

WASTE TOOLKIT

REDUCE, REUSE AND RECYCLE RELIGIOUSLY



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INTRODUCTION

One of the first things Faith in Place Green Team Coaches are asked when helping establish Green Teams at Houses of Worship is how to start a recycling program. Sometimes we're asked about reducing paper, plastic, and Styrofoam waste within a congregation. This is an excellent first step, and can often be an "easy win" in your House of Worship with measureable success.

But this can be tricky depending on your municipality: some cities have robust local recycling programs, and some have none at all. As you'll see in this toolkit, some houses of worship respond to this need by becoming a community recycling center, creating opportunity for community outreach and ministry and working for environmental justice. For others, educating their members on the waste crisis and the importance of reducing, reusing, and recycling goes a long way. So whether you're a waste novice or expert, learning about your waste and how to be better stewards of creation is a great step in your Green Team journey.

We've developed this toolkit to help educate Green Team members and members of your House of Worship on how to be smarter about waste. We'll share what some of our statewide Green Teams have done successfully in their Houses of Worship. We'll examine our consumption habits and outline some creative ways to foster a culture of conservation and environmental justice within your House of Worship.

COMPLETE A TRASH AUDIT

The first step in identifying ways to improve on how to deal with waste is to take a look at your actual trash. This is a simple process and can yield helpful data, allowing you to create a baseline of waste and celebrate when your House of Worship makes successful reductions. You'll be able to see what types of waste you generate and the amount, and whether or not your current waste management strategies and education of the members of your House of Worship need to be updated.

Adapted from: <https://www.goevergreenllc.com/how-to-conduct-a-waste-audit/>

How to do a waste audit:

1. **Plan the waste audit and determine the study area** – If you have an established Green Team, gather support and enlist volunteer help from them. If not, 2-3 interested people should be enough. Don't forget to loop in your cleaning staff, if you have them.

Decide what areas you want to study and when. Is your Sunday coffee hour a big waste producer? What about the weekly community meal for your youth or senior group? How about the bulletins produced at each worship service? All the trash? Just some of the trash? You get to decide.

Some church groups may be concerned or threatened with your proposed work, especially those that might produce a lot of waste. Their feelings of guilt or shame might make moving forward difficult, especially if they are feeling to blame for all the waste. Make sure to give them a heads up about the audit and explain your intentions: getting a baseline of the amount and kinds of waste we produce so we can make improvements, as this aligns with our faithful call to care for creation.

2. **Collect the waste to be examined** – Do this with care and proper protection. If you have cleaning staff, you can have them collect the waste, but you must give them specific instructions on the type of waste and location to collect for the audit, as well as a location to store it until you can sort it. Gather up the garbage bags from the areas you have decided to audit, such as the office, sanctuary, fellowship hall, and classrooms.
3. **Sort the waste by category** – It's best to do this in a timely manner so no mess or smells are produced. You and your team can sort the waste to begin to create an analysis of the types and quantities of waste that your organization is generating. You might consider photographing the waste collected. This makes your findings easier to present later to your House of Worship. You can divide up the data using the tracking sheet in this toolkit, or you can use your own categories.
4. **Analyze the waste data** – You can measure by the number of trash bags created or by weight. If you decide to measure by weight, don't forget a scale! You'll then estimate the percentage and volume of each category in your total waste. Use the tracking sheet on the next page or make your own and tally your results.

Once the audit has been completed it is important to take detailed notes to learn about any trends in your House of Worship's waste habits and report these back to the congregation.

Material Type	% of total trash (estimate)	Volume/weight (estimate)	Currently recycled?	NOTES
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OFFICE AREA:

Office paper				
Envelopes				
Junk mail				
File folders/manila envelopes				
Magazines/catalogs				
Newspapers				
Phonebooks/books				
Shredded documents				
Printer ink cartridges				
Batteries				
Electronics				
Other office items:				

KITCHEN/FELLOWSHIP HALL:

