

Creation Care Team



REGENERATIVE  
AGRICULTURE  
ADVOCACY  
**TOOLBOX**

# TOOC



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# WELCOME...

*We are glad you have passion to protect and serve God’s creation. Hopefully you have connected with people in your church and community with interest in Creation Care. It almost goes without saying there are enormous political, economic, and market forces that are working against Creation Care. Fear Not! We have good news! There is an abundance of good work already underway and your team’s work will make a difference!*

*Regenerative Agriculture is organic farming practices that have a huge impact for the renewal of creation. The natural engine of plants and trees remove carbon from the atmosphere and safely sequester it in the soil, where it belongs. This natural God-given process is proving to be one of the best tools for healing the earth.*

*The carbon removed from the atmosphere lowers global temperatures. The sequestered carbon literally resurrects the soil. More carbon in the soil fosters the microbiome. A single teaspoon of healthy soil, rich in carbon and nitrogen, is*

*home to millions of microscopic organisms. These organisms help nutrients transfer to the roots of the plants and trees. This Regenerative Agriculture Advocacy Toolbox will help local churches act to transform church landscapes, public greenscapes, and backyards into robust tools for healing the earth and curing the climate. We can partner with God in the necessary work of restoring creation to God’s original design – harmony with earth, water, plants, and creatures. This is just the beginning of what is possible!*

*Imagine the grassy areas of your churchyard being transformed by trees, pollinator gardens, native plants, a food forest, and a walking trail. What was once just lawn is now a healing place for meditation with God. This garden, a taste of Eden, restores the soil and the soul! The tools are here to do this and so much more!*

*Together, congregations and communities can be a powerful force for a regenerative approach to gardening and agriculture that actually*

*regenerates the soil and heals the earth. There are additional resources on The North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church (NCCUMC) Creation Care webpage [nccumc.org/creation](http://nccumc.org/creation) and in the Green Church Initiative (GCI) [nccumc.org/creation/green-church-initiative](http://nccumc.org/creation/green-church-initiative)*

*This toolbox is written to assist Creation Care teams that are starting up or experienced teams expanding their ministry. If you have already taken steps to build a collaborative team you may be ready to move ahead to the Action Drawer for ideas and resources.*

*Your NCCUMC Creation Care Team will support you in developing or expanding Creation Care ministries. We will see God’s power at work within us to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20)...for the healing of the earth.*

**Let’s get started!**

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## I. WHERE TO BEGIN ...IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED

The book of Genesis opens, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Psalm 24 begins, "The earth is the Lord's, the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." In Leviticus 25:23, God declares, "The land is mine." We begin with a clear understanding that creation is not our property!

We have become accustomed to using possessive pronouns around land. Our property. My family's land. The Smith's farm. People have been granted a deed, recorded at the county courthouse, that indicates they own a parcel of land. Ownership of private property has been understood, at times, as the ability

to do with one's own land as one pleases. The notion of doing as we please with our land is rooted in a misreading of Genesis 1:27-28: "God created humankind in God's image, in the image of God, God created them; male and female God created them. God blessed them, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

The words dominion and subdue have oft been misinterpreted with the sense of personal power, even autonomy. A careful reading of the text would lead us to think otherwise. Dominion is faithfully expressed as humanity living together into the image and likeness of God.

At the close of the third, fourth, and fifth day of creation, God saw, "It was good." On the sixth day God saw, "It was very good." God's will for creation is goodness. Humanity cannot improve on what God has created good. However, all of creation is damaged by the sin of humanity in the Garden of Eden. The world, creation, and the relationship throughout all of creation have been harmed. Thus, we are called to be reconcilers, joining in God's work to reconcile the entire cosmos with God.

Our place within creation is defined by the Creator God. A faithful interpretation of dominion is rooted in God's command in Genesis 2:15, The LORD God put the human in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. We are cultivators, vinedressers, even shepherds who protect and serve creation as an act of love in concert with God's desire for beauty and goodness in all creation. This reframes our approach to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28) with care and gentleness to work with creation for the fruitfulness and fertility of all life on the planet.

