

Application by Niles Discovery Church for DOC full Green Chalice Certification

“Before becoming a [fully] Certified Green Chalice Ministry, you must be a Green Chalice Ministry and notify the Green Chalice minister of the DOC of our intention to apply for certification.” (from DOC website Green Chalice ministry)

History:

We started in 2010 /2011 with a merger (DOC and UCC,) and location and selling planning for a new “Niles Discovery Church.” We sold a property in our area of Fremont (Niles) in early 2014, selected an architect firm and construction company. Broke ground/rebuilt 36600 Niles Blvd. with attention to the best energy conservation measures available at that time. The NDC Ministry of Properties Team had LEED criteria in mind during all phases of construction. One member of the team had a ‘LEED certificate Green Associate’ at the time and made suggestions for all aspects of rebuild. The first worship service in our new facility was in May of 2015. We began Zoom services in March 2020 when the governor of California highly recommended social distancing due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

In 2016 the congregation completed the first tier of DOC Green Chalice program by forming a **Green Team**, signing the Green Chalice Covenant, and reporting to the DOC a list of steps taken, which included the enhancing of the recycling program, purchasing eco-palms for Palm Sunday, participating in a community garden, and partnering with local organizations for green advocacy. Consequently, we received a Green Chalice Congregation certificate.

I. New and Reviewed Steps: *(all completed)*

1. Create a Creation Care Team: Niles Discovery Church “Green Team” was first established in 2016 with close to 6 members and then revitalized in 2019 with about 20 members.
2. Notify the DOC Green Chalice Minister that Niles Discovery Church is applying for complete certification.
3. Adopt a Green Chalice Covenant—the Green Team’s proposed one or theirs. NDC chose to adopt their own. See below:

**Niles Discovery Church—Creation Care/Green Chalice
Covenant of Commitment**

As children of God and followers of Jesus Christ, we recognize the sacred gift of creation. We affirm our connection to God, each other, and the world around us. We respect all of God’s creation and pray for the healing of the Earth.

We commit ourselves as individuals and as a congregation to the intertwined responsibilities of caring for creation and seeking social justice for oppressed, marginalized, and underrepresented people.

With an urgent sense of purpose, we pledge to study the science of social disparities, climate change, and then redress in achievable ways, our contribution to human suffering and global inequalities.

Furthermore, as humanity confronts the current and future crises of damage to our climate, we further vow that we will continue to study the climate crisis and engage others in climate solutions. In so doing, we expand our efforts to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change we have inflicted on our Earth. We will promote ways that sustain life, advocate for eco-justice policies, and will work towards having these efforts be reflected in all the dimensions of our congregation’s life. We delight in God’s creation and invite others to do the same.

(adopted by cabinet on Feb. 15, 2021)

II. Energy Evaluation – We are Carbon Net Zero

Completed by Ministry of Properties (a team that includes Engineers, construction contractors, bank loan officer (specific to business loans,) security and internet infrastructure experts, teachers, and other church members with varying degrees of energy expertise.

Current:

1. Low voltage wiring for security, fire, internet (all completed by volunteer labor.)
2. Wi-Fi mesh and all internet cabling, boxes, router etc. done by volunteer labor. Members with a ‘Home Depot’ specialist did the kitchen installations.
3. TECTUM ceiling, which is recyclable through the manufacturer was installed in the in the Fellowship Hall.
4. All lighting is either CFL or LED.
5. All rooms except for the sanctuary have motion detection sensors that turn off lights when a room is not occupied.
6. As we find led replacements for CFL's with less wattage, we are changing to LEDs.
7. All outside lighting is on dusk to dawn controllers and all security lighting have motion detectors.
8. The original halogen lights in the parking lot have been replaced with led lighting.
9. We added solar and signed up for the East Bay Community Energy 100% renewable energy sourced program.
10. We have completed the Interfaith Power and Light’s “Cool Congregation” program and are waiting on our certificate. Through them we have purchased carbon credits to zero our carbon footprint.
11. All the toilets meet LEED flow requirements.
12. All paints are VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) free.
13. We implemented a drip irrigation system with master control and adjust timing for season and plant growth maturity.
14. All the HVAC (Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) thermostats are on programmable timers. Schedules are reviewed 2x per year and modified as necessary for special programs. E.g., flea market event.
15. All materials used in the construction are from renewable sources. E.g., floor is bamboo, ceiling in fellowship hall is made from compostable material.