Aluminum cans				
Glass bottles				
Tin cans				
Plastic bottles				
Juice boxes/pouches				
Paper milk cartons				
Styrofoam food packages / to-go containers				
Plastic bags				
Plastic cutlery				
Aluminum foil				
Plastic straws				
Packaging/paperboard				
Paper cups				
Paper plates				
Paper towels/napkins				
Food waste				
Cleaning supplies				
Other kitchen items:				

Material Type	% of total trash (estimate)	Volume/weight (estimate)	Currently recycled?	NOTES
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SANCTUARY:

Paper				
Plastic bottles				
Styrofoam coffee cups				
Paper coffee cups				
Food waste				
Other sanctuary items:				

CLASSROOM:

Paper				
Plastic bottles				
Styrofoam coffee cups				
Paper coffee cups				
Food waste				
Other classroom items:				

UTILITY:

Light bulbs				
Fluorescent tubes				
Light ballasts				
LED lights				
Solvents/chemicals				
Paint				
Other utility items:				

- Don't worry about figuring out the exact percentages of materials, focus on obvious high-generation materials and patterns you can see.
- Don't be overwhelmed by the categories and recording all the details. The importance of the exercise is to provide a picture of your House of Worship's waste stream that will contribute to your waste prevention and recycling plan.

Adapted from Northeast Recycling Council: https://nerc.org/documents/waste_audit_sort_sheets.doc

THE THREE R'S?

"About 4.5 pounds. That's the amount of trash—banana peels, frayed toothbrushes, busted electronics, plastic wrappers, greasy pizza boxes—that the average American generates every day. And it adds up quickly: In 2014 alone, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's most recent available data, we collectively tossed 258.5 million tons of stuff.

Fortunately, not all the items we discard end up in landfills; we recycle or compost more than one-third of our trash. In 2014 this saved carbon emissions equivalent to the yearly output of 38 million passenger cars. But we could be doing so much more. For example, we recycle only 14 percent of all plastic packaging. And we toss about 40 percent of all our food, composting only about 5 percent of that load, according to the EPA."

- Taken from: <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/reduce-reuse-recycle-most-all-reduce>

Everyone has probably heard of the "Three Rs"—Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle—but what do they mean and how can they be applied in your House of Worship? And are there more things we can do? To start, we need to revise our understanding of these terms and add a few more. They should not carry equal weight, as we may have been led to understand.

RETHINK: This is the most important step, and also the hardest. Ask yourself, "do I really need this item?" This step can lead to true heart and behavior change and can become a spiritual discipline.

REFUSE: Refuse to purchase single use plastics like straws, water bottles, take out containers, and other unnecessary packaging. When others see us making these choices, they might feel more empowered to do the same.

REDUCE: Simply put, we need to consume less. We "overshoot" what we consume vs. what the Earth can produce every year, usually by late July or August. To continue living the way we live now, we'd need 1.75 planet Earths! As people of faith, this rampant overconsumption should be a call to action.

REUSE: Reuse means that an item is used several times before going in the trash. This would include bringing reusable shopping bags to the store, but it could go even further into repairing old or broken items. As people of faith, a desire to care for what we have before consuming more should inspire us.

REPURPOSE: Thrifting clothes and home goods, doing toy swaps with a neighbor, or crafting holiday gifts out of unused or recycled materials are all ways we can repurpose. People of faith can use a spirit of creativity to model the values of thrift and conservation.

RECYCLE: Although 75% of America's waste is recyclable, we only recycle around 30% of it. There is much education to be done here in our houses of worship! As people of faith, leaving a healthy planet for future generations should move each of us to action.

ROT: In a word: compost. A high percentage of the food in the U.S. gets wasted, but we can use some of that food for good if we start a compost system at our house or worship or utilize a composting service. As people of faith, we should work to connect uneaten food with those in need, reflect on injustice in our food systems and work for equity, and learn how to sink carbon dioxide from our atmosphere into our compost pile.

