

Proclamation of Sustainability
Frequently Asked Questions
Last edited, Earth Day 2020

1. **Q:** What's the point of the Proclamation? Does it actually do anything?

A: The Proclamation is a vision and commitment to the natural world that WSBC wants to see. It is not an implementation plan, but outlines the church's goals for the next few years. With congregational adoption, CCM is charged with developing an implementation plan and timeline for each goal, acknowledging that time and financial resources may limit how much can be accomplished by 2022 when the Proclamation is revisited.

2. **Q:** What are some strides that have already been made by other groups at WSBC already? What's already underway?

A: Creation Care Ministry is extraordinarily grateful for current and ongoing work by numerous individuals and groups at Watts Street to improve our church's sustainability. Thanks to groups such as Long Range Facilities Planning and Buildings and Grounds, Watts has already improved its energy efficiency by installing nearly 100% LED lightbulbs and developing a plan for improved heating and air systems, reduced onsite flooding through landscape grading, and has continued researching opportunities and conditions necessary for rooftop solar. These are just examples, but the progress and those engaged in it is extensive. CCM aims to connect these efforts and to build upon them. By adopting the Proclamation Watts Street can move forward in a systematic way, using its resources strategically to make the biggest differences in our activities where needed and where possible.

3. **Q:** The Proclamation says we will revisit these goals in 2022. What goals does CCM think are feasible in this short-term timeframe?

A: Short-term (by 2022):

Reduce landfill waste: In 2019, CCM began a Wednesday and Sunday meal composting program. Watts Administration also began replacing single-use dishes and cutlery with compostable items, including communion cups, as needed. In 2020, CCM plans to expand the composting program to all church user groups and all meals. We believe WSBC can move 100% to compostable or reusable items by 2022, and that a subsequent goal will look at reducing waste even further.

Continue to pursue opportunities to improve the environmental sustainability of WSBC: Thanks to some of the progress and projects already underway, CCM believes the church can make meaningful progress in transitioning its electricity use to renewable sources, to reduce urban heat, and to increase plant-based meals at meetings. This includes exploring renewable energy purchasing, planting shade trees, increasing and improving native landscaping and other initiatives.

Ask and help our partners to respect our climate-conscious policies: In 2020, CCM will work with church staff to incorporate zero-waste and reduced-emission language into church user-group agreements and contracts.

Long-term (after 2022):

As building needs and uses change, review WSBC land use decisions: long-term, CCM – partnered with Long Range Facilities Planning and Buildings and Grounds – sees opportunities to make changes to building elements such as HVAC systems, as well as parking lot replacement with porous pavement and other green infrastructure.

Explore creative ways to offset the effect of fossil fuel emissions where WSBC cannot reduce or eliminate them: this goal requires long term behavioral and systems change. CCM is committed to deep exploration of this challenge, and creative solutions at the levels required to make system-wide changes. This will likely include community partnerships and some trial and error to find a successful way forward.

4. **Q:** Why can't WSBC do our own composting instead of paying for a truck to come pick it up?

A: Composting in an industrial facility like CompostNOW allows more items to be composted, including meat and dairy, more paper products, and plant-based cutlery and plates/bowls. Home (non-industrial) composts cannot reach the temperatures needed, nor can it introduce the bacteria (bio-digesters) necessary to process these tough-to-break-down items¹. Onsite composting would require a goal steward to maintain the compost, turn it regularly, and manage the brown and green waste ratio., Commercial composting allows us flexibility to meet church needs without overextending volunteer resources.

5. **Q:** Who would monitor the stormwater runoff?

A: WSBC pays a stormwater fee based on the impervious surfaces (rooftops, parking lots, porch) of the church properties². Reducing the impervious surfaces results in a lower fee and cost savings to the church. Another way to monitor changes in stormwater runoff is to install what are called “stormwater best management practices” or BMPs. These can include native landscaping, replacing impervious pavement with pervious pavers, or re-directing building downspouts (currently connected directly to the city's storm sewer) to a rain barrel or cistern. At WSBC, a rain barrel could capture rainfall for irrigation and watering of plants. Here's an example of how the City of DC helps property owners like churches reduce their stormwater fee through BMP installations via the RiverSmart Communities program: <https://doee.dc.gov/service/get-riversmart>. The steward of this goal would need to research local grant programs that might subsidize the purchase and installation of stormwater management tools like rain barrels and native landscaping.

