

Northern Illinois Conference
Of the United Methodist Church

NET ZERO STRATEGIC PLAN

January 20, 2023
Wespath
Glenview, IL



Conference Eco-Sustainability Task Force
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November 10, 2022

Dear Northern Illinois Conference Leader,

This fall the Conference Eco-Sustainability Task Force, alongside Wespath and The General Board of Global Ministries hosted a Renewable Energy Summit. The Summit was held in response to a pledge from 11 UM agencies to achieve Net Zero by 2050.

Jenny Phillips, the Senior Technical advisor at the General Board of Global Ministries once stated, “We made this commitment as a first step in saying we are committed to making a plan and living into it.” She also noted, that as consumers we are already paying a high price for climate change.

We as a conference are called to have our own in-depth conversations, while building and sharing a long- term creation care efforts.

It is my privilege to invite you as an interested leader, to join the Northern Illinois Conference Net Zero Task Force as they gather at 10am to 4pm on Friday, January 20th, 2023, at Wespath which is located at 1901 Chestnut Ave Glenview, IL 60025. The purpose of this inaugural meeting will be to design and develop a Northern Illinois Conference Net Zero Strategic Plan. If you have questions please email richard.alton@gmail.com.

[You may use this link for registration.](#)

As a Conference we are called to be continuous leaders in the efforts to diminish, and even reverse climate change. It is a mark of our faithful discipleship as we responsibly steward God’s creation.

I hope you will be able to join this effort,

Bishop John L. Hopkins

AGENDA

Introductions

Welcome to each other and review today's agenda

Setting the Context

Review focus question of the day, *"How can our Conference enable our local churches to embrace Net Zero emissions?"*

Practical Vision

Collectively answer, *"What will we see or hear going on in three years that indicates our local churches are implementing net zero emissions actions?"*

Underlying Blocks

Short conversation on what obstacles and blocks stand in the way of the vision, answering the question, *"What are the obstacles, operating patterns, structures, mindsets, and roadblocks standing in the way of our practical vision?"*

Action Framework & Plan

In small teams, creating action steps to foster the practical vision arenas and overcome the underlying blocks, answering the question, *"What specific, realistic, doable actions will move us closer to practical vision and help us overcome our underlying blocks?"*

Reflection

Reflective conversation on the day and confirm next steps

Closing Liturgy

VISION

Participants responded to the question, "What will we see or hear going on in three years that indicates our local churches are implementing netzero emissions actions?". Participants answered this question by individually brainstorming, sharing their ideas in small groups, and collectively distilling the key relationships between all the ideas as a full group.

Net Zero Spiritual Practices	Leveraging External Partnerships	Accountability to Metrics	Conference Financial Support	Practical Solution-Focused Actions	Environmental Activism	Net Zero Promotion
<p>Worship and liturgy (creating worship resources)</p> <p>Broader theological formation (sermon series, small groups)</p>	<p>Network with community netzero effort & movement</p> <p>Connect with city, county, neighborhoods</p>	<p>Visibly tracking goals/green activity</p> <p>Measurable bench marking</p> <p>Annual confer net zero reports</p> <p>Charge conference accountability</p> <p>Baseline data</p> <p>Each congregation have energy audit</p>	<p>Resources on financing from NIC</p> <p>District netzero teams</p> <p>NIC grants (grants, loans, support local churches)</p> <p>Conference support for financial support</p>	<p>Greening parsonages</p> <p>Solar every church</p> <p>Right size buildings</p> <p>Composting</p> <p>Clean mechanical systems (wastewater, hvac, etc)</p> <p>Number of churches replacing HVAC with geothermal</p> <p>More induction kitchens</p> <p>Encourage biking and walking</p> <p># Churches energy efficiency programs</p> <p>Life cycle considerations</p> <p>Permeable parking lots</p>	<p>Climate awareness events</p> <p>Community gardens</p> <p>Climate champions</p>	<p>Congregation education</p> <p>Education (small groups)</p> <p>More conversations (more buzz form DS, bishop, etc.)</p> <p>Guidance for members for their personal actions</p> <p>NIC institutional support (clergy messages from bishop)</p>

CONTRADICTIONS

Participants responded to the question, "What are the obstacles, operating patterns, structures, mindsets, and roadblocks standing in the way of our practical vision?"

Participants identified blocks in each of the vision arenas (listed on the blocks list) and identified the key themes bolded below.

