

ECOfaith: Creating an Environmental Sustainability Program for Religious Communities

Project Team: Christine Chen, Stephanie Dolmat-Connell, Jessica Golman & Sarah Siedschlag
 Client: Ed Bastian, Program Director, ECOfaith
 Faculty Advisor: Oran Young

Background & Project Objectives



Second Baptist Church, Santa Barbara

ECOfaith was founded in 2008 by a diverse group of religious leaders in the Santa Barbara area as a way to bridge the gap between traditional spiritual teachings and modern environmentalism. Their mission was to:

1. Work towards energy efficiency and conservation in places of religious faith;
2. Educate and encourage members of their congregations to adopt environmentally sustainable lifestyles as a dimension of spiritual practice;
3. Partner with a broader community to create a healthy environment.

To accomplish these goals, ECOfaith conducted pilot projects with four different faith communities in the Santa Barbara area. We began our project by evaluating ECOfaith's efforts through interviews with pilot project leaders and a quantitative assessment of their program results and effectiveness.

Based on our analysis, we determined that developing an enhanced sustainability program could address many of our client's needs. This program, which we call *The ECOfaith Path of Sustainability*, would fulfill the following objectives:

1. To improve data collection and measurement of progress, the program structure should encompass a robust record-keeping framework.
2. To unite the worship building and education goals, efficiency retrofits and conservation measures should be linked with congregation education.
3. To make the most efficient use of ECOfaith's energy and resources, our tools should help participants prioritize the most cost-effective, high-impact, and relevant solutions.
4. To overcome limitations in funding, time and technical expertise, program tools should be easy to use, customizable, and include a variety of feasible, low-cost solutions.



Holy Cross Catholic Church, Santa Barbara

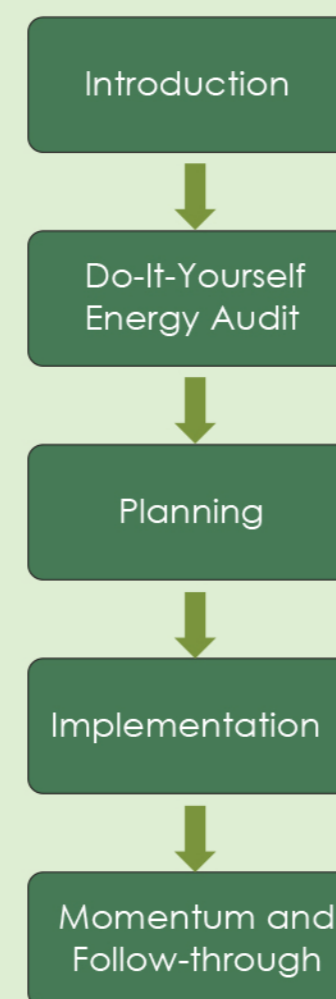
Revised Process

Original ECOfaith Process



We revised ECOfaith's original process to include the elements that worked well for the pilot projects while integrating several new components that would improve implementation and maintain momentum. We also incorporated usability and flexibility enhancements within each step to make our program accessible to any congregation wishing to join ECOfaith.

Revised ECOfaith Process



The modern environmental movement has endorsed a profound shift towards science, technology, and policy to solve important problems. Yet, environmentalists are increasingly aware that our current climate crisis will require more than just solutions based in hard science - these efforts must be accompanied by a widespread and deep-rooted change in individual norms and behavior.

Religious communities are well-positioned to shape environmental values due to their influence on personal moral development. With over three-quarters of Americans self-identifying as religious, and with more than 50,000 congregations in California, the potential for faith communities to guide environmental action is substantial.



ECOfaith Path of Sustainability



- A faith community embarking upon the ECOfaith Path of Sustainability would:
1. Organize congregation leadership into a united, committed group and form a Green Team tasked with oversight of environmental activities.
 2. Develop and implement an action plan for the congregation to pursue over a one-year period. This plan will include:
 - 6 sermons/messages that incorporate environmental themes;
 - 4 energy efficiency or conservation actions for the worship building;
 - 6 educational activities; and
 - Administration of the CEC Get Energized Pledge.
 3. Inform congregation of progress through a poster that displays an implementation timeline and status for each action.
 4. Interact with other ECOfaith congregations through regular meetings and "buddy" or mentorship pairings.

Resource Toolkit

Do-It-Yourself Energy Audit

We assembled a step-by-step energy audit procedure that addresses major areas of energy consumption in a worship building. The audit is split into sections designated by building system and consists of a two-part process: the building walk-through and post-walk-through energy analysis tool that includes resources for how to implement each recommended action. Our tool is user-friendly, regionally-relevant, high-impact, and time- and cost-efficient.