Beyond the city stormwater fee, WSBC doesn't really know how much stormwater runoff its property is responsible for. Some time ago, grading and extensive work was done on the playground area to mitigate surface flooding. Understanding stormwater runoff patterns and potential solutions could be a good project for a Boy Scout, or even students at Duke's Nicholas School for the Environment, through a class, summer internship or Master's Project.

¹ <https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2016/04/commercial-or-backyard-composting/>

² <https://durhamnc.gov/814/Stormwater-Utility-Fee>

6. **Q:** What does “purchase or install renewable energy resources on church premises” entail? How would that be budgeted?

A: First, CCM acknowledges the work that other church committees have already completed to assess the feasibility of rooftop solar panels at the church, and are grateful to these groups for keeping the conversation active. From their work, we know that rooftop solar may be an option sometime in the future, but the church should consider short-term solutions to reduce the electricity it receives from fossil fuel sources.

Like the question around meat consumption, electricity consumption from fossil fuel sources has social as well as environmental justice implications. Duke Energy coal-fired power plants line the coast of North Carolina, and require coal ash ponds to store coal waste once it’s burned. This coal ash is toxic and the ponds leak, and are vulnerable to overflowing during hurricanes and other intense storms. This pollutes habitat for animals and plants, and water supplies for nearby residents who are at the frontlines of environmental justice.

In Durham, Duke Energy has a monopoly on the electricity market, so the church cannot simply change vendors to a renewable energy company. This impacts how any progress might be budgeted. For instance, if the church undertakes solar panel installations, this would likely be budgeted with buildings and grounds, and would require both an upfront investment and some cost savings in the actual electricity used. Further, the church is in a Durham Historic District which governs changes to the building façade and roof aesthetics. Other implementation alternatives exist, though.

To actually reduce our overall energy consumption, regardless of its source, efforts are already underway. The church made great strides in becoming efficient especially in replacing the lighting with nearly 100% LED bulbs and, in Fall 2019, The main sanctuary HVAC system was replaced with a much more efficient unit. As funds are available, there are opportunities to replace the other HVAC systems with more efficient units. This is led by Buildings and Grounds and Long Range Facilities Planning teams.

Implementation Options:

- A. Though Duke Energy is the only available electricity provider in North Carolina, WSBC can make an immediate change by paying its electricity bills through Arcadia Power or NC Green Power³. Both organizations are intermediaries who connect conventional electricity use with renewable energy projects around the country. The intermediary supports renewable energy sources which contribute to the overall electrical grid and by participating, the church in effect “offsets” the energy it uses from Duke Energy. In some cases, it is free to “replace” 50% of the church’s electricity use with renewable sources, and requires a small surcharge to go 100% renewable energy. North Carolina’s energy markets are regulated, and is monopolized by Duke Energy. Thus, any intermediary does not directly supply power, instead it connects an individual’s power use to renewable energy sources, which break down into Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs), to demonstrate a demand for renewable energy sources.

³ <https://www.ncwarn.org/wp-content/uploads/Arcadia-Power.pdf>

This demand serves two purposes: Duke Energy is required by North Carolina to source some of its energy from renewables. Second, sourcing electricity from renewable sources demonstrates a demand for renewables that is greater than the current level required by law, giving the legislature and Public Utilities Commission (who regulates Duke Energy) information to determine if and how to increase subsidies or requirements for increased renewables.

- B. WSBC can look into collective purchasing opportunities like the Community Purchasing Alliance⁴ to build collective purchasing power that reduces the cost of renewable energy investments. Another benefit of a collective solution is that beyond sharing costs across a large group, it extends the benefit of renewable energy access to other houses of worship and community groups with whom WSBC partners. Existing networks like DCIA or Durham CAN could easily be used as a platform to share this opportunity and investment.
- C. One additional longer term alternative to promote solar energy would be to partner with community groups whose property is more amenable to solar panel installation. Possible partners could be other houses of worship, schools, or nonprofits. The result could be a joint venture by sharing whatever power would be generated. This would likely be a complex arrangement that would require careful planning and contracting.

- 7. **Q:** To reduce the urban heat island, can WSBC consider edible landscaping, such as fruit trees, herbs, and gardens?