Disinformation Noise
Inertia/Resistance to Lifestyle Change
Problem Seems too Big
Scarcity Mindset
Not Important to Some in the Hierarchy
Small Actions Don't Count
Isolation from the Possibilities
Either/Or Mindset

Blocks List

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No one has a metrics job• Legacy codes, regulations, and rules• Scarcity mindset• Overcoming false dichotomy between theology and science• Resistance to lifestyle changes• Internal demands of congregations• Stuck with coal• Ignorance about what's possible• insularity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• not enough advocates• distractions• misinformation from other sources• thinking small actions don't count• disinformation (gaslighting, rabbit holes, etc.)• Other priorities• Problem feels too big• inertia |
|--|--|

ACTION FRAMEWORK

Participants responded to the question, "What specific, realistic, doable actions will move us closer to practical vision and help us overcome our underlying blocks?"

Participants individually brainstormed actions, shared their ideas in small groups, and collectively distilled the key actions between all the ideas as a full group.

Sharing Motivational Communication

- Earth week social media campaign
- Celebrate small successes (awards, reports, articles, stories)
- Ambassadors for practical solutions to promote via e-news and reporter
- Reach out to city leaders
- Examples of reducing isolation
- Invite to process
- Engage external resources
- Tell inspiring stories in all media formats
- Quarterly legislative updates and action
- Change language away from scarcity mindset
- Video of UMC net zero commitment

Creating Educational Resources

- Training for community organizing
- Seminars for trustees re: practical solutions with engineers and govt reps
- Provide ready-made sermon series
- 10 pt action plan
- Publish list of grants
- Approaching people where they are in their net zero process
- Net zero study program
- Redistribute resources
- Identify organizations in community for networking
- List priorities
- Congregation Net Zero questionnaire
- Tabulate resources
- Resource list – small group curriculum

Executing Specific Actions

- Divestment from fossil fuels
- Requiring all new appliances be high efficiency
- Get baseline energy audit
- Advocacy day in Springfield

Including Nature in Worship

- Encourage concurrent worship walks
- Teach spiritual practices (ex natura and divina)
- Earth stewardship is shared with most religions
- Nature venues for worship

Promoting Conference Level Activities

- Negotiate for entire conference
- Do conference legislation
- Bishop statement on t/f work
- Broaden eco task force scope
- District awareness events
- Make trustees responsible for net zero
- Request time with DSS
- Create CC metrics/reports for netzero efforts
- Net Zero advocate in each congregation (for networking, communication, accountability)

ACTION PLAN 2023

	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Goal
Sharing Motivational Communication Carolyn Burnham, Michael Kerrigan, Nancy Blade, James G	Button announcing net zero focus at elder's meeting (Michael)	Ann. Conf. produced video for worship on net zero commitment (Carolyn)	Celebrate gathered net zero stories in Reporter and social media (Carolyn)	Fall charge conference adopt suggested climate pledge (Nancy)	All churches in N.I. annual conference sign a climate pledge
Executing Specific Actions Al Brunsting, Mac Robinette, Maureen Stillman, Josh White, Harriette	Contact 10 churches, gauge interest energy audit (Josh)	Get baseline energy audit done x 10 (Josh)	Requiring all new appliances in >10 churches be high efficiency (Al)	Congregation meeting 10 pt action plan (Josh, Mac)	Divestment from fossil fuels
Including Nature in Worship Christian Coon, John B, Jean I, Cathie L	Interfaith perspectives on creation care – articles in e-news	Worship walks choose a day (4/23?) publish in E-news: Invitation to participate locally, general description, example contact info for resources (Christian)	Nature in church through music and video – work with music directors (Cathie)	4-week sermon series provide scripture sources (model), Look for resources (prairie, lake, forest), Native American perspective (John)	Further develop a theological grounding through worship for our collective environmental work
Creating Educational Resources Don L, Beth G, Hope	Begin collecting resources (Hope) Research green building certification (Don)	Congregant questionnaire earth day (need support to develop)	Beaddisciple.com online course by July (Beth)	Develop trustee training (Hope, Don, others) Workshop: "What is Net Zero?" (Don)	Seminars for trustees re: practical solutions with engineers and govt reps
Promoting Conference Level Activities Violet, Dick, Melissa, Jim L	Bishop statement on T/F work (Dick) Identify net zero advocate manager (Melissa)	Request time with DSS (Violet) Manager writes water advocate job description (Melissa)	Formalize net zero committee through conf. legislation (Violet, Dick)	Net zero advocate in each congregation (for networking, communication, accountability) (Violet) Create CC metrics/report for net zero efforts (Dick)	Establish a structure for administering net zero campaign

NEXT STEPS

01

Working with Small Groups

Use the action plan to complete (and recruit folks to help complete) your identified goals for each quarter

02

Second Saturdays on Zoom

Join us on Zoom for monthly coordination

03

Quarterly Meetings

Check in as a full group each quarter for accountability and remaneuvering