

Adas Israel Congregation

Environmental Policy Statement

September 2007

Environmental Vision

Caring for the environment is a deeply Jewish value. The opening chapters of the Torah describe the origin of humanity as part of all Creation, and describe our first home as a lush and fruitful Garden. We are told that the first earthling was made from the clay of the earth, and was placed in the Garden to till it and tend it. Our rabbis of old imagined God saying to Adam: “See my works, how fine and excellent they are! All that I created, I created for you. Reflect on this, and do not corrupt or desolate my world; for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you.”

Our sacred texts tell us that we are part of God’s Creation and that we have a central role in caring for this planet—a planet that sustains billions of human beings and millions of species, all part of the sacred web of life on Earth. Among many Jewish teachings related to the Earth’s resources, our tradition teaches the mitzvot of *bal tashchit*—not to waste, of *tzaar baalei hayim*—concern for the suffering of all living things, and of *shmita*—allowing the earth to rest and restore its productivity naturally every seven years.

Adas Israel Congregation affirms our Jewish heritage and the importance of thoughtful stewardship of the environment, particularly in a time when the threats to the planet from energy use are an increasingly serious cause for concern. As part of our commitment to *tikkun olam*, Adas Israel will seek to make ecologically sensitive decisions, to become a leader in raising awareness and promoting change within the Jewish community and the Washington area, and to bring the Adas Israel building and its environs, as well as our community of members, into a relationship of sustainability and harmony with Creation that is a profound expression of our Jewish values.

Policy Goals

Three goals will guide Adas Israel’s efforts in the coming years. Within each goal, a draft action plan with more specific programs and priorities is provided below.

1. *Adas Israel’s Building*: Reduce the ecological footprint of Adas Israel’s building and environs, including such things as reduced energy usage, improved recycling programs, greener food strategies, and planning for renovations in infrastructure.

2. *Adas Israel’s Community*: Through education and direct change programs, encourage the membership of Adas Israel to “walk lightly on the Earth,” with a primary focus on the most urgent issue -- reducing the community’s energy use (“carbon footprint”).

3. *Wider Community*: Adas Israel will seek to engage its membership in environmental projects as a congregation both within the Jewish community and within the wider Washington area, working with other synagogues and interfaith organizations to gain the maximum effectiveness for our efforts.

Draft Action Plan

The action plan outlines the congregation's top priorities for each of the three policy goals over the coming 12-18 months. Comments and feedback on these priorities will be greatly appreciated; the action plan will be revised and updated periodically based on input from the Adas Israel community.

1. Adas Israel's Building: Reduce the ecological footprint of Adas Israel's building and environs.

- Lighting:
 - Conduct an audit of the synagogue's lighting to identify opportunities to decrease lighting energy use while maintaining or improving light quality; measures may include replacing inefficient fixtures with more efficient fixtures, replacing incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, installing and adjusting lighting controls (including dimmers and occupancy/vacancy sensors), de-lamping, and others
 - Put in place procedures to ensure that burned out fluorescent lamps are recycled

- Recycling and source reduction programs:
 - Conduct an audit of waste disposal procedures throughout the synagogue. Take steps to ensure that the synagogue recycles all those materials it is required by law to recycle.
 - Research opportunities to reduce paper consumption by, for example, installing and using duplexers on select office printers

- Food and kitchen strategies:
 - Increase the proportion of food served in the synagogue that is local and sustainably grown
 - Implement cost-effective water- and energy-saving measures in the Kay Hall, Gewirz Hall, Gan HaYeled, and staff kitchens

- Building envelope and equipment:
 - Conduct a comprehensive audit of the building envelope and mechanical equipment
 - Implement short-term measures (pluck the low-hanging fruit) to reduce energy consumption and garner immediate utility bill savings
 - Incorporate medium- and long-term measures into existing capital replacement plans

- Green energy:
 - In concert with the aforementioned efforts to reduce energy consumption, strive to meet the synagogue's remaining energy needs through direct procurement of green energy and/or green tags (carbon offsets)

2. *Adas Israel's Education and Action:* Encourage the membership of Adas Israel to “walk lightly on the Earth.”

-- Education and awareness programs:

- Hold congregational/community events featuring speakers on topics related to environmental sustainability
- Incorporate environmental themes into divrei Torah delivered from the bimah and into holiday programming such as the Tu B'shevat seder
- Take up sustainability-related topics in adult education and in religious school classes

-- Direct change programs:

- Hold a campaign in the weeks leading up to Hanukah to encourage congregants to install compact fluorescent light bulbs in their homes; models include the ENERGY STAR[®] Change a Light, Change the World Campaign and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life's (COEJL) How Many Jews Does it Take to Change a Light Bulb Campaign
- Encourage and facilitate congregants' purchase of green energy and/or green tags (carbon offsets) for their homes
- Work with Bnai Mitzvah families to incorporate environmental concerns into their simcha planning, particularly in working with caterers on menus.
- Gain synagogue approval to hand each Bar/Bat Mitzvah teen on the bimah a compact fluorescent light bulb as a gift from the congregation as a symbol of commitment to work for tikkun olam.

3. *Wider Community:* Adas Israel will seek to engage its membership in environmental projects as a congregation both within the Jewish community and within the wider Washington area.

-- Participation in existing challenges and organizational coalitions: As examples, Adas Israel will seek to become a partner in the Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light coalition of religious institutions that are committed to working against global warming. The congregation will leverage the resources and expertise of existing programs and seek additional opportunities to increase the visibility of its commitment within the broader community by partnering with leading organizations and programs such as ENERGY STAR, Shomrei Adamah, COEJL, and the Teva Learning Center. Adas Israel might also join the Cool Capital Challenge, a combined effort with businesses, environmentalists, governments, and the greater DC community to meet the challenge of global warming and cut the city's combined carbon dioxide emission by 1 billion pounds by Earth Day 2008.

-- Congregational projects:

- Hanukkah 2007 CFL project
- Spring 2008 outdoor clean up