices of our particular Saint, St. Aidan. That is reverence for and stewardship of the realm of Creation, created by God and entrusted to our guardian care. We also hope our two sites (one still potential) for environmental restoration and preservation will be centers for education and learning, particularly for youth.

If you'd like to learn more about GreenFaith, go to [www.greenfaith.org](http://www.greenfaith.org).