

Climate Justice Niagara Parish Accreditation Program



Care for Creation is an important part of who we are as a faith community. As part of the diocesan vision for excellence in ministry, the Parish Accreditation Program seeks to enable and encourage parishes to live out our call to be better stewards of creation while we strive to sustain and renew the earth (the Fifth Mark of Mission). As we live into this area of prophetic social justice making, a Climate Justice Parish Facilitator, along with a Climate Justice Team, will be essential in working through the Accreditation Program.

The Accreditation Program is divided into 15 categories which are listed below. Each category has three levels to be achieved: Bronze, Silver and Gold. To achieve bronze accreditation a parish needs complete 10 of the 15 bronze level categories. As the program is designed to be cumulative, for silver and gold accreditations, the other lesser levels are prerequisites for accreditation. These can be different for each level. For instance, you may complete bronze level categories 1-10, but then choose to complete silver categories 2-9, 11 and 12 for your silver accreditation. As a parish you will decide which 10 categories you think are most suitable for you and your unique context. You may also be doing other amazing sustainable practices within your parish. We recognize this and as a result you may suggest two substitutions to count towards your 10 categories needed for accreditation.

Once your church has met the requirements for accreditation, complete the reporting form along with a brief explanation about what you have done for each completed item and return it to the Climate Justice Niagara Chair. The Climate Justice Niagara Committee will review your submission and be in contact with you.

1. The Niagara Home Challenge

BRONZE: The Diocese's commitment to greening the church and the Niagara Home Challenge has been presented and distributed to the parish at a service or special event.

SILVER: At least 40% of parishioners (based on average Sunday attendance) have completed and returned the Niagara Home Challenge. Email is preferentially used to notify parishioners of the Challenge and to exchange ideas and encouragement with each other.

GOLD: At least 80% of parishioners (based on average Sunday attendance) have completed and returned the Niagara Home Challenge.

2 Climate Justice Facilitator

BRONZE: A Climate Justice facilitator has been appointed and attends Parish Council. The Best Practice posters and information sheets have been distributed and displayed throughout the parish.

SILVER: The Climate Justice facilitator has created a Climate Justice Team. The team has met with parish groups and committees - including office and cleaning staff - to advise them about the Climate Justice Niagara Best Practices and to hear suggestions about greening their ministries.

GOLD: The Climate Justice Niagara Best Practices have been adopted by all church groups.

3 Lighting

BRONZE: Signage is posted at all light switches to remind people to TURN OFF lights when they are not in use and as people leave the room.

SILVER: LED bulbs are installed as CFL (compact fluorescent) or incandescent bulbs burn out.

GOLD: A full lighting survey has been undertaken, and a plan has been implemented for the replacement of old technology and the installation of new lighting fixtures and bulbs. Motion detectors have been installed where possible.

4 Water Use

BRONZE: All the taps have signage asking users to limit their use of water. No plastic bottles are used in the church. Best Practices related to water use have been implemented for groups that use water most frequently (e.g. kitchen, garden).

SILVER: Aerators have been installed on as many taps as possible to conserve water, and all taps and toilets have also been inspected to check for leaks.

GOLD: Dual or low flush toilets have been installed. A clear reduction in water use has been established over a year period.

5 Energy Audits

BRONZE: A paper-based sustainability audit has been completed to establish a baseline on energy and water use for the last two years. The parishioners are aware of high areas of consumption and verbal commitments to reduce energy have been received.

SILVER: A Climate Justice Niagara walk-through has been completed with a CJN committee member; OR a walk-through sustainability audit has been completed by members of the parish and two-, five- and 10-year plans have been established for items that need to be refurbished or replaced. Short- and long-term budget plans now include the refurbishments and replacements required.

GOLD: A Green Audit (or equivalent professional sustainability audit) has been completed by an outside party, and procedures are underway to implement any necessary findings. OR a Climate Justice Niagara audit has been completed and data submitted with work being done to reduce Green House Gas Emissions.

6 Waste Management

BRONZE: There are clear signs on blue and green bins in the kitchen. Blue boxes are available in the office area and around the church.

SILVER: Training sessions have been given to the leaders of parish groups and committees in the correct use of blue and green bins. The average number of garbage bags used per week has been established as a baseline to show when future reductions have been accomplished.

GOLD: Evidence is available to support the amount of waste diverted from the garbage has increased. Other users of the church building have been trained and made aware of the Accreditation Programme and they have given assurances that they will follow the same practices as part of their commitment to being good renters.

7 Vehicle Use

BRONZE: Carpooling to church services and meetings is encouraged; a sign-up sheet and a volunteer to facilitate this service have been established.

SILVER: Bus routes to church are posted. Bike racks are installed on parish grounds. Church committee work is conducted after services and other parish events, when possible, to reduce the number of extra car trips to church.