Yes, practicing Regenerative Agriculture, gardening, and advocating for practices that restore, repair, and regenerate creation is an act of love toward God and neighbors. We are called to work with God who is redeeming all creation.

This is just a brief introduction to the deep spiritual and theological themes throughout scripture calling us to Creation Care. We invite you to search the scriptures with your team. You may want to use some of the following resources for rich conversations that deepen the understanding of, and commitment to Creation Care. God is at work for the reconciliation of all creation. Care for creation is a vital aspect of our discipleship.

### A WORD ABOUT VOCABULARY

Winston Churchill famously said, "America and England are two countries separated by common language." Words can mean different things in different regions and cultures. So, it is with Agriculture. Let's take a few paragraphs to avoid miscommunication. Agriculture is often thought

of as commercial farming that produces mega-tons of crops for sale. A quarter acre intensively farmed can produce as much as 5 tons of produce – that too is agriculture. Agriculture is the science of growing things. Agriculture is the business of selling what farms grow. A farmer recently reminded his audience not to confuse gardening with farming. When we speak of agriculture we need to be respectful that farming is an entrepreneurial endeavor in which the farmer stakes her future and livelihood.

For our purposes in the care of creation, the scientific practices of agriculture can be applied to gardens, landscapes, yards, and especially the property owned by the congregation. Naming those beneficial agricultural practices is where the lexicon diverges and it can get confusing.



**Organic Agriculture** – is a very specific system of growing that requires much work and documentation to be a certified organic producer allowed to sell under the Federal organic logo. Some growers will use the phrase organic practices regarding their methods even though they are not certified organic. The costs of certification can be prohibitive for small scale farmers. Organic in the grocery store has become somewhat ubiquitous, like the word Kleenex, which is used to mean facial tissue regardless of brand. So, know who is speaking when someone uses the word "organic."

**Sustainable Agriculture** – This name was much in vogue in the early part of the 21st century to name agriculture practices that are organic, eliminate chemically formulated amendments, as well as chemical herbicides and pesticides. Recent critiques of the term sustainable note it is synonymous with maintenance rather than indicating progress and improvement.

**Biological Agriculture** – A recent attempt to clarify the language by meaning agriculture that works with the natural processes, not against them. This term is not yet widely used or clearly defined.

**Regenerative Agriculture** – A system of farming principles and practices that increases biodiversity, enriches soils, improves watersheds, and enhances ecosystems. By capturing carbon in soil and above

### CREATION CARE READING LIST

- *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture* –by Ellen Davis
- *From Nature to Creation* –by Norman Wirzba
- *This Sacred Life: Humanity in a Wounded World* –by Norman Wirzba
- *The Good Food Revolution* –by Will Allen
- *Earth-Honoring Faith* –by Larry Rasmussen
- *Organic Wesley* –by William C. Guerrant, Jr
- *Hospitable Planet* –by Stephen A. Jurovics



Wendell Berry's writings are a wonderful grounding. A great place to begin for anyone new to Berry: *The Art of the Commonplace*, his novel *Hannah Coulter*, and some of his poetry in *Farming: A Handbook*.

[www.scripturecreationandlife.wordpress.com](http://www.scripturecreationandlife.wordpress.com)

Presian Burroughs is a theologian in the area of New Testament and creation. Her article is worthy current reading in terms of New Testament and creation, especially agriculture.

[www.christianfoodmovement.org](http://www.christianfoodmovement.org)

This is a solid introductory website with some theological reasoning for the work we're doing. The list of resources is awesome, though it has been a couple of years since any new articles have been added.

Global Weirding – [www.youtube.com/channel/UCi6RkdaEgqRVKi3AzidF4ow](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCi6RkdaEgqRVKi3AzidF4ow)  
Accessible science via YouTube from Dr. Katharine Hayhoe, a preeminent climate scientist who is a disciple of Jesus.

ground biomass, Regenerative Agriculture aims to reverse global climate change (terra-genesis.com). Throughout this document, we chose to use the term regenerative agriculture rather than organic or sustainable because regenerative agriculture seeks to prevent further harm to the earth as it seeks the healing of the soil, hence the word regenerate. As a toolbox put together by United Methodists, we especially find significance in the theological aspects of regenerative agriculture. Much of the biodiversity, or living things, that contribute to soil health have been killed off by previous agricultural practices. Regenerative agriculture works for the resurrection of life within the soil and, in turn, works towards the healing and redemption of all creation.