Planned additions/actions and continuations

1. Maintain our **Carbon Net Zero** status, improve in all areas listed in next sections, and encourage local community to do the same.
- 2 Research an EV charging station
3. Participate in energy-saving/climate justice conferences to improve as possible

III. Make three changes in any of the following areas

Buildings and Facilities

Current/Recent past:

1. Use of only environmentally safe cleaning products in the church (began in 2015 and continues to this day) –2 pt.
2. The church purchases only recyclable or compostable plates and utensils (cornstarch or paper) for those times when washing kitchen supplies is not possible. – 3 pt.
3. Energy Star (Energy conserving appliances) were installed in the church kitchen when the building was remodeled in 2015, including a commercial energy efficient dishwasher). – 5 pt.
4. In 2016 the Ministry of Properties completed the installation of Solar Panels. (First year's energy saving was \$6000.) – 5pt.
5. June 2017, for energy conservation, Ministry of Property members changed all hallway lights in the church to LEDs and an additional LED fixture was added to Fellowship Hall closet and installed LED lighting in the church parking lots. – 3 pt.
6. Recycling/composting food scraps, coffee grounds, etc. in addition to all paper products, cans, and glass. – 2 pt.
7. Ceramic “real mugs” for coffee/tea that can easily be washed and reused. – 1 pt.
8. Cloth table clothes are all laundered at homes by volunteers
9. – 1 pt.

Planned changes/additions:

1. Install an EV station.
2. Check windows for sealing and recalk.
3. Replace CFL's in hall with LED's.
4. Benchmark our water use for landscaping and reduce where possible.
5. Install a bike rack (This is our church-sponsored Girl Scout Troop project.)
6. Review and update door installations (east &west) entrances.
7. Continue temperature adjustments in all areas of church building and parsonage for energy savings.

Worship and Office Practices

Current/Recent past:

1. The office mails back toner cartridges to the copier company with which we have a lease. – 2 pt.
2. The office collects inkjet cartridges (from church members) and takes them to OfficeMax/Staples for recycling. – 3 pt.
3. We have moved about 85-90% of our 300ish monthly newsletter mailings to electronic format. The office prints a very limited number of paper copies. *The Bell* for mailing and/or distribution after worship. Ninety percent plus of the newsletters are emailed and are read online via that email; or our website. Also, a bulletin entitled “This Week at Niles Discovery Church” is electronically distributed and includes all the latest meeting and event information. – 5 pt.
4. We are very conscientious about: Reuse it, Recycle/Repurpose it, or let it Rot (Green waste); and if it won't rot, only then is it trash. – 3 pt.
5. In 2020, the Green Team recommended, and Cabinet approved sending to the Northern California Nevada Conference Council our endorsement for “A *Kairos* Call to Action: Ten Years of Church Mobilization on Climate and Inequality.” The Conference Council also endorsed the Call. We do a *Kairos* moment in worship once or twice a month. – 4 pt.
6. Niles Discovery Church celebrated the “Season of Creation” over five Sundays (September 1 – September 29, 2019) with a unifying theme of “Walking Together.” (The sanctuary was decorated with photographs of animals, plants, and humans from congregants. In addition, images were solicited from congregants and were projected during the worship service.) – 5 pt.

A. Rev. Brenda Loreman - Sunday, September 1, 2019:

Walking Together: Land and Water (John 4: 4-15 and Psalm 126) We explored the images of land and water and how they reflect our interdependence with the earth and each other.)

B. Rev. Jeffrey Spencer – Sunday, September 8, 2019:

Walking Together: Biodiversity: (Matthew 6:25-33 and Job 28:1-11) The sermon explored the importance of biodiversity, why stewardship of biodiversity is a Christian value, and what we could learn from biodiversity.)

C. Rev. Jeffrey Spencer – Sunday, September 15, 2019:

Walking Together: Climate Change (Romans 8: 18-27 and Psalm change.) The seriousness of our rapidly changing climate and its impact on the existence of life.

D. Rev. Jeffrey Spencer – Sunday, September 22, 2019:

Walking Together: Simplicity and Sustainability (Exodus 16: 13-21 and Luke 12: 13-21)

God's creation provides enough for everyone if no one takes too much.

