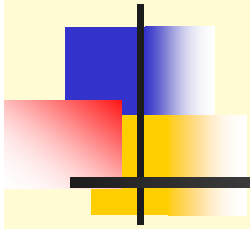


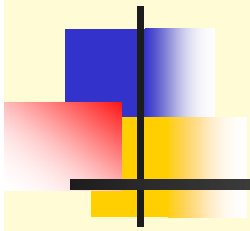
THE PRACTICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP



A Survey of Churches and Worship Centers
in the
Holland / Zeeland / Saugatuck / Douglas and
Surrounding Lakeshore Communities

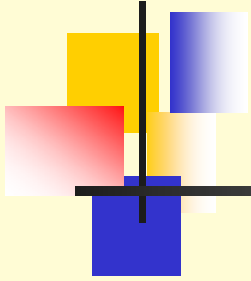
A RESEARCH PROJECT FOR

WEST MICHIGAN CREATION CARE



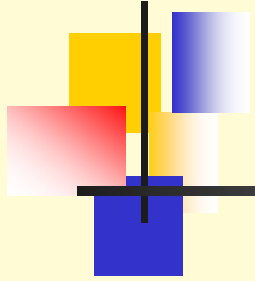
Prepared by:
Megan Mullins, PhD

The Carl Frost Center for Social Science Research
Hope College
December 2007



WEST MICHIGAN CREATION CARE

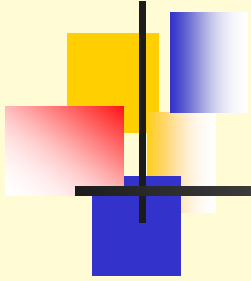
An interdenominational group that provides a theologically based voice to contemporary public discussion of the natural world.



WEST MICHIGAN CREATION CARE

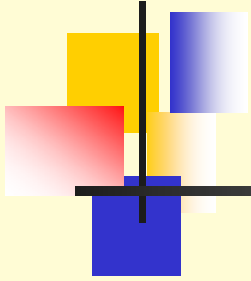
Goals

- Be a community where discussion and reflection encourage a faith-based understanding of God's love for creation and our proper place in it
- Be a place where local environmental concerns and solutions can be discussed and advocated
- Encourage area churches and worship centers, both individually and collectively, in their development of a voice for environmental stewardship.



WEST MICHIGAN CREATION CARE

Its members come from West Michigan lakeshore communities and represent lakeshore churches and worship centers. The group meets under the banner of Western Theological Seminary's *Journey Program*.



RESEARCH PURPOSE

- This presentation highlights results from a 2007 survey of church and worship center environmental stewardship practices.
 - The purpose of this research was to identify...
 - Existing activities,
 - Future plans, and
 - Service gaps
- ...in stewardship practices at churches and worship centers in Holland, Zeeland, Saugatuck, Douglas, and the surrounding lakeshore communities.