By *Regenerative Agriculture*, we mean holistic agricultural practice that from seed to table:

- a) Works with creation and the local, native ecosystem to grow healthy food
- b) Seeks the Creator's intention for land, air, water, and creatures to be in harmony
- c) Builds the health of the soil through natural processes and amendments
- d) Refrains from chemical applications that damage the soil and the ecosystem
- e) Captures carbon from the atmosphere and sequesters it in the soil
- f) Respects the dignity of each person in the food system
- g) Produces healthy food

The practices of Regenerative Agriculture, holistically working with creation, can be applied to a garden, a landscape, and the church grounds. We will address this notion as we progress through the toolbox.

The bottom line – we need to be aware that people in farming, government, and the community use different vocabulary with varied meanings. Knowing our neighbor's lexicon on agriculture and Creation Care will go a long way to building bridges and partnerships. Our task is to find common ground and work together for the healing of all creation. Another article shows why regenerative is not only for agriculture but part of a wider, deeper movement is: [www.thecounter.org/regenerative-agriculture-racial-equity-climate-change-carbon-farming-environmental-issues](http://www.thecounter.org/regenerative-agriculture-racial-equity-climate-change-carbon-farming-environmental-issues)

### C.R.E.A.T.E. –THE TOOLBOX IS A PROCESS

We have organized the Regenerative Agriculture Toolbox into six "drawers" using this acronym, **C.R.E.A.T.E.**

- C**onnections
- R**elationship-building
- E**mpowering the Collaborative Team
- A**ctions
- T**elling Your Stories
- E**ngaging Decision Makers
- A**dvocating for Regenerative Agriculture touches on: Just Food Systems, Economic Justice, Racial Justice, and Chil-

dren in Poverty – just to name a few. This intersectionality can build on current ministries and spark innovation. Working to heal the earth will heal relationships, economies, and communities.

**C.R.E.A.T.E.** is also a proven pathway for developing ministries with your community that have lasting impact that will transform the world.

This process works to develop a new ministry or innovate a current ministry that draws upon the power of the Kingdom of God.

#### 1) Begin by making **connections for life-long learning.**

Find two or three to gather for learning and prayer together. Where two or three gather in God's Name, the Lord is present and new things happen.

**2) Find people** in your community who know the community and have a similar passion. **Build relationships** and keep expanding the network of relationships. A tip for relationship building is ending each new conversation by asking: **"Who are three people you know that I should talk to next?"** As groups build trust, the power of innovation is set in motion.

**3) Work from strengths** and resources to identify goals and actions. Brainstorm potential action. Keep it free flowing...no filtering, and post ideas on the wall! Allow the power of synergy and consensus to bring some of the ideas

to the forefront. **Effective goals are SMAART:** *Specific, Measurable, Audacious & Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based.*

Attend to the communication pathways...make sure information flows within the team.

**4) Take action** rooted in the values and goals developed in the team in steps 1-3. Begin with the goal(s)/action(s) that have impact, consensus, and are boldly achievable. Execute the action plan and communicate, communicate, communicate. Measure and adjust as needed. Celebrate wins! Evaluate and innovate...Keep the momentum growing.

#### 5) **Curate the Stories.**

Give space for telling the stories of impact and transformation. Find places to tell and spaces to publish these stories in the community.

#### 6) **Engage Decision Makers.**

Decision Makers are in the local church; municipal councils, the state legislature, and the United States Congress and Senate.

The stories, experiences, allies, and impacts garnered in the work are great tools for engaging decision makers. Elected representatives appreciate the power of a story to change minds; data and experience that shed light on the truth; and, the compassion of constituents whose experience crafts solid policy proposals for the greatest good.