RESOURCES:

There Is No Away: <http://thereisnoaway.net/>

The Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Waste Hierarchy: <https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/reduce-reuse-recycle.php>

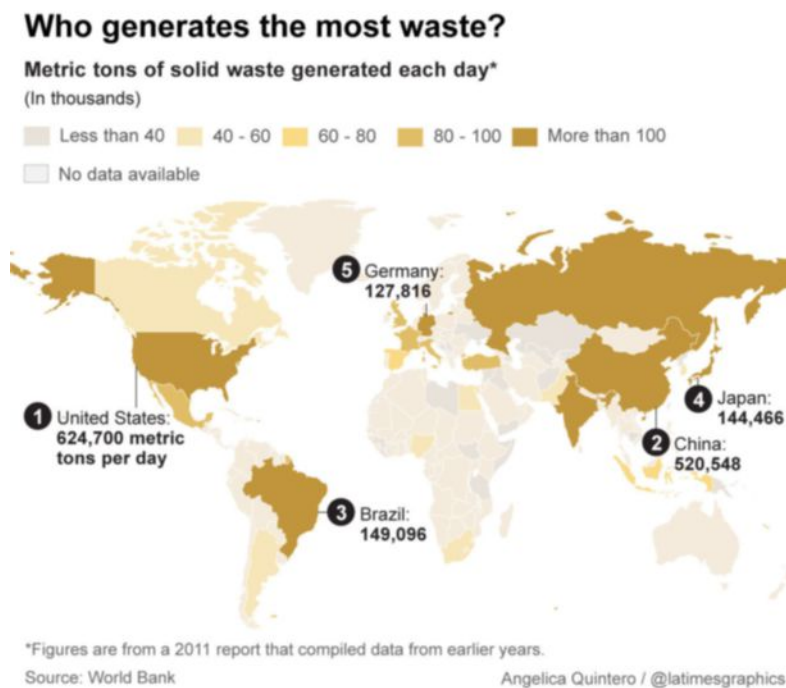
Earth Overshoot Day: <https://www.overshootday.org/>

How to Start Recycling at Church: <http://www.flourishonline.org/2010/09/how-to-start-recycling-at-church/>

'Waste' Examines The Global And Local Afterlife of Recyclables: <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/12/760128833/waste-examines-the-global-and-local-afterlife-of-recyclables>

America's new recycling crisis, explained by an expert:

<https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2019/4/2/18290956/recycling-crisis-china-plastic-operation-national-sword>



"When it comes to creating waste, no one tops the U.S. And when it comes to recycling waste, well, the U.S. is one of the worst, according to a new analysis by the English risk management firm Verisk Maplecroft.

The numbers for the outsized contribution to the global waste crisis by the U.S. are staggering. The U.S. makes up only four percent of the world's population, but produces 12 percent of the world's global waste. By contrast, China and India make up more than 36 percent of the world's population and produce 27 percent of global municipal solid waste, as The Guardian reported."

- Taken from: <https://www.ecowatch.com/us-waste-2639072301.html>

What has brought us to a waste crisis in the United States?

In a word, disconnection and injustice. We consume at incredible levels without thought of what will happen after we're gone, and we discard our waste into neighborhoods of the poor and people of color. We fail to see how our actions affect those in other countries or in future generations. This is not only a garbage crisis but a moral crisis.

RESOURCES:

Where does your plastic go? Global investigation reveals America's dirty secret:

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jun/17/recycled-plastic-america-global-crisis>

The world's trash crisis, and why many Americans are oblivious: <https://www.latimes.com/world/global-development/la-fg-global-trash-20160422-20160421-snap-htmlstory.html>

Waste crisis: Americans create 3x more waste than global average:

<https://www.ecowatch.com/us-waste-2639072301.html>

Sierra: The US Recycling System is Garbage:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/2019-4-july-august/feature/us-recycling-system-garbage>

Environmental Justice: It's More Than Waste Facility Siting by Robert D. Bullard

Social Science Quarterly Vol. 77, No. 3 (September 1996), pp. 493-499

https://www.jstor.org/stable/42863495?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

The Environmental Justice Movement:

<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/environmental-justice-movement>

BOOKS:

Green Church: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rejoice! by Rebekah Simon-Peter

Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming, edited by Paul Hawkin

RETHINK AND REUSE

Addressing climate change by reducing our carbon footprint is a moral responsibility as Khualfa al-ard – caretakers, stewards, and guardians of the earth. We must care for all of creation. Reshaping our patterns of consumption and conservation not only help preserve the planet for us and our future generations, but also improve overall public health and economic prosperity, particularly for the vulnerable amongst us who are most severely impacted by climate change.