DATA COLLECTION

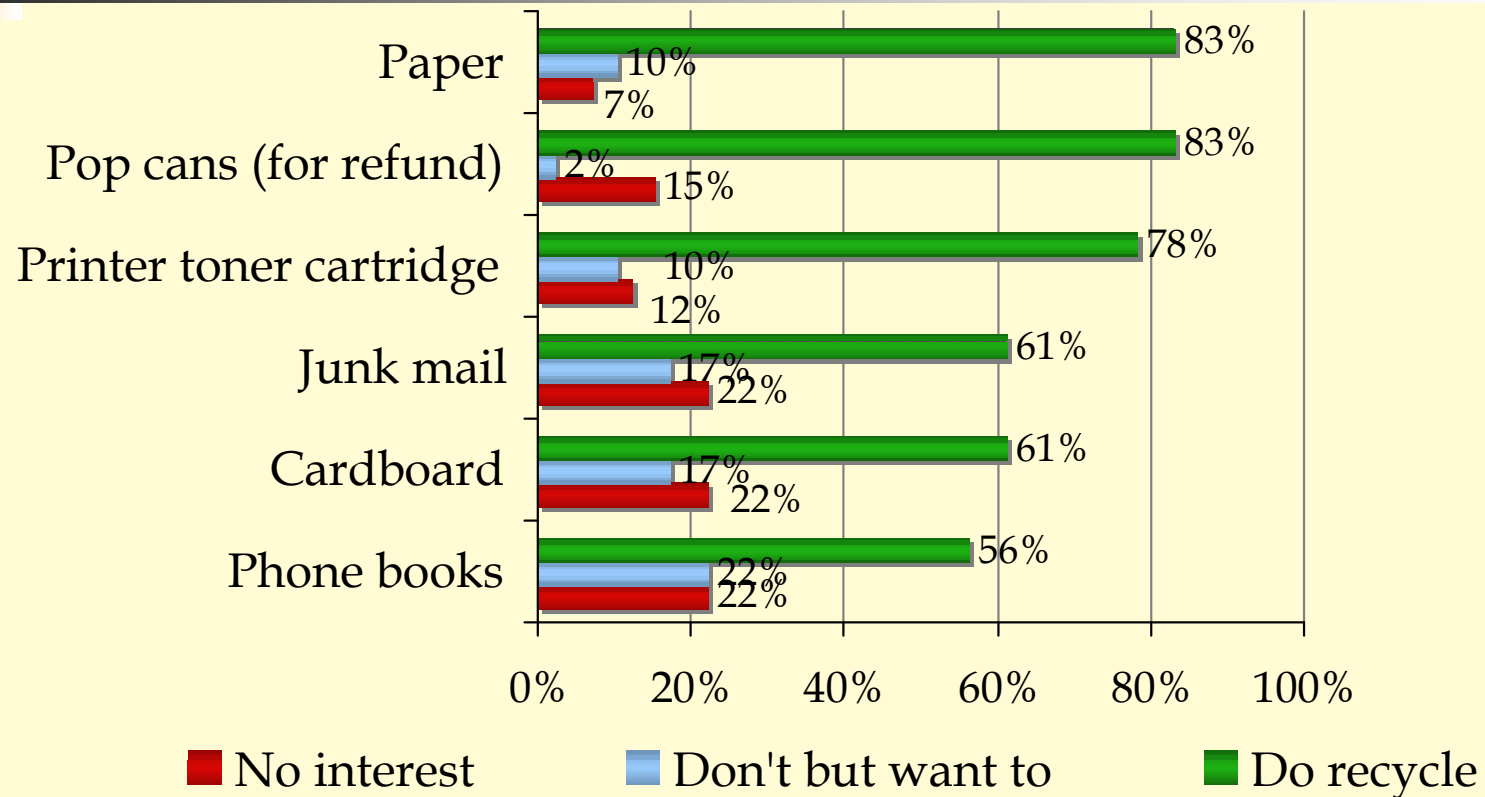
- Survey developed by West Michigan Creation Care with support and advisement from the Frost Research Center at Hope College.
- Data collected Oct. 1st - Nov. 15th, 2007.
- 140 surveys were distributed
- 42 surveys returned = 30% response rate