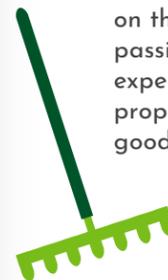
When we approach decision-makers with proven solutions, backed by story and data, we have the opportunity to be heard. Approach decision makers as partners, rather than adversaries, as this offers a good environment for policy changes that help our communities thrive.

We want our decision-makers to have us on speed dial. Decision-makers need to see us as constituents who are competent in our work and a trusted source for accurate frontline data in their district. Building that kind of relationship with decision-makers does not mean they will always vote our way. The goal is to be trusted so we can be truly heard. Lesson one in evangelism (telling the good story)... be trustworthy and people will listen.

### A BLESSING AT THE BEGINNING OF THE JOURNEY

While the challenge of climate change can indeed feel overwhelming, we hope this toolbox will empower you and give you a solid foundation on which to begin this mission that God has called you to be a part of. We hope you know you are not alone in this work. God is calling people from all across the Church and beyond to join together for the holy work of healing creation.

How exciting to come alongside God in the Creator's work of redeeming and reconciling all creation! As you consider the tools laid out below, may you feel empowered to go forth into the world, in the spirit of the Gardener who conquered death, to seek healing, regeneration, and resurrection.





## II. THE TOOLS IN THE TOOLBOX

Each tool drawer will be opened with a brief explanation. The drawers will contain a variety of ideas, resources, and weblinks. Enjoy exploring the toolbox.

Remember these are tools, not a program. Employ these tools to design and build a creation care—regenerative agriculture ministry unique to your community.

### CONNECTION TOOLS

The first connections are to the science, facts, and

theology of Creation Care. Take time to learn, read, and explore Creation Care and Regenerative Agriculture.

Begin by deepening the understanding of Creation Care as a component of discipleship and Regenerative Agriculture as a faithful response to God’s command to “keep and till the garden.” (Gen 2:15). Please check out the weblinks listed in this section.

We have provided a number of organizations, websites, and reading suggestions to help deepen your roots in Creation Care. As you learn, do not hesitate to forward to the NCCUMC Creation Care Team a website or resource

you have found particularly helpful. This toolbox will be updated to stay abreast of new breakthroughs, concepts, and practices.

**NCCUMC Creation Care** – [www.nccumc.org/creation](http://www.nccumc.org/creation)

Our website curates a wide variety of the latest resources, educational opportunities, and actions for Creation Care. Members of the Conference Creation Care Team will be honored to connect with you and your Creation Care Ministry.

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**RAFI-USA** – Rural Advancement Foundation Incorporated  
[www.rafiusa.org/cttt](http://www.rafiusa.org/cttt)

RAFI can help you connect with local farmers and programs like Come to the Table. You can sign up for their newsletter through their website. RAFI-USA is a non-profit, thus local Creation Care Teams can keep the movement going by making an annual donation.

**Resourceful Communities** – [www.conservationfund.org/our-work/resourceful-communities](http://www.conservationfund.org/our-work/resourceful-communities)

Resourceful Communities helps grassroots leaders create opportunities that preserve the rural landscape, access much-needed resources, and celebrate unique local cultures. They support a network of community organizations, faith-based groups, and resource partners who provide additional support through training, materials, or funding. Their triple-bottom-line approach generates economic, environmental and social justice benefits in partner communities. Their Faith & Food Initiative supports pastors and lay leaders as they establish or strengthen food ministries that seek to support the local economy, heal the earth, and provide people with access to nutritious food.

**NC Food Hubs** – [www.ncfoodhubs.org](http://www.ncfoodhubs.org), will help you find food hubs in your area. Food hubs aggregate produce from local farmers for regional distribution. This website identifies food hubs

across the North Carolina Conference that are looking to partner with local churches.

**Your Local North Carolina Ag Extension Office**

This is also a great place to begin building relationships. Extension Agents can connect you to local resources for Regenerative Agriculture practices at home, in the garden, with church properties, and local organic farms education. They can also connect you to local organic Master Gardeners. Extension Agents will know who are the Regenerative Agriculture farmers in your county. Use this link to find your county office. [www.ces.ncsu.edu/local-county-center](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/local-county-center)

**Carolina Farm Stewardship Association**  
[www.carolinafarmstewards.org](http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org)

The Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CSFA) is a farmer-driven, membership based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that helps people in the Carolinas grow and eat local, organic food by advocating for fair farm and food policies, building systems that family farms need to thrive, and educating communities about local, organic agriculture. You and/or your church can support this work with an annual membership of \$25.