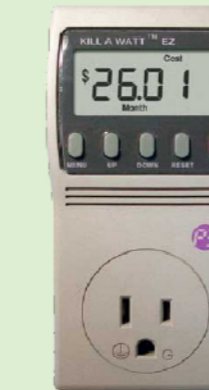


Cost-Benefit Analysis Tool

Actions with Upfront Cost	Annual GHG Reduction (lb CO ₂ e)	Low-End Upfront Cost (\$)	Annual \$ Saved on Utility Bill	Payback Period (years)
Replace incandescent light bulbs with CFLs or LEDs	4273	\$120	\$875	0.1
When replacing windows, install efficient double-paned, low-emissivity windows	2059	\$300	\$171	1.8
Seal drafts and plug air leaks around doors, windows and other spaces	1373	\$50	\$114	0.4

We developed an easy-to-use cost-benefit analysis tool that compares 23 greenhouse gas reducing actions ECOfaith participants can take. These recommendations range from actions that require an upfront investment to behavior-changing actions that have no financial cost. Given the wide range of groups that would potentially use our tool, our principal design objectives were simplicity and ease-of-use.

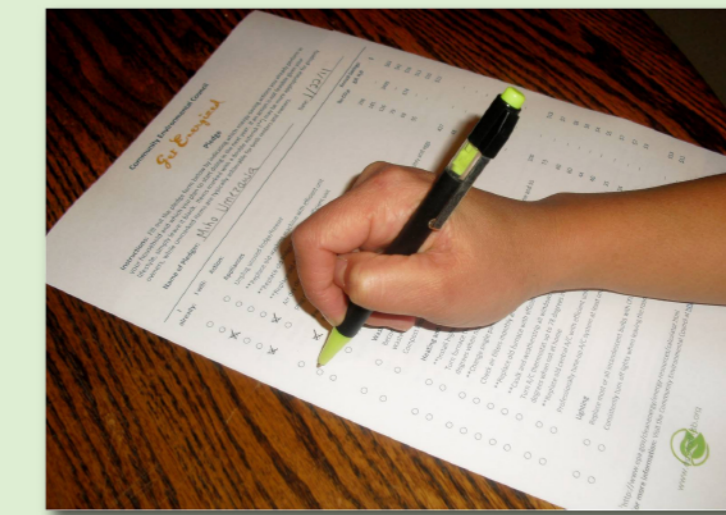
Educational Resources



We compiled a list of educational action items that were designed to inform participants both of a specific environmental problem and of steps an individual could take to address the issue. The overall list includes three categories of actions: hands-on activities, ideas for demonstration and discussion groups, and templates for passive signs or visual displays. Among the six required education items, congregations must complete at least one action from each of the three categories. Examples of the hands-on action items include: renting a Kill-a-Watt meter and demonstrating its usage, and hosting a bike-to-worship day.

Pledge

The Community Environmental Council Get Energized Pledge was an integral part of ECOfaith's original education program. To improve the effectiveness of the pledge, our program incorporates yearly follow-up into the Path of Sustainability process. We also developed a congregation-wide goal-setting tool that encourages increased congregation participation. Other enhancements we made were to improve the accuracy of the greenhouse gas emission and water estimates, and to adjust the pledge to appeal to ECOfaith communities' diverse demographics.



Recommendations for ECOfaith

- Initiate new pilot projects to test and refine the *Path of Sustainability*
- Focus on maintaining communication and momentum
- Explore additional ways of measuring impacts of behavior change
- Increase emphasis on reducing indirect greenhouse gas emissions
- Expand toolkit availability by broadening web presence
- Revisit organizational mission with new experience and tools in mind

Acknowledgements:

The James S. Bower Foundation; Zoe Elizabeth (Project Manager, UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability); Ivor John (Board Member, Community Environmental Council); Simone Pulver (Assistant Professor, UCSB Environmental Studies Department); Sangwon Suh (Assistant Professor, Bren School of Environmental Science & Management); Pastor Wallace Shepherd & Onja Brown-Lawson (Second Baptist Church); Reverend Lynn Bruer (Grace Lutheran Church); Father Ludo DeClippel (Holy Cross Catholic Church); Normah Abdul Halim, Iman Mehai & Afaf Turjoman (Islamic Society of Santa Barbara); Maureen Earls (Santa Barbara Parish); Noel Fuentes (St. Raphael Church); Rabbi Alyson Solomon (Congregation B'nai B'rith); Terre Sanitate & Drusilla van Hengel (Trinity Episcopal Church); Eric Hatton (Graphic Artist)

