

Just Neighbors Award August 2015

Presented by:

Compassion, Peace & Justice Task Force of the Presbytery of Des Moines

Presented to:

**Trinity United Presbyterian Church, Indianola
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines
for engaging in compassion, peace and justice ministry in their community as
“Cool Congregations”**

At the August Presbytery meeting the Compassion, Peace and Justice announced new recipients of the Just Neighbor: Indianola, Trinity United and Des Moines, Westminster for their efforts in environmental stewardship. Both congregations have been identified as “Cool Congregations” by Iowa Interfaith Power and Light. You can read about the churches below and if your church is interested in becoming a cool congregation or if you are already making strides in this area please let us know!

Trinity United Presbyterian Church invited the Iowa Interfaith Power and Light organization to present a “Cool Congregations” workshop about 5 years ago. Approximately 40 people attended from several churches in Indianola and surrounding communities. They learned ways to save energy in their churches and homes. They also learned about the serious issues related to climate change and need for action to maintain a livable status on God's creation called the earth.

Trinity United had a church audit by the local utility company, and many also had audits in their homes. They learned a variety of ways to make their homes and church more energy efficient.

After Trinity United worked on energy conservation, they gathered together with representatives from three other churches in Indianola and formed the Indianola Green Team. Some of their activities have included: potlucks with DVD's in their respective churches to increase awareness of the climate crisis. They invited Dr. Jan Everhart, religion professor from Simpson College to hold 4 sessions about the Bible and creation. Dr. Everhart has spoken from Trinity's pulpit about the same topic, as has Susan Guy, the Director of Iowa Interfaith Power and Light. Rev. Guy also led a Food and Energy workshop at an ecumenical gathering in Indianola.

The Indianola Green Team has visited the offices of our U.S. Senator and Congressmen at least once a year to discuss the need for action to support renewable fuels and to drastically reduce carbon emissions. Congressman David Young is visited the Indianola Green Team on August 21. They have also visited State Legislators regarding state energy issues. They have cosponsored energy events at Simpson College. They have visited the local newspaper office and now have a column in the paper about once a month regarding energy issues. Several of have become members of the Indianola Sustainability Committee and other related efforts in the community.

Dr. Al and Kathie Farris held two educational series on water issues and energy issues at our adult Sunday School class. They are now planning a 4 week session about critical actions to address climate change. The Trinity Green Team members are also researching an Environmental Protection

Agency Energy Star tool that easily tracks energy use and energy savings, and financial savings for the church.

Margaret Vernon reports that Trinity United takes these actions because we believe God's creation is in crisis and we are called to respond.

Westminster also had a full energy audit approximately two years ago. This resulted in a 100 page report of recommendations that the church could begin checking off and report back to MidAmerican Energy as they completed them. Of those Westminster chose several that could be completed that could have the largest impact and also be affordable in budget.

First was a major project of insulation and additional insulation in the ceilings of the entire sanctuary and commons portion of the church. This alone has had a substantial effect on heating and air conditioning cost resulting in noticeable savings on power bills.

Second was replacing lighting with more energy efficient units and bulbs. These and several other more minor recommendations have resulted in noticeable and welcome immediate and continuing power bill savings

Westminster plans to do other recommendations as they are able, such as having the building's many heating and air conditioning systems reprogramed to utilize them well and in coordination with one another. This is a very expensive process and will be completed as budgeting allows.

Ted Coppock report: bottom line is we are realizing saving now and in addition reporting the items we have done has resulted in sizable rebates from Mid-American Energy after reporting completion of portions of the work. This has resulted in Westminster being designated a "Green Congregation".

Thank you to Margaret and Ted for your reports and thank you to Indianola, Trinity United and Des Moines, Westminster for your inspiring stewardship efforts!