



Green Parish Accreditation Program

Greening Niagara Committee of the Diocese of Niagara

Care for Creation is an important part of who we are as a faith community. As part of the diocesan vision for excellence in ministry, the Green Parish Accreditation Program seeks to enable and encourage parishes to better live out our call to be better stewards of creation while we strive to sustain and renew the earth.

Many parishes will have already appointed a Greening Facilitator. As we live out this area of prophetic social justice making, this position, along with a Green Team will be essential as your parish works through the Accreditation Program. The Accreditation Program is divided into 15 categories which are listed below. Each category has 3 levels to be achieved: Bronze, Silver and Gold. There is no time line on achieving each level but it is our hope that by Earth Sunday of 2010, every church will have started work towards the Bronze level.

To achieve accreditation a parish needs only to complete 10 of the 15 categories at any given each level. These can be different for each level. For instance, you may complete Bronze level categories 1-10 for your Bronze accreditation, but complete Silver categories 2-9, 11 and 12 for your Silver accreditation. As a parish you will decide which 10 categories you think are most suitable for you and your unique context. You may also be doing other amazing sustainable practices within your parish. We recognize this and as a result you may suggest two substitutions to count towards your the 10 categories needed for accreditation.

Once your church feels it has completed the requirements for accreditation as a Bronze, Silver or Gold parish, complete the reporting form and return it to the Diocesan Resource Centre. Accreditation at any given level remains valid for three years; after which a parish will either have to be re-accredited at the same level, having completed 12 of 15 categories, or achieve a higher accreditation level.

1. The Niagara Home Challenge

BRONZE: The Diocese's commitment to greening the church and the Niagara Home Challenge has been presented to the parish at a service or special event.

SILVER: At least 40% of parishioners (based on average Sunday attendance) have completed and returned the Niagara Home Challenge. Email is preferentially used to notify parishioners of the Challenge and to exchange ideas and encouragement to each other.

GOLD: At least 80% of parishioners (based on average Sunday attendance) have completed and returned the Niagara Home Challenge.

2. Green Facilitator

BRONZE: A Green Facilitator has been appointed and attends Parish Council. The Best Practice posters and information sheets have been distributed and displayed throughout the parish.

SILVER: The Green Facilitator has gathered together a Green Team. The team has met with parish groups and committees - including office and cleaning staff - to advise them about the Greening Niagara Best Practices and to hear suggestions about greening their particular ministries.

GOLD: The Greening Niagara Best Practices have been adopted by all groups in the church.

3. Lighting

BRONZE: Signage is posted at all light switches to remind people to TURN OFF lights when not in use and as people leave the room.

SILVER: CFL bulbs are installed as incandescent bulbs burn out. Remaining incandescent bulbs (if the fixture doesn't permit CFL technology) have dimmer switches, timers or a motion detector on both internal and external lighting.

GOLD: A full lighting survey has been undertaken and a plan has been implemented for the replacement of old technology and the installation of new lighting fixtures and bulbs.

4. Water Use

BRONZE: All the taps have signage asking users to limit their use of water. No plastic bottles are used in the church. Best Practices related to water use have been implemented for groups that use water most frequently (e.g. kitchen, garden).

SILVER: Aerators have been installed on as many taps as possible to conserve water, and all taps and toilets have also been inspected to check for leaks.

GOLD: Low flush toilets have been installed or the old style toilets have water bottles in the tanks to reduce water consumption. A clear reduction in water use has been established over a year period.

5. Energy Audits

BRONZE: A paper energy audit has been completed to establish a base line on energy and water use for the last 2 years. The parishioners are aware of high areas of consumption and verbal commitments to reduce energy and water have been received.

SILVER: A walk through energy audit has been completed by members of the parish and 2, 5, & 10 year plans have been established for items that need to be refurbished or replaced. Short and long term budget plans now include the refurbishments and replacements required.

GOLD: A full energy audit has been completed by an outside party and procedures are underway to implement any necessary findings.

6. Waste Management

BRONZE: There are clear signs on blue and green bins in the kitchen. Blue boxes are available in the office area and around the church.

SILVER: Training sessions have been given to the leaders of parish groups and committees in the correct use of blue and green bins. The average number of garbage bags used per week has been established as a baseline to show when future reductions have been accomplished.

GOLD: Evidence is available to support the amount of waste diverted from the garbage has increased. Other users of the church building have been trained and made aware of the Accreditation Programme and they have given assurances that they will follow the same practices as part of their commitment to being good renters.

