

Cleanliness and Godliness

A Guide for Planning a Green Cleaning Fellowship Event

From the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Programs

Goals: To Worship together, Build support, and Witness!

A green cleaning activity at your church or in your home is an opportunity for fellowship and becoming better informed. It will build support in your church and community for environmental health and justice issues. As a host, you can help facilitate these goals by setting concrete expectations for yourself and by following the steps below.

STEP 1: Pick a date and time for your green cleaning fellowship

- Touch base with your church and church leadership team about availability and interest.
- Think about when your friends and neighbors are most available.
- Decide if you want to ask a friend or neighbor to be a co-host with you.
- Find a suitable location and make sure it is available for the date and time you want it.
- **Let NCC Eco-Justice staff know your plans so that we can support the event.** Contact the NCC Eco-Justice Program at 202-544-2350 or info@nccecojustice.org

If you're a student organizing an event on campus... you'll also want to do the following things:

- Book a room on campus.
- Send the event announcement out on every campus and community listserve you can think of—organizations, clubs, academic departments, etc.
- Hang flyers around campus.
- The day of the event, and a few days before, “table” outside a high-traffic area and pass out small flyers about the event to increase visibility and momentum.
- Make sure the event is included in your campus newspaper’s calendar.

STEP 2: Invite your guests

- **Make a guest list.** You should invite three times as many people as you want to show up. Think first of inviting those in your church community, and other houses of worship around you. Then consider inviting your neighbors, coworkers, and friends from clubs, organizations or the community around your church — this is a great opportunity for witness and outreach! You'll soon have a long list.
- Announcement the event at your church from the pulpit, in the bulletin, on an announcement screen, or in the church newsletter.
- Send an email or snail-mail invitation to your guest list **four to eight weeks before** the party date. Evite.com is another option for sending electronic invitations. You could also make a Facebook event page.

STEP 3: Follow-up invitation

- **Call your guests** to invite them personally—nothing works better than personal communication! Do this within one week of sending out the invitations. Ask a friend, family member, or co-host to help with the calls.
- Keep an RSVP list going, and update it as people reply. Also, keep track of friends who can't make it to the party but are interested in learning more about Christian environmental concerns.
- A personal email reminder to your invitees is also a great touch and will turn more people out for your event.

STEP 4: Prep the fellowship hour

- Decide if you want to serve snacks and beverages at the party. In addition to the materials in this Guide, you'll need:
 - o A copy of the [**Mindful Living: Human Health, Pollution, and Toxics**](#) resource (available free by download at <http://nccecojustice.org/resources.html#environmentalhealthresources> or in hard copy by emailing info@nccecojustice.org).
 - o A copy of the *Green Cleaning Toolkit*, a collection of products, methods, and recipes for non-toxic cleaning. You can download [**Cleanliness and Godliness: A Green Cleaning Toolkit**](#) at <http://nccecojustice.org/resources.html#environmentalhealthresources>
 - o Pens (for sign-in sheet)
 - o Appropriate worship materials (Sample songs can be found online at <http://www.nccecojustice.org/hymns.html>)
 - o Props for explaining toxic cleaners and safer alternatives
 - o Handouts for your congregation (optional)
 - o Other resources that may be of interest include:
 - Executive summary from the United Church of Christ's [**Race and Toxic Waste at Twenty**](#) report (Found at <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/TWART-light.pdf> if you wish).
 - NCC's resource on safe cosmetics, [**Made In the Image of God**](#) <http://nccecojustice.org/resources.html#environmentalhealthresources>
- Enlist a friend or five to help you out the night of the party. Roles include:
 - o Working the sign-in table to make sure everyone signs in
 - o Setting up the meeting room
 - o Leading in the opening and/or closing prayer
 - o Serving refreshments
 - o Providing props

STEP 5: Time for fellowship!

- Arrive early.
- Set up the room.
- Welcome your guests and thank them for coming.
- Make sure that everyone signs in with legible and complete contact information.
- Open with prayer and/or song.
- Follow your agenda (included in this kit).
- **Have fun!**

STEP 6: Fellowship event follow-up

- **Thank your guests** for coming with an email, hand-written note, or phone call.
- Thank your helpers and volunteers.
- A staff member from the NCC Eco-Justice Programs will call to hear how your party went. You can contact us directly at 202-481-6932, or at info@nccecojustice.org
- Help us record how successful your event was by mailing, emailing, or faxing the sign-in sheets, and any letters to:

National Council of Churches in Christ
 Eco-Justice Programs
 110 Maryland Ave NE, Suite 108
 Washington, DC 20002

Tips for success

- 1. Personally invite your guests.** Email is a great tool for getting the word out, but a phone-call or in-person invitation really makes a difference.
- 2. Leave Yourself Plenty of Time.** Make sure you have plenty of time for planning, promoting, and putting together the details of your fellowship!
- 3. Engage.** Make sure you take the time to engage your guests in the issue – bring them into discussion, and use the time for fellowship.
- 4. Worship!** Remember, you are there to celebrate God and God's Creation. Do that!

