



Best Practices for Worship

In the beginning, when God was creating the heavens and the earth, God took time to acknowledge the work that was done and to celebrate it, commenting that it was good. When the work was complete, “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.” (Gen. 1:31 NRSV) As we gather together to worship, we must also recognize the goodness of creation and include in our celebration of the divine a respect for (and thus celebration of and with) God’s work.

Buildings

A worship space that is bright, open, and clean, will help people feel welcomed and part of the community. Please see our best practices for Parish Grounds and Maintenance for ways to show the community that your church is green-thinking as part of your theology.

Bulletins & Liturgy Booklets

Every parish loves to hand out an order of service, and some even print their liturgies. It’s important to keep in mind that while this is part of doing ministry, there is a lot of paper and copier ink being used for these bulletins and booklets. Consider removing announcements from the bulletin or keeping them shorter, and instead e-mailing them to parishioners, or, where facilities permit having them scroll on overhead screens before and after the service. For visitors and those without email, make a special announcement sheet available. Consider printing what needs to be printed on recycled paper to reduce your carbon footprint. Reuse liturgy booklet for an entire liturgical season and recycle bulletins.

Altar linens

Consider having a member with a front-loading washer to clean the linens, and save them until there is a full load, rather than wash them in a half-empty, less energy-efficient machine. As the linens themselves wear out, they might be replaced with natural and organic fabrics. Stain-repellent materials will reduce the need for harsh chemicals (like bleach), and are easier to keep looking crisp.

Flowers

Flowers in church remind us of the importance of life and living things in our Christian faith. Unfortunately many cut flowers are grown with a great deal of pesticides and transported long distances. If cut flowers are required, use florists who offer locally or, better still, organically grown flowers. Whenever possible buy living plants which can be given to parishioners to enjoy in their homes or planted in their gardens after they are no longer needed in the church. During the spring and summer months, invite parishioners to offer flowers from their gardens.

Candles

Burning any substance is always going to have its environmental downside, especially paraffin candles which are petroleum based. But there are greener options: beeswax candles are smoke free, non-toxic and non-allergenic and soy candles - made from the oil of soybeans - burn cooler and longer than paraffin candles. While it may not be practical for heritage or ascetic reasons to make the switch in every case, consider using beeswax or soy candles for services and gatherings which use tea light candles. These are available at fair trade stores, farmer’s markets, and natural food stores.

Elements

The bread and the wine which is used in our worship could be sourced locally. Local vineyards could provide the wine; local bakers could be commissioned to make the bread. Local consumption increases awareness and economic growth, as well as decreasing the overall carbon footprint.

Special services

Why not celebrate God’s creation IN God’s creation on a fine spring or fall day? Making use of local green space for Sunday service will not only allow the congregation to gather in the goodness of God’s handiwork, but will also show passers-by that the community is thriving, and welcome them in. The congregation might hold a special service to recognize Earth Day or St. Francis’ Feast Day. A distinctly ‘green’ service can be organized. Guest speakers can be brought in to preach an eco-friendly sermon that will be spiritually uplifting and connect theology and ecology for your congregation.