- Dr. Azhar Azeez, President, Islamic Society of North America from COP 23 Interfaith Climate Statement

Our consumption habits are a matter of faith. We cannot fill emptiness with things, and we should look to our faith traditions to find ways to create deep connection with our earth, our Creator, and each other. We cannot consume our way out of the climate crisis—we must begin to rethink and refuse the items we thoughtlessly consume every day.

That begins by rethinking our actions. We must ask ourselves, do I really need all this stuff? Is there another use for this item I'm about to purchase? Can this item even be recycled? By investing more time in understanding our personal consumption habits, we will become increasingly self-aware of our effect on the environment. This self-awareness may influence our behavior, values, and consumption habits. It may even become a spiritual discipline.

The most direct method of reducing the amount of waste we create is by refusing to consume. This does not mean we stop generating trash altogether but rather stop consuming particular products, perhaps single-use plastics or other items we feel do more harm than good.

There are other reasons why people may choose to make a conscious effort to refrain from buying certain products: its quality, its short shelf life, its inability to be repaired, the company's ethics, the chemicals involved, and so on. Whatever the rationale behind declining product purchases, the result is less trash. Making these decision takes practice, and this lifestyle operates from the value of learning to do without or making do with what you have.

Here are some tips on how to rethink and reuse:

- Buy only what is needed, and avoid impulse shopping
- Buy reusable or refillable items
- Buy in bulk or economy-size, which reduces packaging
- Avoid single-serving sizes
- Choose products with less packaging
- Write letters to your favorite stores asking them to reduce their packaging on produce or other items

RESOURCES:

The Life Changing Magic of Making Do:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-life-changing-magic-of-making-do/>

The Story of Stuff: <https://storyofstuff.org/>



The Church of the Good Shepherd Green Team in Carbondale makes stainless steel straws available for use in their House of Worship and gives them away to visitors.

REDUCE

This is the best and fastest way to improve your waste habits in your House of Worship, and is often where Green Teams get started or ask for help. Because recycling is not always an option in communities, the best path to waste reduction is to not create waste in the first place! What does this look like in houses of worship?

- Use reusable cups at coffee hour:
 - Many houses of worship already have coffee cups in their kitchens, so stop buying disposables!
 - Find a process to wash your cups after use: get a dish washing committee together, or ask people to rinse their own. Better yet, bring your own travel cup from home.
- Wash dishes during social functions instead of using disposable products:
 - Have Green Team members (or other groups) take turns washing dishes
 - Paper and Styrofoam products use lots of water and energy in their production. When you opt out of purchasing these items, you immediately reduce your carbon footprint.
- Want to inspire your community to use reusable dishes and silverware at their own events? Consider renting out sets of dishes for community use.
- Are you looking for advocacy opportunities? Consider writing or supporting a ban on Styrofoam or plastic shopping bags in your municipality.

- Make your House of Worship a “No Bottled Water” zone. Instead, encourage members to bring and refill their own bottles.
- Use stainless steel or silicone straws
- Use paper with a high recycled content
- Send newsletters digitally when possible. This reduces the amount of paper you use and ultimately throw away/recycle.
- Utilize screens and projectors instead of paper bulletins at worship services when possible.

RESOURCES:

Plastic Free July: <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>

Wait, do I really have to wash dishes all the time? <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/2019-4-july-august/ask-mr-green/there-earth-friendly-disposable-dishware>

More on the hidden costs of Styrofoam:

<https://greendiningalliance.org/2016/12/the-real-cost-of-styrofoam/>

More on the impacts of paper products:

<https://sciencing.com/environmental-effect-of-paper-plates-5478412.html>



GO ZERO WASTE

"The simple answer: We aim to send nothing to a landfill. We reduce what we need, reuse as much as we can, send little to be recycled, and compost what we cannot.

The less simple answer: It's really about redefining the system. We currently live in a linear economy where we take resources from the earth and then dump them in a giant hole in the ground. The goal of zero waste is to move to a circular economy where we write trash out of existence. The circular economy mimics nature in that there is no trash in nature.