KEY FINDINGS

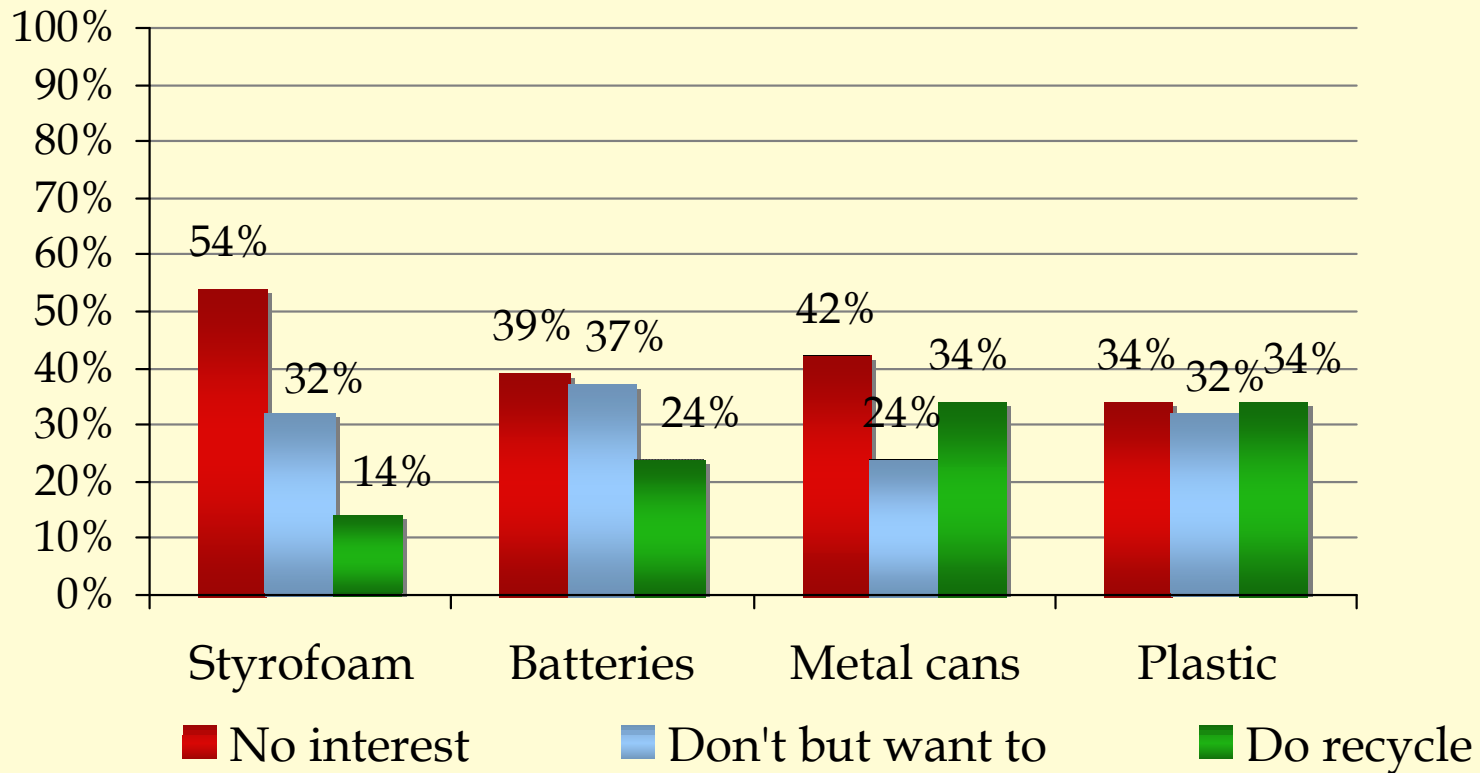
- *Most stewardship practices of those churches and worship centers surveyed entail recycling and conservation of energy consumption through changes in lighting and water usage.*
- *More had educational curriculum on stewardship practices for children than adults.*
- *Respondents asked for more education and resources on this issue.*

MOST FREQUENT ITEMS RECYCLED



Most popular recyclable items were paper and aluminum cans.

LEAST FREQUENT ITEMS RECYCLED

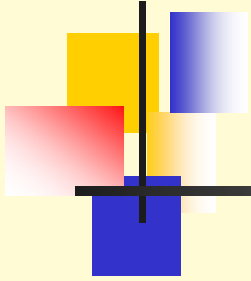


Styrofoam and metal cans were least likely to be recycled.



ENCOURAGE INDIVIDUAL RECYCLING?

- 43% said their church or worship center encourages individuals to recycle by...
 - Talking/teaching/providing information,
 - Sorting recyclables, or by
 - Making recycling containers available/providing recycling at the church.



COMMENTS...

Containers at church for used ink jet cartridges, pop cans and bottles, separate trash receptacles in office and kitchen.

Newsletter articles.

Right now only by talking. We don't have a specific plan.

We furnish information about what is recyclable, who accepts the various items, cost, contact info, etc.



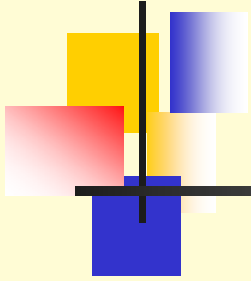
ON ENERGY USE...

- 20% of respondents said their church had completed an energy audit. Of this group...
- *3 churches/worship centers were willing to share their audits with West Michigan Creation Care members.*



TOP 6 CHANGES WITHIN LAST 5 YEARS TO REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION

- To reduce energy consumption...
 - 54% had switched to florescent light bulbs,
 - 42% had switched to reduced energy bulbs,
 - 39% had made changes to heating use,
 - 29% had made insulation changes,
 - 49% had changed water and toilet use, and
 - 34% had made changes to windows.
- No respondents reported using solar, wind, or bio-fuel as alternate forms of energy.



EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM

- 10% reported using curriculum based on stewardship of natural resources.
- Curriculum used were...
 - Printed materials, DVDs, presentations, informal conversations, and Internet resources.
- 20% had invited a person speak to the congregation on environmental stewardship.