Green Cleaning Fellowship Timeline and Checklist

* rip this out and put it on your fridge!

Get started:

- ☪ Set a date and time for your fellowship gathering:
_____, _____, 200_ _____ am/pm to _____ am/pm
- ☪ Set a goal for attendance. Invite 3 times as many people as you want to come:
_____ x 3 = _____
(# of people you want to come) (# of people you should invite)
- ☪ Build your guest list. Think about:

Church Members	Family
Other faith communities/groups	Friends
Neighbors	Coworkers/Colleagues
Members of local clubs and organizations	Local chaplains or parish nurse groups
Church disabilities groups	Women's groups

Check with your church. See what the building availability is, and touch base with the pastor and relevant committees to get them involved.

Four to eight weeks before the fellowship event

- ☪ Mail/Email the invitation to your guest list.
- ☪ Announce the event in church – on Sunday, in the bulletin, and in the church newsletter.
- ☪ Touch base with the NCC's Environmental Health Initiative for resources and suggestions at info@nccecojustice.org or by calling 202-544-2350

Three weeks before the fellowship event

- ☪ **Call your guests.** Nothing works better than a personal invitation! When you call, emphasize why this is important to you and why you want them to come. You can start building your RSVP list by asking, "Can I count on you to come?"

Two weeks or 10 days before the fellowship activity

- ☪ Send a reminder email to your entire guest list.
- ☪ Let NCC Eco-Justice know how many guests you're expecting. info@nccecojustice.org.

Three days before the fellowship activity

- ☪ Call all your guests to confirm their attendance and get them excited about the fellowship activity. This can be just a quick reminder, or a message on their voicemail.
- ☪ Make sure you've got the food you want to serve. Consider making the event a "zero waste" activity by using real plates and cups.
- ☪ Make sure you have any necessary props.
- ☪ Double-check that the multimedia resources are ready to go.
- ☪ Review the agenda for the fellowship hour.
- ☪ Make sure your helpers are ready

Day of the event

- ☪ Arrive early so that you have plenty of time to set up, greet guests who arrive early, and attend to last minute details.
- ☪ Arrange the room to your liking.
- ☪ Set up a welcome table with nametags, sign-in sheets, pens, etc.

- ☪ Set up food/refreshment table.
- ☪ Welcome your guests!
- ☪ Follow the agenda.

After the event

- ☪ Thank your guests for coming with an email, hand-written note, or phone call.
- ☪ Mail sign-in sheets, member sheets, and any letters to National Council of Churches, Eco-Justice Programs, 110 Maryland Ave. NE, Suite 108, Washington, DC 20002.

Sample Agenda (2 hour event)

I. Welcome (20 Minutes)

- a. Guests sign in, write name tags, mingle – 10 minutes
- b. Host welcomes everyone and invites them to take a seat or stand in a circle for prayer. Open with the Call to Worship or the Prayer of the People found on page 10 of the *Mindful Living: Human Health, Pollution, and Toxics* resource.
- c. Host introduces her/himself and reviews agenda (Introductions, exploration of environmental health and faith, Bible study, green cleaning presentation, follow up actions, closing prayer) – 5 minutes
- d. Round of introductions -5 minutes

II. Defining environmental health and faith connections (20-25 minutes)

- a. Ask the group what they think environmental health is (possible ideas: health of Creation- water, air, land, plants, animals, insects, healthy environment to live, play, and work. Opposite of environmental health might be a dirty, polluted environment for Creation and for us. 5 minutes
- b. Assign people into pairs. Ask them to pick (or assign to each pair) one of the following Bible passages to discuss and consider what it means for environmental health (1 Corinthians 6:19; Mark 12:28-31 or Leviticus 19:18; Jeremiah 8:22; Ezekiel 47:12; Genesis 2:15). 5-10 minutes
- c. Bring the group back together and ask them to report on some of the connections they saw. -5 minutes

III. Green cleaning presentation (15-45 minutes)

- a. Use the Green Cleaning script to guide your presentation (15 minutes)
- b. Take time to make a few of the recipes and try them out at your home or church setting. (20-30 minutes)
- c. If there are questions you can't answer, that is ok. We are not meant to be experts but to help provide a moral perspective on the issue based on both the known science and our faith. You can also volunteer to write down questions and to contact the NCC's Environmental Health staff for answers. info@nccecojustice.org or 202-544-2350
- d. Is it snack time?

IV. Moving Forward (20 minutes)

- a. Do a brainstorm of individual actions, congregational actions, and community actions you can take to apply the knowledge you have gained about cleaning products and other toxics.