Instead of discarding resources, we create a system where all resources can be resumed fully back into the system."

- From goingzerowaste.com



Committing to be a Zero Waste House of Worship is a bold step. The good news is that you don't have to do it perfectly, only commit yourself and your members to learn more about your consumption habits and take steps toward meaningful, measureable change.

- From <https://permies.com/t/107888/ungarbage/waste-imperfectly>

Here are some resources to get you started:

RESOURCES:

Zero Waste Cities: At the Forefront of the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda:

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/zero-waste-cities-at-the_b_12029704

Zero Waste Church: <http://www.zerowastechurch.org/>

Zero Waste and Islam: <https://muslimmatters.org/2018/03/22/a-zero-waste-lifestyle-is-an-islamic-way-of-life/>

Zero Waste and Judaism: <https://hazon.org/seal/greening-case-studies/waste-reduction/>

Zero Waste Home: <https://zerowastehome.com/>

Films:

Minimalism: <https://minimalismfilm.com/>

No Impact Man: <https://www.impactpartnersfilm.com/films/no-impact-man>



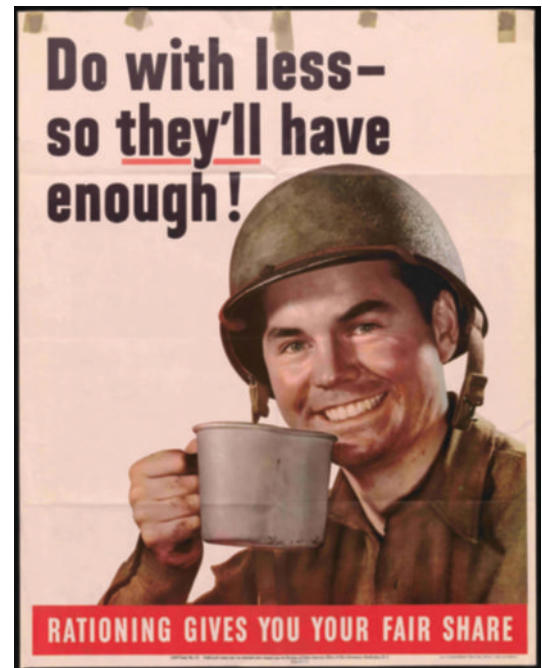
REUSE & REPURPOSE

“Use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without.” This was a common slogan used during WWII. Sometimes the criticism Green Teams hear when trying to tackle waste is that it’s just too hard or too much work to pay attention to our consumption habits. But we’ve done it before as a matter of national security, and we can do it again as a matter of social justice.

So how can Houses of Worship introduce reuse and repurposing to their members?

- Looking for a giveaway? Put your church name and logo on reusable shopping bags, travel silverware sets, or travel coffee mugs. Not only will this encourage your house of worship to use these items, but it will make a statement to your community that your House of Worship values conservation.
- Have some handy members in your House of Worship? Put together a tool lending library. You could include yard/gardening tools as well and help beautify your community. You may want to check with your church insurance agent about liability coverage beforehand.
- Want to engage with your neighbors? Host a fix-it clinic where your handy members help others repair their household items.
- Have any talented seamstresses? Help teach House of Worship and/or community members simple sewing skills to make their clothes last longer, and stay out of the landfill.
- Host a clothing or toy swap! House of Worship and/or community members can bring items to your facility and trade for what they need.
- Who doesn’t love a good rummage sale? One person’s trash is another person’s treasure. Any funds collected can go towards the House of Worship’s Green Team ministry.
- Douglas Avenue UMC in Springfield started a ministry of reusing and refinishing old furniture, employing at-risk women and teaching them job skills. This program is an excellent example of how embracing the concepts of reuse and repurposing can lead to amazing and unexpected things! Check out Wooden It Be Lovely: <https://www.woodenitbelovelydaumc.com/>

Over 11 million tons of recyclable clothing, shoes, and textiles make their way into landfills each year.