**North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light** – [www.ncipl.org](http://www.ncipl.org)

NCIPL core programs promote a variety of solutions to mitigate future climate

change, including energy efficiency and conservation, increased renewable energy use, and collective low-carbon lifestyle changes. NCIPL programs encourage congregations, clergy, and judiciaries to be aware and able to articulate the moral dimensions of climate change and environmental justice issues from a faith perspective.

**Zero Waste Church** – [www.zerowastechurch.org](http://www.zerowastechurch.org)

Through study and reflection on a curriculum entitled, A Life of Grace for the Whole World, that is based upon the Episcopal House of Bishop’s Pastoral Teaching on the Environment, which calls for “all God’s children to work for the common goal of renewing the earth as a hospitable abode for the flourishing all life,” Church of the Nativity, Raleigh launched a program called Restoring God’s Earth: A Year of Personal Action. The program can be downloaded as a free e-book. The website also contains information about “carbon farming” and other regenerative agriculture practices.

**UMCreation Justice** has a monthly tips communication that can be used for newsletters, websites, and bulletins. [www.umcreationjustice.org/tips](http://www.umcreationjustice.org/tips)

*Note: If your church has not already made the bulletin an e-doc or a link on your church app, then please start the conversation and save some trees!*



## These websites offer helpful resources for education on Regenerative Agriculture

[www.cefs.ncsu.edu](http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu) This agricultural resource is, “shallow enough for a baby to play in, deep enough for an elephant to drown in.”

[www.savory.global](http://www.savory.global) Great starting place for learning the restorative and regenerative power of Regenerative Agriculture.

[www.soilfoodweb.com](http://www.soilfoodweb.com) This resource is excellent for understanding Regenerative Agriculture and the regenerative power it has for the mitigation of climate change. This is a great place for deeper research into the science and practices that great healthy soil and food systems.

[www.kisstheground.com/stewardship](http://www.kisstheground.com/stewardship) – A truly extensive, groundbreaking resource.

This **Scientific American** article is a synopsis of the regenerative power of Regenerative Ag [www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-dirt-could-help-save-the-planet](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-dirt-could-help-save-the-planet)

[www.rodaleinstitute.org](http://www.rodaleinstitute.org) – Rodale serves agriculture professionals. The practices they offer can also be used in small scale gardens or food forests.

## RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING TOOLS

We have been building relationships since we took our first steps, some are lifelong friendships. Relationships are built on listening, compassion, and trust nurtured over time.

Imagine the people in your Creation Care relationship network gathered around a table for a meal and conversation. Ask these questions:

- Who is at the table?
- Who is not at the table?

### • How does this table accurately reflect the diversity of our community?

(Socio-economic, race, ethnicity, language, gender, faith, roles in the community)

Every church in our Conference has access to MissionInsite, a great tool for knowing the demographics of your community. Find out who the **MissionInsite** administrator is in your congregation. The mapping system allows the administrator to explore the exact area in which the proposed ministry will oper-

ate. If a current administrator has not been assigned, the pastor can reach out to the Conference to get your church connected to MissionInsite.

Your **Ag Extension Office** can connect you with local organic farmers, farmers markets, food hubs, and other enterprises springing up that are focused on Regenerative Agriculture practices.

Get to know your **local Organic Farmers – Become a customer!**

Ask about their farm practices. Get to know their stories. Become a friend. Remember farmers are professionals with limited resources, including their time. Farmers are intelligent innovators by necessity and will be a valued part of the Creation Care work. Honor the farmer by maintaining clarity on the difference between Regenerative Farming (capital-intensive business from which the farmer makes her living) and Regenerative Gardening that is not the gardener’s livelihood.