- b. This should be done in the order of—individual, congregational, community-- although some ideas may organically come up in each brainstorm in which case you could mark them on another sheet of paper as you go.
- c. Ideas for individual action- See *Mindful Living*, page 11. Also consider opening windows when cleaning so that fumes can evaporate.
- d. Ideas for congregational actions-See *Mindful Living* resource pages 9, 10, and 12. Also consider using green cleaning products, remodeling with carpet free of flame retardants, and replacing outmoded incandescent bulbs with compact florescent light bulbs (CFL's).
- e. Ideas for community action- Promote an educational forum on environmental health at your church and invite the wider community to attend. Contact NCC Eco-Justice Programs to learn about what local or federal legislation you or your congregation could support to protect children and other vulnerable populations from toxics. Conduct a letter writing campaign or letters to the editor campaign to ask for comprehensive chemical policy reform.

V. Join the Network! (5 minutes)

- a. Invite your guests to join the NCC Eco-Justice Programs network. This gives them access to all our resources, and keeps them up to date with Christian Creation care. Remind them of the other work we are doing (contact us for the most up to date information on this), and then remind them that all of this work can't be done without their support.
- b. On the sign-in sheet, participants can request updates from the NCC Eco-Justice Programs.

VI. Conclusion/Socializing

- a. Distribute "Cleanliness and Godliness: A Green Cleaning Toolkit" from the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Programs
- b. Close in prayer or with the Assurance of Pardon or Sending Forth found on page 10 of the *Mindful Living* resource.
- c. A time to mingle and socialize after the event may be appreciated.

Contact us!

National Council of Churches
Environmental Health Initiative
Info@nccecojustice.org
202-544-2350

Notes:

NCC Eco-Justice Programs

Green Cleaning Presentation Script

Welcome & Introductions

Thank you for coming to learn about safer cleaning. I will begin with a little bit of background on the problem of toxic chemicals in everyday products, and let you know what the National Council of Churches is doing to move us toward solutions.

The Problem

As people of faith, we are called to protect and serve God's Creation, and especially those who are most vulnerable among us. Yet, many everyday products contain toxic ingredients that are especially dangerous for children, communities of color, and pregnant women.

Does anyone here know children who suffer from asthma?

Do you know children with learning disabilities?

Who knows a relative or friend who has been diagnosed with cancer?

Toxics in the environment we inhabit can cause or exacerbate these conditions.

In the last fifty years, the chemical industry has grown exponentially. In the United States we currently use 80,000 synthetic chemicals, most of which are unregulated by the federal government. Now scientists are examining our body tissues and fluids, finding hundreds of industrial chemicals in our bodies. A recent study of the cord blood of newborns found that fetuses are exposed, on average, to over 200 chemicals. Many of these chemicals are known to be harmful. The cumulative effect of multiple substances is even more difficult to assess.

More and younger people are being diagnosed with cancer. In 1960, one in twenty women was expected to get cancer. Now it's one in three. That increase is not from changing genetics, better diagnosis, or longer life spans. Rather, it is linked with exposure to toxic chemicals that didn't exist prior to World War II.

This trend of rising cancer rates is being reported by the public health community as a health crisis. At the same time, we are experiencing increasing rates of asthma and other disorders.

As people of faith, we are called to be stewards of Creation, and to care for our bodies and the most vulnerable among us. These toxics represent one of the greatest threats to the health of God's people and the entirety of God's Creation.

The Solution

The National Council of Churches, consisting of Protestant denominations, Orthodox churches, historic black churches and peace churches, along with other members of the faith community, is partnering with community groups, environmental organizations, and the public health community to try to improve the laws that should protect us from harm.

The good news is that for many of the dangerous chemicals in use, there are safer alternatives.

And cleaning chemicals are a perfect example! In fact, not so long ago, what our parents or grandparents used were often MUCH safer alternatives.

What are some of the things you remember cleaning with when you were growing up? Things you saw your parents using?

(Answers: baking soda, borax, super washing soda, vinegar, etc)

BEGIN SHOW AND TELL (Use props here or pictures provided by the NCC):

Baking soda was one of the examples we heard, and it's a great one.

What kind of things do you use baking soda for?

(Answers: scrubbing bathroom sinks and other surfaces, deodorizing, cleaning out drains, etc)

Here's the chemical industry alternative- Soft Scrub (or see what is available around your house that may be similar. Look at the ingredients. Most of us have some of these products around our house!)

What's wrong with Soft Scrub? For starters, it contains formaldehyde. Formaldehyde is a known carcinogen, but manufacturers are not required to put it on the label.

Also, Soft Scrub contains chlorine bleach.