A: Yes! Edible landscapes are a great idea (one example is here⁵) and one that CCM is excited to explore. Edible landscaping would require a dedicated steward to manage fruit litter (fallen fruit, leaves, etc.), weeds and the regular harvest of food. To extend the land resources that WSBC owns to others, CCM also supports the idea of a creative garden space, that can serve as a demonstration garden or education area to teach our younger congregants about sustainable food systems. This would be another great project for a Boy Scout or youth.

- 8. **Q:** If the church's goal is to stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable by reducing the church's reliance on fossil fuels, how does the goal to "offer plant-based alternatives to meat-based meals in equal measure" fit in?

A: Concerns about damage to the climate through the release of greenhouse gases intersect with other social and environmental justice concerns. The production, transportation and consumption of meat is one example. In North Carolina, hogs and chickens are raised in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), which raises a high number of animals in a small plot of land. This impacts the animal's life before they are processed for meat. It also impacts the lives of neighboring communities who must deal with the smell from these farms, as well as the danger of living near waste lagoons (where the animals waste is consolidated before it's sprayed on fields as fertilizer) which can flood during storms (which are increasing in number and intensity thanks to climate change) and pollute the community's water supply.

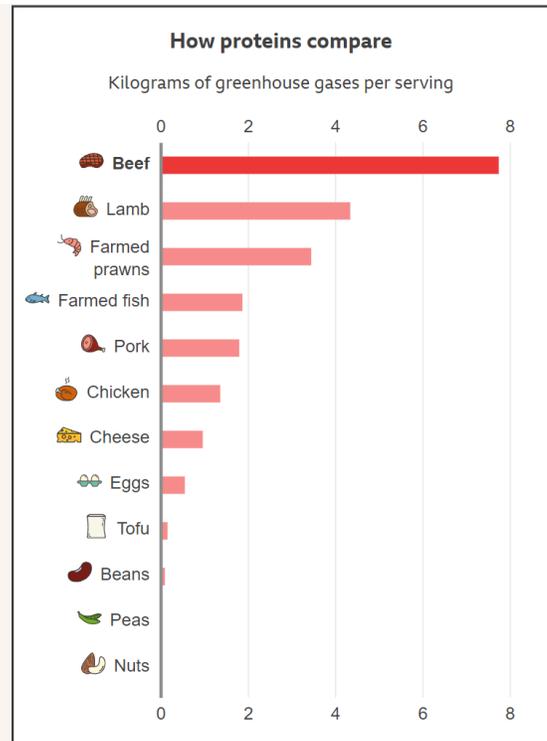
⁴ cpa.coop

⁵ <https://www.briegrows.com/products/the-foodscape-revolution>

Further, livestock is the world's largest user of land resources – 1/3 of land available to grow food is used to feed animals⁶. Animals are fed a mixture of grain that is grown elsewhere in the US, requiring removal of forests in many cases, and fossil fuels to transport this grain to livestock. Besides the concerns about transportation emissions, this land could be used to feed more people, or it could be used for renewable energy production like solar and wind farms. Animals are processed into meat products and shipped all over the world. About one quarter of the US pork production is exported to more than 10 countries. This global transportation system, along with the transport of meat from the farm to our supermarket, all adds up to greenhouse gas emissions.

So, given the impact on our Earth of meat production, transportation and consumption, does this goal resonate with the congregation? And, is the congregation on board with a zero-emission endeavor? If no, then we should revisit the goal itself. If yes, we need to reduce meat consumption. Let's work together on the details for how to implement this goal in a way that makes sense.

⁷Implementation Options: Currently, around 10% of the meals prepared for Wednesday night supper are plant-based. CCM proposes, in partnership with church staff and others tasked with implementing church meals, that WSBC offer one fully plant-based supper per month. This would increase WSBC's yearly Wednesday night plant-based offerings to 33%, which CCM believes is a very strong goal to reach in the first year of implementation. Further, CCM proposes that when folks sign up for Wednesday night meals each Fall, we invite congregants to commit to "Meatless Mondays" as well. Extending this invitation and gathering responses in a systematic way will allow WSBC to track progress and develop ideas to support congregant goals.



⁶ [smithsonianmag.com/travel/is-the-livestock-industry-destroying-the-planet-11308007/](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/is-the-livestock-industry-destroying-the-planet-11308007/)

⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-46459714>