### Creation Care Map

Rev. Jacob Dye has created a map of all churches and ministries throughout the North Carolina Conference who are engaged in Creation Care ministries. This tool can help churches who are engaged in similar work connect with one another. If you are thinking about starting a creation care ministry, check out the map to see if another church is already engaging in the work. They could be a potential

partner or a great resource to help you get started! People who are investing their discipleship in food justice are likely to be great resources, allies, and may even join in the work of your Creation Care Team. [www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/edit?mid=1zbGKy7rGBW9f-Slti\\_VbBUy33p65U1eB-&usp=sharing](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/edit?mid=1zbGKy7rGBW9f-Slti_VbBUy33p65U1eB-&usp=sharing)

Try this **Sustainable Farm Map** explained here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPFxJxgipyg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPFxJxgipyg)

**Volunteer on local Regenerative Agriculture farms** to deepen relationship with farmers, learn their practices, and invest in a more just food system.

Often the local **United Way** has someone in their office who is a natural connector. If not, they will know the person you need to know. **Find the Allies and Influencers** in your community. They will help you connect with **nonprofits and people** who will be an invaluable resource. Seek out people in nonprofits and government agencies as their experience

and expertise will deepen the team’s understanding and engagement with the community.

Reach out to **neighboring churches**, regardless of denomination, to discover what they are already doing in Creation Care. Imagine the increased impact of three or four congregations working together. Get radical! Find out if the Jewish synagogue, local mosques, or other faith communities are at work for creation. Look for nearby interfaith creation care groups. People who love creation are our allies and friends.

## EMPOWERING THE COLLABORATIVE TEAM TOOLS

At some point we may have learned a problem-solving process similar to this one:

- a) Identify the problem
- b) Make a list of possible solutions
- c) Execute the best solution, next problem! Please avoid this approach as if it were a temptation.
- d) Voilà, problem solved...

People have strengths, communities have strengths... so start here: This is known as **Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)**. For an introduction to ABCD, begin here: [www.johndempseyparker.org/asset-based-community-development-a-catalyzing-worksheet](http://www.johndempseyparker.org/asset-based-community-development-a-catalyzing-worksheet)

[www.johndempseyparker.org/exploring-community-partnerships-an-orientation-practices-for-beloved-community-building](http://www.johndempseyparker.org/exploring-community-partnerships-an-orientation-practices-for-beloved-community-building)

**Ask: What strengths, resources, and people in our community are assets for Creation Care?** This is powerful because it unleashes the energies and passions that already exist.

**Engage youth...**their ideas are powerful! Youth have an investment when it comes to healing creation. Listen intently to youth and empower them as leaders! They are a human resource we may have under-utilized for visioning/planning/mobilization in the local church.

Again, build a **diverse collaborative team** with connections throughout the community so we start from many strengths. When we move from strength to strength (Psalm 84:7) we create sustainability in our work and can accomplish more.

**Ask: Given our strengths and resources what is the best next step to make an impact, build momentum, and attract**





people to the cause? Acting on strengths leads to better questions that fit the community and its assets.

## ACTION TOOLS

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of actions. It is simply an idea starter. We all know the foolishness of using a hammer to drive a screw. Draw on your people, your strengths, and the creativity within your team to fashion actions that will work best in your setting and community.

### Plant trees on vacant church property. Check out the **Pando Project** at *Leaf and Limb*.

They are a source for trees and creative action, i.e. searching forests for native seeds. PANDO – [www.leaflimb.com/project-pando](http://www.leaflimb.com/project-pando)

Encourage and help church members and neighbors plant trees in their yards.

### Planting a Food Forest on church property.

- Check with your **Ag Extension Agent** on tree selection, berry bushes for

your region.

- Connect with your local **Beekeeper Association** about adding a pollinator garden.
- A local **beekeeper** would enjoy placing a hive in proximity to your garden/forest.
- Consult a great book on native planting, *Nature's Best Hope* by *Douglas W. Tallamy*.
- Consider **planting only native plants, flowers, and vegetation** on church grounds. This provides excellent habitat for pollinators and other local critters who are necessary for the health of your church's ecosystem.

### Invite RAFI-USA to speak in your community.

[www.rafiusa.org](http://www.rafiusa.org) You will find great friends, ideas, and support in the good folks with RAFI-USA.