Expected changes/additions:

1. Back to worship in the Sanctuary with all COVID-19 protocols in place.
2. Return to choir and live music in the sanctuary as permitted.
3. Establish and/or continue electronic bulletins, newsletters, and meetings as appropriate.
4. Reduce printing of hard copies/paper usage.
5. Recycle more printed materials.

Education/Outreach/Justice

Current/Recent past:

1. 2017 the **congregation** approved a by-law change, adding under *Mission and Values*, as a shared value within Stewardship: “Implementing practices to sustain and repair the earth’s resources.”—2 pt.
2. On Earth Day 2016 a new, widely announced in the community, program of recycling and composting was begun by the Ministry of Social Concerns. This program marked the beginning of the church using all compostable utensils and plates during meals/snacks, for times when washing dishes is not practical. — 4 pt.
3. May 2016 an educational outreach program “Think Beyond the (Gas) Pump” was co-sponsored by the Social Concerns Team, Tri-Valley Ecology and Sierra Club. — 3 pt.
4. Ministry of Social Concerns sponsored a 2019 presentation on the book: *The Great Pivot: Creating Meaningful Work to Build a Sustainable Future* by local author Justine Burt. The lecture and book-signing included advocacy for a Green New Deal. —3 pt.
5. A monthly “Second Saturday Documentary Series” began in 2012 co-sponsored with the San Jose Peace and Justice Center and continues. It has included films on climate change such as “The Story of Plastic” about plastic pollution, and “The Need to Grow” about soil protection and many more social and environmental justice topics. —4 pt.
6. In 2016, several garden boxes were rented from the LEAF (Local Ecology and Agriculture Fremont) Center across the street from the church. Vegetables grown were delivered weekly during harvest seasons in 2016 through 2019 to the Centerville Presbyterian Church’s Supper Program for those in need of a healthy meal. —3 pt.
7. Beginning in 2016 Niles Church sponsored a booth at LEAF’s annual Earth Day Event. One year’s subject was “Reducing Plastic Usage.” –2pt.

Expected changes/additions

1. Participate in a Regional Green Challenge: <https://www.fremontgreenchallenge.org/>
2. Participate in “The International One Trillion Trees Project.”
<https://www.trilliontreecampaign.org/>
3. Present activities on the March 11th --11th hour Sacred Earth: Climate Crisis Alert

Ministry of Evangelism and Outreach and Ministry of Christian Education

Current/Recent past

1. Several members of the church participated in “California Coastal Cleanup Day/Month” in both 2019 and 2020, using paper or bio-degradable bags for collection. —3 pt.
2. The Ministry of Christian Education purposefully added the study of creation-care to the children’s curriculum in 2019. Scores of books and member/teacher developed curriculum related to each is used in our four levels of children’s education: preschool, K-3, 4-6, and adolescents/young adults. —4 pt.
3. The Adult Education class read and discussed *Climate Church, Climate World* by Jim Antal, and the author preached for the congregation via Zoom in 2020. This developed into an All-Church Read used this book and 40 or more people read and discussed it, including people from other local churches. It was followed by a Q and A with Rev. Antal. This event was co-sponsored by Daytime Fellowship and the Green Team. Other churches have now followed suit and have instituted an “all church read” and discussion of Rev. Antal’s book— 5 pt.
4. To further educate the congregation on social justice issues, including creation justice, in 2020 the Adult Education Class read and had a multiweek discussion of *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson. —1 pt.
5. An “All-Church Read of *White Fragility* by Robin D’Angelo & M.E. Dyson and discussion was sponsored by Daytime Fellowship in 2020.—3 pt.
6. A special “Church with the kids” program began via Zoom, which is run by a pastor and a Sunday School teacher. — 4 pt.

Planned changes/additions

1. Add more new books and curricula about social and environmental justice
2. Return to Children’s time during the worship service with COVID-19 protocols in place
3. Return to Age level Sunday school classes.

IV. Final step is to submit to the DOC Green Chalice Minister of Niles Discovery Church’s commitment and intention to continue caring for God’s creation.

Respectfully submitted on _____ by the Green Team of Niles Discovery Church

Susie Claxton, Green Team Facilitator

Reverend Jeffrey Spencer, Senior Pastor