7. Vehicle Use

BRONZE: Car pooling to church services and meetings is encouraged; a sign-up sheet, map of parish homes, and a volunteer to facilitate this service has been established.

SILVER: Bus routes to church are posted. Bike racks are installed on parish grounds. Church committee work is conducted after services and other parish events, when possible, to reduce the number of extra car trips to church.

GOLD: Committee work is conducted by email as often as possible. One Sunday a year is designated "car free" or "HOV" (high occupancy vehicle) Sunday.

8. Worship & Sunday School

BRONZE: Earth Hour, Earth Sunday, St. Francis Day or a similar event is celebrated every year with an eco-friendly service and an emphasis on environmental issues. Children's programming includes at least one environmental theme per year.

SILVER: At least 3 services or bible studies per year have environment issues as their main theme. A KAIROS rep has been appointed to receive monthly emails and mailings and these ideas are used at some of these services.

GOLD: A service is held outdoors at least once per year. The parish has worked with local or regional environmental organizations on one of their projects or has had a representative speak at a church service or workshop.

9. Heating & Cooling

BRONZE: A programmable thermostat has been installed and/or in winter, the thermostat is normally set to 20°C/68°F degrees while in summer, if air conditioning is installed, the thermostat is set to 24°C/75°F degrees or higher when the church is in use.

SILVER: 2, 5 & 10 year financial plans have been discussed to ensure that any possible upgrades to a high efficiency furnace have been considered. Windows are checked each year for draughts and sealing, caulking, and weather stripping is done promptly.

GOLD: A high efficiency furnace has been installed. The walls, roof, and basement upgrades have been completed to ensure the church building is well insulated.

10. Fair Trade

BRONZE: Fair Trade coffee is used for all parish events.

SILVER: More than one Fair Trade product is used at the church. Fair trade products are available for sale at church.

GOLD: An educational event has been held which explains the importance of using Fair Trade products at church and at home by highlighting the relationship between global poverty and trade injustice and environmental sustainability.

11. Parish Grounds

BRONZE: No pesticides are used in the garden. Indoor plants are used throughout the building to improve air quality.

SILVER: Flower beds are mulched and native plants, shrubs and trees have been planted to cut down on watering. If used, flowers and plants from the parish grounds and/or parishioner properties are used to make up floral arrangements for the church at least annually.

GOLD: The crew (paid or volunteer) which looks after the parish grounds is made aware of the theology behind using sustainable practices and they fully abide by the Best Practices for Grounds established by the Diocese.

12. Paper

BRONZE: Wherever possible, paper is printed double-sided. Electronic bank transfers are available to reduce the use of weekly envelopes.

SILVER: All the paper used is Forestry Stewardship Council, Canadian Standards Association or Eco-Logo certified. Toilet paper and paper towels are made from unbleached, 100% post-consumer recycled paper. A parish email list has been established to send newsletters and other parish information.

GOLD: Sunday bulletins have been reduced by weekly news emails to the email list or by projected material during some of the services.

13. Kitchen & Parish Events

BRONZE: No styrofoam items are used at parish events. The dish washer is only used when full and then only using the most efficient programme or cycle available.

SILVER: Reusable cloth or vinyl tablecloths or napkins are used. All dishes and cutlery used at Church are reusable. When available, local and seasonal food is used at parish events.

GOLD: An "eat local" meal has been held. Where possible, sugar, butter and cream are served in reusable containers and not as 'single-serve' items.

14. Recycle & Reuse

BRONZE: Recycling facilities at church are available for dropping off at least two items (eyeglasses, postage stamps, ink cartridges, clothing, household goods, books etc.)

SILVER: Education about community recycling facilities and community agencies that accept gently used donations is offered through the parish bulletin and/or newsletter.

GOLD: A Parish Rummage Sale is held each year to give everything a second chance.

15. Maintenance & Cleaning

BRONZE: No indoor pesticides or perfumed sprays are used. Only environmentally friendly de-icer is used in the winter.

SILVER: Where applicable environmentally friendly products are used for cleaning the church, offices and parish rooms. These might be from a recognized supplier or homemade remedies of vinegar and baking soda. Kitchen and bathroom cleaning practices should follow the Best Practices Sheet.

GOLD: A list of safe cleaning products, correct concentrations of bleach, and easy cleaning alternatives has been made available to everyone in the parish. Forty percent of the congregation has agreed to follow these cleaning practices at home.