

## Green Corner: Education is the Key to Change at St. Francis

“Education is key to environmental stewardship,” says Dr. John Carpenter. John, a former professor of Environmental Science at the University of South Carolina, is the unofficial environmental guardian at St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal Church in Chapin, SC.

If you are interested in piloting a sustainability initiative in your parish, John recommends reading *A Catechism of Creation: An Episcopal Understanding* <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/CreationCatechism.pdf>

“This is a Biblically-based pamphlet that helps people understand it is our responsibility to care for creation,” John says. He uses this booklet to persuade parishioners that environmental issues should be a priority in the church.

### **Projects Completed**

Under John’s direction, St. Francis made changes both large and small over the last several years. They changed all their light bulbs to more energy-efficient Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL) or Light-emitting Diode (LED). “Most are LED except for some tube lights,” John says.

They installed programmable thermostats in both the sanctuary and the parish hall. Some of their bathroom lights now automatically switch off after a certain amount of time. They recycle plastic, glass, batteries, light bulbs, and all paper.

St. Francis replaced all the windows in their buildings with double-paned, energy-efficient glass. “We recently included a connector from the parish hall to the sanctuary,” John says. “All of that glass is double-paned, too.” They even got help from a parishioner who just happens to be a professional landscaper to modify their landscaping for better drainage.

### **Future projects**

Recently, John collaborated with other sustainability-focused parishioners on a grant proposal to add 100 new trees throughout the town of Chapin. Unfortunately, they were turned down.

That setback does not mean they will abandon the project. “We are going to continue to plant more trees to help extract pollutants from the air,” John says. They are also replacing dying trees on their property with “more air pollution extraction-sensitive trees,” such as Tulip Poplars or Dawn Redwoods.

John will continue to provide sustainability education for parishioners and community members. “I have taught classes to community members and Sunday School classes to both children and adults. Several people are helping me beat the drums and get the word out: We are called to take care of the Earth.”

As John points out, St. Francis of Assisi is the patron saint of animals and ecology. He hopes that his namesake parish can continue to live up to St. Francis’ example and care for creation. Right now, he feels that they are in a good place. “I am not sure what else we can do to be more environmentally friendly at this point!” Way to go, John!