

New Energy for New Town:

**A PLAN TO REDUCE ENERGY USE AND OTHER
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS BY THE NEW TOWN
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

Prepared for the NEW TOWN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

**By James Rosenthal, ZERO EMISSIONS ROAD TRIP
with Emily Andree**

May 2006

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
AT THE CHURCH	2
IN MEMBERS' HOMES	3
IN BETWEEN	4
ABOUT ZERT	5

Introduction

In Genesis, humans are given dominion over fish, birds, and “every living thing that moves upon the Earth.” This is often interpreted to mean that humans not only have the power to exploit the Earth’s resources but also have a responsibility to manage and protect these resources. “Every living thing that moves” depends on a delicate balance that human activity can easily disrupt.

It is easy to forget that our daily activities can play a role in disrupting this balance. In the January 1, 2006, issue of *New Town News*, Pastor David wrote, “This year we do not want to focus upon faith in the abstract or theoretical, but this year we want to be guided into the application of our lives to faith.” By being mindful of the consequences of our actions, we can ensure that we fulfill our responsibility as stewards and that the Earth continues to be a habitable place for all living things.

Energy and the Environment

Most human activity consumes energy, and this energy usually is derived from fossil fuels. When we burn fossil fuels for energy, carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere, contributing to global climate change. We also affect the environment by releasing toxins and degrading habitat in other ways.

Opportunities within the New Town UMC

The staff of the New Town United Methodist Church includes the minister, assistant minister, program chair, youth minister, and Sunday school superintendent. The staff can help make the Church more environmentally not only by changing their own behavior, but also by helping shape the behavior of the entire Church membership.

The Church currently has around 270 members, and its new facilities will accommodate a thousand. The Church has the potential to reach a lot of people. Most of these families include children, and there is an opportunity to instill conservation behaviors at an early age.

A Plan for Improvement

The New Town United Methodist Church already does some things that reduce its negative environmental effects, such as its use of compact fluorescent light bulbs and recycling efforts. The Church can build on this good start to become a model for environmental practices.

This plan is divided into three sections, “At the Church” and “In Members’ Homes,” and “In Between.”

At the Church

Three principles cover the changes that can be made at the church, “Turn It Off,” “Save a Tree,” and “Buy the Best.”

Turn It Off

The basic idea behind this principle is to turn things off when they’re not in use. This includes lights, computers, office equipment, and other electric devices.

- **Computers.** Computers should be put to sleep if they’re not going to be used for ten minutes. If a computer isn’t going to be used for an hour, it should be shut all the way down.
- **Photocopiers.** Photocopiers are one of the greatest energy users in an office. Plan photocopying so that it can be done in batches, allowing the photocopier to be turned off in between.
- **Powerstrips.** Some things keep using energy even when they’re off, including computers and anything that goes into “standby” mode. These stealth energy users should be connected to power strips that are turned off whenever the computer or other device is turned off. This ensures that they’re *really* off.

Save a Tree

Using paper not only consumes trees, it also consumes a lot of energy. Thankfully, there are ways to reduce paper use.

- **Print and photocopy double sided.** This should be set as the default mode.
- **Communicate electronically.** Consider what information can be distributed electronically and what must be printed on paper. Give members the option to receive the *New Town News* and other material via Adobe Acrobat files that are emailed or some other electronic format.

Buy the Best

The Church can make a big difference by purchasing more environmentally friendly equipment and supplies.

- **Buy efficient.** Energy efficiency should be considered in all equipment purchasing. Even if there’s a slightly greater initial cost, that money will likely be exceeded by the energy savings. Look for devices with the Energy Star logo.
- **Computers.** The most energy-efficient computers are laptops, because they have to be efficient to run on their batteries. They’re also more convenient and needn’t cost much more than a desktop computer.
- **Printers and fax machines.** Inkjet printers and fax machines can produce the same quality as laser printers and fax machines but use a fraction of the energy.
- **Faucet filters.** Water coolers consume a lot of energy. A more environmentally friendly option is to install faucet filters that filter the water coming out of the tap.
- **Reusables.** Instead of paper cups, Styrofoam bowls, and plastic flatware, use reusable plastic cups and bowls and metal flatware for children’s programs. Then let the children wash their dishes and teach them water conservation habits, such