CURRICULUM FOR CHILDREN

- 35% reported having included environmental stewardship in their programming for children. This programming consisted of...
 - Camp programming,
 - Earth Day classes and activities,
 - Trash pick-up,
 - Recycling, and
 - Inclusion of environmental stewardship in teaching about creation.



PARTICIPATION IN WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS/CONFERENCES

- 24% reported having someone from their organization attend special events on environmental stewardship, such as those sponsored by...
 - Land Conservancy West Michigan,
 - National Council of Churches,
 - WEST group,
 - Creation Care, and
 - The Step It Up rally.



EXISTING MISSIONS/TASK FORCES

- 9 respondents (22%) said their church has a mission group or task force addressing environmental stewardship. Those groups identified were...
 - Green Team (3),
 - Caring for Creation Ministry,
 - Ecology Group,
 - Stewardship Committee,
 - Faith in Action, and the
 - Taking Grace Green Commission.



HOW WEST MICHIGAN CREATION CARE CAN HELP CONGREGATIONS

- 18 respondents (43%) said that West Michigan Creation Care could help their congregation by...
 - Providing education (information, tools, resources) (61%),
 - Speaking to congregations about environmental stewardship (11%),
 - Establishing networks via in-person or email contact (11%).



COMMENTS/THEMES...

Keep sending us more information. We are quite serious about this and want to move from the talking stage to action.

Give us practical advice on how to care for God's world.

Put the issue in front of the congregation and provide some educational materials or a special speaker.

Send info via email with new ideas/suggestions.



OTHER STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

- A few other projects occurring at churches or worship centers were mentioned such as ...
 - Development of nature trails/Recreation of wetlands,
 - Task force on climate change and study groups,
 - Environmentally friendly building upgrades,
 - A youth club with environmental projects, and
 - Reduction of energy bills through thermostat upgrades and conservative water use.



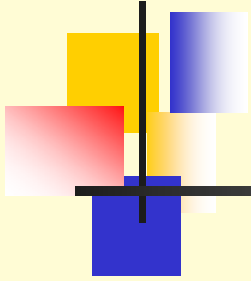
OTHER DESIRED ACTIVITIES

- Participants said they would like to see more...
 - Children's activities related to stewardship,
 - Adult education related to stewardship,
 - Increased product recycling,
 - Use of environmentally friendly products,
 - Increased energy efficiency, and
 - Increased education on stewardship and integration into worship goals and practice
- ... at their churches or worship centers.



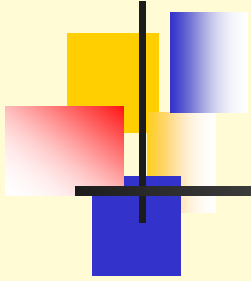
SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- Most respondents report their churches/worship centers are active in environmental stewardship through recycling and by making changes to improve energy efficiency.
- However,
 - Under half encourage individuals to recycle, and
 - Most curriculum on environmental stewardship is included in curriculum for children rather than for adults.



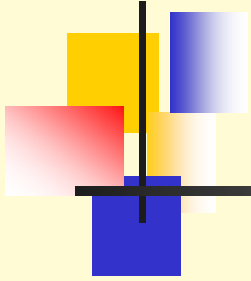
Additionally...

- While churches/worship centers said they want more information on this issue...
 - Less than 20% had invited someone speak to their congregation about this issue, and
 - Less than 25% had staff or church members who had attended faith-based workshops, seminars, or conferences on this issue.
- A few respondents did indicate they are invested in this topic and are already working on projects addressing environmental stewardship.



CONCLUSION

There is a clear and identified need for education on environmental stewardship practices in these churches and worship centers.



CONTACTS

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops	www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp
National Council of Churches of Christ	www.nccecojustice.org
Reformed Church of America-Care for Creation	www.rca.org
Evangelical Environmental Network	www.creationcare.org
Coalition on the Environment & Jewish Life	www.coejl.org/index.php
Michigan Interfaith Power and Light	www.miipl.org
Local West Michigan environmental links	www.greenwestmichigan.org
Energy Information	www.westmichiganenergy.org
W.M. Strategic Alliance/Green Infrastructure	www.wm-alliance.org
U.S. Green Building Council	www.usgbc.org
WMEAC-Religion, Ecology & Spirituality	www.wmeac.org

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