### Hold a composting class for the community at church.

- Not everyone will enjoy and continue composting, so you might put a collection bin at church so people can contribute their table scraps.

- Compost on church property to feed the church's gardens & food forest.

**Encourage and teach Regenerative Agriculture practices for home gardens.** AG Extension Service can connect you to **master gardeners** as a resource.

### Backyard Bounty.

Teach members how to use

regenerative practices and plant extra to share. Collect the abundance and distribute fresh, earth healing foods to neighbors.

### Gardening is a spiritual practice.

After all, God is a gardener (Gen 1-3, Ps 65, Ps 104), so what better way to learn about God's desires for creation than to sink your own hands into the soil. People can have gardens to grow their own vegetables, flowers, and herbs. Having a chicken coop is pretty accessible for many people. For people without space for a garden, a lot can be grown with just a few pots.

### Provide church space for a Farmers Market (no charge).

- If there isn't a Farmers Market in the area, the church could start one.

- RAFI offers mini-grants to rural churches who work with local growers and local restaurants in their communities.

- Consider transforming your food pantry into a Farmers Market where the whole community is invited to shop.

- RAFI also facilitates programs aimed at increasing purchasing power for those who are purchasing with SNAP/EBT benefits.

### Open up space in your church kitchen for an aspiring local chef.

- Invite a member of the community who wants to start a local restaurant to use your

kitchen to serve lunch throughout the week.

- This allows the entrepreneur to introduce themselves to the community and generate income without the large initial operating cost.

### Provide church space for CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) pickup points.

The CSA allows small farmers to know their market and plant to meet the need. It also helps the farmer with budgeting by knowing her revenue stream.

- Encourage church members to purchase from the CSA

### Creation Care studies with farmers as testimonial participants.

What insight might farmers in your church or local community have to share? Offer space for local farmers to share their stories. Consider having a local farmer offer a reflection on one of the several passages of Scripture that have an agrarian focus. Become aware of the challenges our neighbor farmers face and how the church can respond.

### Commit to using local items in your church.

- Fresh-baked bread served at Holy Communion versus commercially produced bread.

### Connect with a local school to teach composting & regenerative gardening

Meet with the principal and offer your services and funding to begin a garden at the school. Students learn by getting their hands in the

soil. They not only learn how to grow food in harmony with nature, for they also get to eat what they grow. Imagine teaching composting on site as student/staff/faculty bring kitchen scraps to contribute to the compost pile.

### Churches purchase "ugly veggies" from Regenerative Agriculture farmers.

Hold an ugly food festival or ugly food potluck using the unsellable veggies. Donate the "ugly veggies" for pantry or community meal use.

### Purchase excess/unsold produce for church meals, community meals, and pantries.

### Offer bible studies and book studies on Creation Care.

Have the church reflect on what it means to "have dominion" in the image of God. As Methodists, what does Wesley's teaching on discipline have to offer in the work of healthier farming, eating, and purchasing practices?

### Ask Youth to lead a Creation Care Study and come up with projects youth lead.

Below are some examples. However, trust youth to identify ideas that fit their calling and passion

- Youth can lead Mission Trips to local farms.

- Youth design and lead a Regenerative Agriculture ministry on church grounds.

- Youth deliver CSA boxes to





folks who are challenged with mobility.

### Hold a Movable Feast

• Invite a local chef to cook food the church has purchased from a local farmer. - Invite members and neighbors to learn about the food as they enjoy it.

• The Chef talks about the use of local food in her restaurant.

• The Farmer talks about the food she grows and how to get it.

• Encourage folks to sign up for the CSA and support the Farm2Fork Chef.

• Have a presentation on the food justice issue in your community.

• Enlist new servants to join in your Regenerative Agriculture ministry.

### Here's the **moveable part of the feast**:

• Invite community leaders, influencers, and clergy/laity from other churches to the feast.

• Offer to help them do another Moveable Feast in their parish or organization.

• Your invitees pay it forward by inviting other leaders and influencers to their feast.