- as not running the water continuously when washing. When food is served, consider local, organic, and vegetarian options, all of which are gentler on the environment.
- **Cleaning supplies.** Buying environmentally friendly cleaning supplies helps prevent toxins and other pollutants from entering our waters.
 - **Recycle or donate the old.** When replacing old equipment, donate it if it still works and find out how to recycle it if it doesn't.
 - **Good working order.** Maintaining equipment in good working order helps keep up its efficiency. Clean refrigerator coils to keep it cooling competently.
 - **Support local businesses.** When possible, support your community by purchasing from locally owned businesses.

In Members' Homes

The Church has many ways of reaching its growing membership, including sermons, Sunday school, evening programs, the *New Town News*, and bulletin boards. These means of communication can be used to increase awareness of environmental issues and encourage conservation behaviors both in the church and at home.

Top Ten Ways to Reduce Energy Use at Home

1. **Turn it off.** It's so simple: when you're not using something, turn it off.
2. **Install compact fluorescent lights.** They fit most light fixtures, provide ample and attractive light, and pay for themselves many times over through energy savings.
3. **Buy Energy Star appliances.** The Energy Star logo ensures that you're buying efficient equipment that will lower your energy costs.
4. **Turn the water heater down to 120°.** Anything above that is wasted heat that you won't use.
5. **Wash your clothes with cold water.** They'll get just as clean without the extra energy expense.
6. **Take short showers.** Since you presumably like your showers hot, make them hot and short.
7. **Keep your refrigerator coils clean.** Don't make your refrigerator work harder than it has to.
8. **Weatherize your house.** Weatherstripping prevents your hot and cold air from leaking out of the house. If it's not time to invest in insulating windows and doors, use storm windows and storm doors.
9. **Use window shading.** Let the sun in when you need heat. Block the sun to keep it cool. Use shading to help insulate your windows when it's cold.
10. **Keep learning.** Search the Internet. Read a book or magazine at the library. There's a lot of information out there about how you can live in harmony with the planet.

In Between

How Church members get between home and the church can have tremendous environmental consequences. Members should be encouraged to find alternatives to driving alone. If a member lives close, walking or biking can be a pleasant option. Car pooling can allow Church members to get to know each other better. Riding the bus can allow members to meet other people in their community. The new church location is easily accessible on the Williamsburg Area Transport bus network.

About ZERT

As a committed environmentalist, I used to regard cars as the root of all evil. Ever expanding highways fragment our landscape. They suck life out of communities, as people drive to big-box stores selling cheap goods made at the other end of the globe.

Most of the wealthiest corporations sell either cars or gas, a concentration of power with immense environmental implications. Cars have disconnected people from their neighbors, and burning gas emits carbon dioxide, which contributes to global climate change.

But cars are more than a way from Point A to Point B. Driving is a distinct pleasure. Intercity buses are more fuel efficient, but riding a bus allows no spontaneity, no discovery. Driving, I am in control of my destiny, and I am free to take the most roundabout way wherever I am headed.

To curb our impact on climate change, zero emissions is the ideal, for buildings, transportation, and every element of our society. Zero emissions doesn't mean that no energy is used and no carbon emitted. If carbon is emitted, some action must be taken to offset that emission. Zero emissions is the net effect.

Cross-country road trips can result in tons of carbon dioxide released. But is it possible to take a road trip with no net emissions, or even negative net emissions? To find out, I have embarked on a Zero Emissions Road Trip, or ZERT for short. As I travel around the country, emitting carbon, I must find ways to reduce other energy use, to achieve zero net emissions.

This Document

New Energy for New Town is part of my effort to reduce energy use in Williamsburg, Virginia. Please let me know what you think about this plan and keep me updated about your progress in implementing it.

Email me at zeroemissions@gmail.com

Follow my progress and share your thoughts at <http://zeroemissionsroadtrip.com>