GOLD: Committee work is conducted by email, Zoom, or conference call as often as possible. One Sunday per year is designated "car free" or "HOV" (high occupancy vehicle) Sunday.

8 Worship and Sunday School

BRONZE: Earth Hour, Earth Day, Climate Justice Sunday, Season of Creation and similar events are celebrated every year with eco-friendly services and an emphasis on environmental issues. Children's programming includes at least one environmental theme per year.

SILVER: At least three services, bible studies or events per year have environment issues as their focus; with outdoor locations where practical.

GOLD: The parish has worked with an environmental organization on a local project, and a representative of an environmental organization has spoken at a church service or workshop.

9 Heating and Cooling

BRONZE: A programmable thermostat has been installed and in winter the thermostat is normally set to 20°C/68°F degrees while in summer, if air conditioning is installed, the thermostat is set to 24°C/75°F degrees or higher when the church is in use.

SILVER: Two-, five- and 10-year financial plans have been discussed to ensure that any possible upgrades to a high efficiency furnace or Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) have been considered. Windows are checked each year for draughts and sealing, caulking, and weather stripping is done promptly.

GOLD: A high efficiency furnace or ASHP has been installed for applications where technology exists. The walls, roof, and basement upgrades have been completed to ensure the church building is well insulated. If air conditioning is installed it has at least 15 SEER and 12.5 EER (thus meeting the requirements for the maximum **saveONenergy** grant).

10 Fair Trade, Organic and Local

BRONZE: Coffee is sourced from at least one of the following three labels - Organic; Rain Forest Alliance certified; or Fair Trade.

SILVER: More than one product is used from one of the above four alliances, e.g. tea/sugar/coffee.

GOLD: An educational event has been held that has explained the four categories of Fair Trade/organic. OR a local food event is held every year and/or local food has been used in four parish events throughout the year thus supporting local farmers.

11 Parish Grounds

BRONZE: No pesticides are used in the garden. Indoor plants are used to improve air quality. A rain barrel has been installed.

SILVER: Flower beds are mulched, and native plants, shrubs and trees have been planted to cut down on watering. Flowers and plants from the parish grounds and/or parishioner properties are used to make up floral arrangements for the church as often as possible. Parish has completed a Climate Justice Niagara Communion Forest Tree Inventory.

GOLD: A vegetable, pollinator or rain garden has been planted. Whoever is responsible for the parish grounds (paid or volunteer), is made aware of the theology behind using sustainable practices and they fully abide by the Best Practices for Grounds established by the Diocese. Recommendations from the Communion Forest Tree Inventory have been completed.

12 Paper

BRONZE: Wherever possible, paper is printed double-sided. Electronic bank transfers are available to reduce the use of weekly envelopes.

SILVER: All the paper used is Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC), Canadian Standards Association or Ecologo certified, and PCW (Post-Consumer Waste) recycled. Toilet paper and paper towels are made from unbleached and with as high a % post-consumer recycled paper as possible. A parish email list has been established to send newsletters and other parish information.

GOLD: Sunday bulletins have been reduced by weekly news emails to the email list, or a projector screen has been installed for services and announcements on Sunday.

13 Kitchen & Parish Events

BRONZE: Plastic and Styrofoam items are not used; paper cups are a better alternative. The dishwasher/sanitizer is only used when full and then on the most efficient program or cycle available.

SILVER: Reusable cloth or vinyl tablecloths or napkins are used. All dishes and cutlery used at Church are reusable. When available, local and seasonal food is used at parish events.

GOLD: An "eat local" meal has been held. Where possible, sugar, butter and cream are served in reusable containers and not as 'single serve' items.

14 Recycle & Reuse

BRONZE: Recycling facilities at church are available for dropping off at least two items (eyeglasses, postage stamps, ink cartridges, clothing, household goods, books etc.)

SILVER: Education about community recycling facilities and community agencies that accept gently used donations is offered through the parish bulletin and/or newsletter.

GOLD: A Parish Rummage Sale is held each year to give everything a second chance. Or other ways of recycling items have been initiated i.e., A little library; a clothing fair; or a community shop has been established at the parish.

15 Maintenance & Cleaning

BRONZE: No indoor pesticides or perfumed sprays are used. Only environmentally friendly de-icer is used in the winter.

SILVER: Where applicable environmentally friendly products are used for cleaning the church, offices and parish rooms. These might be from a recognized supplier or homemade remedies of vinegar and baking soda. Kitchen and bathroom cleaning practices should follow the Best Practices Sheet.

GOLD: A list of safe cleaning products, correct concentrations of bleach, and easy cleaning alternatives have been made available to everyone in the parish. Forty percent of the congregation has agreed to follow these cleaning practices at home.