- From <https://1940s.org/on-the-homefront-war-rationing>



Photo from our Green Team at Grace Lutheran Church and School in River Forest during their rummage sale.

RESOURCES:

Fast fashion—used clothes are the way to go: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jun/17/recycled-plastic-america-global-crisis>

7 Reasons Why Reusing and Repurposing is Better Than Recycling: <https://www.onegreenplanet.org/lifestyle/why-reusing-and-repurposing-is-better-than-recycling/>

My Repurposed Life: <https://www.myrepurposedlife.com/>

Films:

Reuse! Because We Can't Recycle the Planet: <http://www.reusedocumentary.com/>

The True Cost: <https://truecostmovie.com/>

Waste plastic is a commodity, and recycling brokers search across the US and abroad for buyers who will want to melt the plastic down, turn it into pellets, and make those pellets into something new. Low oil prices mean it's cheaper right now to manufacture new plastic than recycle used plastic. And China — which purchased \$10.8 million of our scrap metal and paper in 2011 and about \$5 million of our cast-off plastic in 2014 for recycling — has started rejecting shipments of US recyclables in recent years, partly because of contamination.

So how can you learn how to recycle?

- The best way is to take a field trip to your local recycling center. These centers are happy to clear up misinformation and help you plan how best to recycle in your House of Worship. They can tell you what can and cannot be recycled in your area and how to prepare recyclables for sorting at their facility.
- Don't have recycling in your area? Consider this a possible ministry opportunity! Effingham Centenary United Methodist Church's Green Team did just that, and they continue to be one of the only places in their county where you can take your recyclables. Read more about their mission here: https://www.effinghamdailynews.com/news/local_news/church-provides-community-with-a-recycling-option/article_5be8a810-3d6b-11e5-a462-879b87fa1b3a.html

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Here are a few other ways you can recycle in your House of Worship:

- Recycle weekly bulletins: put labeled receptacles at the exits and remind your congregants to place their used bulletins in on their way out.
- Terracycle: Many items cannot be recycled at your local recycling center, like juice pouches. Companies like Terracycle make it easy for you to collect these hard to recycle items and send them to their facility for recycling. Consider becoming a Terracycle drop off site for your community. Go to <https://www.terracycle.com> to learn more.
- Perhaps you've seen local schools or civic groups collecting plastic bottle caps to be remade into park benches or picnic tables. Why not get in on the fun? Partner with a local group to be a drop off point, or start a project of your own! Check out Green Tree Plastics' ABC Promise Partnership (<https://www.greentreeplastics.com/abc-program/>) for more information.



The Interfaith Green Partners have a float each year at the Arlington Heights 4th of July parade...at the very end. Green Team members pick up recyclables along the parade route, reminding the community to be good neighbors and dispose of their waste properly. And they have fun doing it!

RESOURCES:

Americans are really bad at recycling. But only because we're not trying very hard:

<https://www.greenamerica.org/rethinking-recycling/americans-are-really-bad-recycling-only-because-were-not-trying-very-hard>

50 Recycling and Trash Statistics That Will Make You Think Twice About Your Trash:

<https://www.rubiconglobal.com/blog-statistics-trash-recycling/>

SCARCE: School & Community Assistance for Recycling and Composting Education:

<https://www.scarce.org/>

Films:

Waste Land: <http://www.wastelandmovie.com/>

Trashed: <http://www.trashedfilm.com/>

Plastic Paradise: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch: <http://plasticparadisemovie.com/>

ROT

"On average, Americans toss out a staggering 400 pounds of food per person every year. Most of it ends up in a landfill, where it releases methane, a potent contributor to climate change. We also have to consider all the greenhouse gases released by growing the food we ultimately chuck. All told, our wasted food produces more greenhouse gas emissions each year than 37 million cars."

- Taken from <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/reduce-reuse-recycle-most-all-reduce>



Composting can be a powerful way to reduce your House of Worship's impact on the earth. And it doesn't have to be complicated! The following resources can help you faithfully follow your call to reduce your wasted food and turn those food scraps into healthy soil.