In Sweden, they're phasing out the use of chlorine completely because it's linked with all sorts of health problems, including asthma and respiratory problems. When we bleach things like paper, or use chlorine bleach products, dioxins can be a byproduct.

Dioxins are a class of extremely toxic chemicals known to cause cancer and a host of other health problems. There is no known safe level of dioxin.

And in addition, the Soft Scrub is in a plastic container.

What do we do with plastic? This particular bottle tells us that it CANNOT be recycled, so most likely it will be incinerated.

Incineration of plastics leads to contamination of our air and water, particularly when the plastic is polyvinyl chloride or PVC. When PVC is burned, it also produces dioxins. Eventually, dioxins can enter the food chain and get into our bodies and women's breast milk.

And finally, the Soft Scrub is much more expensive!

Communities of color and low-income communities bear a disproportionate share of the adverse impacts of pollution and suffer from increased health hazards compared to society as a whole. The location of hazardous waste facilities are disproportionately found in communities of color. Local reliance on fishing and hunting for food, and other factors contribute to the inequitable burden. The United Church of Christ's report, *Toxic Waste and Race at Twenty* found that people of color make up the majority of those living in host communities within three kilometers of the nation's hazardous waste facilities. (On the web at <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/TWART-light.pdf>) This is a matter of justice, and an issue of faith.

Arm and Hammer baking soda laundry soap versus Tide-like detergent. (Show and tell detergent versus safer alternative- have the audience guess which is which, and why)

Commercial Cleaners: Most of us will continue to use some commercial cleaners, and the good news is that there are more safe and effective off-the-shelf products available than before. Things to look for are:

- Natural and naturally derived ingredients from sustainable sources. You may need to ask, and this is good because it helps store managers know that there is an interest in nontoxic products.

- A minimum of mystery ingredients or chemicals of concern
- Packaging free of bisphenol-A, phthalates, and toxic inks. Again, you may need to ask.
- Biodegradable
- Recyclable packaging, wipes, and dryer sheets
- No chlorine bleach, phosphates, nitrates, or borates
- Concentrated products save energy, eliminate excess packaging
- No Phthalates, 1,4-Dioxane, Volatile organic cleaning compounds, Hydrochloric acid, Ammonia Sodium hydroxide, Butyl cellosolve Formaldehyde, Harmful fumes, xylene, sodium lauryl sulfate

The words “Organic” and “Natural” do not necessarily mean nontoxic on cleaning products—check the ingredients. Look for the words, “fragrance free.” (Some “unscented” products have fragrance to mask the chemical smell of the product.) The contents of “Fragrance” are a trade secret and may contain chemicals that studies have shown to be toxic. Also, if you find a brand that makes a safe laundry detergent, it does not follow that their dish soap is equally nontoxic. Sometimes, you can trust your nose. If a product smells “chemically,” if it burns your nose and eyes or gives you a headache, consider it suspect. However, this does not mean that a product that doesn’t bother you is safe. As you become savvier, you will find products that work for you. Again, the good news is that there are actually some products that can be found in major super markets or natural food stores that are less toxic or even honest to goodness non-toxic.

You can also look up a variety of products and ingredients on the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](http://www.householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov/index.htm) website at: <http://www.householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov/index.htm>

(Additional show and tell as time permits. See what is around your house and refer to the ***Cleaning as Good Stewards of Creation and of the Whole Body of Christ*** sheet. If you are holding the meeting in a place with Internet access, it would be possible to look up some products at the [Department of Health and Human Services website](http://www.householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov/index.htm).)

The National Council of Churches is building momentum to pass comprehensive legislation that would require manufacturers to test chemicals for safety before putting them on the market. It would encourage use of safer chemical alternatives, many of which already exist. In the meantime, the NCC is offering “**Mindful Living: Human Health, Pollution, and Toxics**,” a free twelve page booklet with further information on how toxic chemicals, ideas for actions in the church and home, sermon starters, worship materials, and bible study. (“**Mindful Living**” can be downloaded from <http://nccecojustice.org/resources.html>. You can order a hard copy from info@nccecojustice.org or call the NCC Eco-Justice staff at 202-544-2350.)

Move on to the brainstorm session or make your own cleaners using the recipes on the list.

Brainstorm session (See Moving Forward Section of the Agenda)

We can do something in our own congregation and in our personal lives about toxic chemicals. Let’s come up with some ideas of things we can do in our homes. (Brainstorm ideas on a sheet of paper)

Now let’s take time to think about what we might do in our congregations. (Brainstorm ideas on a sheet of paper)

Lastly, how might we engage the broader community or provide public witness to this issue? (Brainstorm on a sheet of paper. If there is time, plan how you will do some of these things).

Return to the agenda at item III. b

Green Cleaning Fellowship Hour Sign-in

Name	Address	Email	Phone	Request updates from the NCC? Y/N
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