• Yes, you see the strategy, then the feast is repeated in other parishes or organizations.

• This feast spreads, increas-

ing demand for local Regenerative Agriculture produce!

## TELLING YOUR STORIES

We know the power of story. **Create space for celebrating the stories** that arise from the work of the collaborative team. Stories keep us focused and motivated. Post them on social media. Include these stories in worship.

Put up **displays at community festivals, events, and gatherings.** Have your storytellers on hand to engage people!

**Visit community and civic clubs,** Scouts, Jaycees, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, et.al. who are always looking for presentations and stories that inspire.

One example of a way to tell your story: <https://www.rafiusa.org/blog/cttt-technical-assistance-spotlight-longs-chapel-umc-and-christopher-farms/>

**This is evangelism at its core...**telling the good news and fishing for people who are ready to be caught up in Kingdom work. This is participation in the mission of God - to redeem and restore God's good creation. People want to be part of something that is **making a difference in their community.** In Elaine Heath's *The Mystic Way of Evangelism*, she has an entire chapter dedicated to "Eco-evangelism." Go - Tell - Baptize/Initiate - Make Disciples!

We can help people discover their calling to the work of Regenerative Agriculture and Creation Care. See what Elaine Heath and friends are doing at Spring Forest, [www.springforest.org](http://www.springforest.org)

**Practice the elevator speech.** Chance encounters will offer 30 seconds to tell someone: *What, Why, the Impact, and How to join us.* The elevator speech will become a great way to open the conversation with decision makers. This is 30 seconds to capture someone's imagination.

## ENGAGING DECISION MAKERS

Engaging decision makers will go much better when Creation Care Teams have done the research, know the data, walked through the process, engaged neighbors, have taken action, measured results, and know the policy required to effect the necessary change.

**Take Action Tuesday** is an outreach of RAFI-USA. Each Tuesday they send an email with the issue and talking points to contact elected officials. Join the email list here: [www.rafiusa.org/blog/category/action-alerts](http://www.rafiusa.org/blog/category/action-alerts)

**The General Board of Church and Society** has great training resources for contacting decision makers and making the policy ask [www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/creating-change-together-801](http://www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/creating-change-together-801)



Put your experience to work communicating the good that is being done along with the public policies that need to be adopted with your elected officials by phone, email, or in person.

Check out this YouTube video on Faithful Creation Justice Advocacy. This is a wealth of information for Engaging Decision Makers [www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYcDPOF8rmQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYcDPOF8rmQ)

You may want to subscribe to **UMCreation Justice emails**, [www.umcreationjustice.org](http://www.umcreationjustice.org)

The basics of an in-person meeting with a decision-maker include:

- 1) Develop your elevator speech.
- 2) Research and know the decision-maker.
- 3) Plan your meeting with data and story around the impacts.

- 4) Know who is speaking and the goal of each speaker.
- 5) Have the storytellers present at the meeting with the decision maker or her staff.
- 6) Rehearse!
- 7) Know your ask and respectfully make your ask.

## CONCLUSION – GO! LET'S CULTIVATE COMMUNITY FOR THE HEALING OF THE EARTH

While this toolbox is not exhaustive, we know it is certainly extensive! Don't let that be overwhelming - none of us are called to tackle every action in this toolbox. We are called to employ our time, talent, and energy in those actions that create the good needed in our community. With many people working in their communities, we will see the transformation of the worldwide community.

The work of Creation Care is holistic, touching every aspect of our lives. And so, it will take all of us, joining alongside God for the transformation of the world. We pray that this toolbox empowers you to find a starting point and take the first step in this holy work. We invite you to open this toolbox to find what work God is calling you and your community to do at this time. Engage with the learning materials and connect with your neighbors as you respond to God's call.

We are so thankful for your willingness to join us and your community in this journey to a redeemed and restored creation. Please keep the NCCUMC Creation Care Team apprised of your work. Other congregations and missional networks can use your successful models in their communities.





Creation Care Team  
REGENERATIVE  
AGRICULTURE  
ADVOCACY  
TOOLBOX

Caretakers  of God's Creation  
North Carolina Conference  
United Methodist Church 