First, it's a good idea to look at the reasons why food is wasted at your House of Worship in the first place. Did you order or prepare too much? Did you not have an accurate headcount of event attendees? Did you have an abundance of donations? If possible, try to connect food you cannot eat with people who are in need. Check out the Illinois Wasted Food Action Alliance for more information: <https://sevengenerationsahead.org/illinois-wasted-food-action-alliance/>

Still have lots of food scraps? Check your local waste management authorities to see if there is food scrap collection available in your area. You can also go to the Illinois Food Scrap Coalition at <http://illinoiscomposts.org/> to see if you can join their efforts.

RESOURCES:

Churches Compost Waste to Promote Values of Conservation: <https://bit.ly/2YCU975>

Composting for Congregations, from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of :
https://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-a-livable-future/_pdf/projects/foodnfaith/composting_congregations.pdf

Zero Waste Church: Composting: <http://www.zerowastechurch.org/composting/>

Beginning a Composting Practice: <https://doers.org/beginning-a-composting-practice/>

Composting, from Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry of the Archdiocese of Hartford, CT
<http://www.catholicsocialjustice.org/uploads/1/3/0/4/13041697/composting.pdf>

Sustainable America: A Food Waste Challenge for Groups:
<https://sustainableamerica.org/blog/new-toolkit-a-food-waste-challenge-for-groups/>

Seven Generations Ahead: <https://sevendgenerationsahead.org/>

Fresh Taste: <https://freshtaste.org/>

Films:

Dirt! The Movie: <https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/dirt-the-movie/composting.html>

Wasted!! The Story of Food Waste: <http://www.wastedfilm.com/>



CONCLUSION

Reducing, reusing, and recycling can be a huge undertaking. The scope of the waste problem in the United States is vast. It's easy to feel hopeless and that even our small efforts don't matter. But there is hope! And there is always something we can do.

As people of faith, we believe in the long game of repairing our relationship with creation and working toward environmental justice. Connecting your faith tradition's writings about conservation and consumption is a good first step. Putting together a plan of action to help make your community healthier for all is the desired end result. Caring for creation is not just work to be done in a committee, but should touch everything that you do, so find allies and gently instruct your House of Worship why this work is deeply important. Remember that this work of cleaning up after ourselves is a matter of justice for our neighbors in space and in time. Be patient, stick with it, and ask for help. Celebrate the small things you accomplish, share these wins with your congregation, and together chart a course for bigger things.

You can start small and make an impact, but you must start. We hope this toolkit can help you take the first steps.





HOLIDAY APPENDIX

Holidays, no matter what your cultural or religious background, likely involve food, family, and fun. And maybe presents, too. So how do we cut down the overconsumption when we're celebrating?

Here are some things you can do, no matter what the occasion, to celebrate more sustainably:

- Reuse decorations
- Get creative on gift wrapping: choose reusable decorations like festive greenery, beeswax wrap, hand towels, or skip the wrapping altogether.
- Add some eco-friendly holiday tips to your House of Worship's weekly bulletin or monthly newsletter.
- Instead of sending paper holiday cards, consider sending an electronic version, or purchase from a company like Paper Culture that plants a tree with every purchase.
- Serve in-season locally sourced food and beverages
- Skip the holiday-themed paper goods and serve your meals on reusable plates.
- Make/upcycle gifts for loved ones using materials you already have. Don't forget food item gifts like jams or baked goods!
- Do a "white elephant" gift exchange using only items you already have at home.
- Give "experience" gifts like concert tickets, museum memberships, or cooking classes.
- Counteract the carbon used in your holiday travel by purchasing carbon offset credits.

Here are some resources that might help you better plan your holiday celebrations with an eye toward reducing waste and curbing overconsumption:

Books:

7 Days of Christmas: A Season of Generosity by Jen Hatmaker

Crafty Gifts by Jane Bull

Handmade Gatherings: Recipes and Crafts for Seasonal Celebrations and Potluck Parties by Ashley English

RESOURCES:

Going Zero Waste: Zero Waste Holidays: <https://www.goingzerowaste.com/zero-waste-holidays>

Kind Planet: Zero Waste Holiday Guide: <http://thekindplanet.com/blog/2015/12/15/zero-waste-holiday-guide>

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