

The green focus for this Holy Week of 2020 continues our quest as a sustainable Green Faith Congregation working together to heal our Planet on this 50th Anniversary of Earth Day. Last year we celebrated 10 years as a GreenFaith certified United Methodist Church, forrecognized community leader in environmental stewardship, and the first United Methodist Church. Our Red Bank umchurch was founded in 1864 and we have worshipped in our present church location since 1944.

The green certification process began in 2009 with audits of all aspects of church life, including trash, which led us to change from using plastic to finding alternatives and we began an active recycling focus. This included banning plastic from our church building and programs as much as possible – straws, Styrofoam containers, cups, flatware and more and going to reusable and washable. Our past decisions were led by pastors such as Len Rowell and Merna Bethke, and continues today with Pastor Jessica Naulty. Our strong history of Methodist social principles of caring for God’s creation, and church members who understood the environmental costs of not caring, gave support to GF programs. Working with other faith groups in our area, we found ways to recycle through Terracycle.com, a NJ company, and now TREX.com.

Our Green Team sponsors an annual Green Fair each spring, but this year is different due to the corona virus. We will do as much as possible online, on our church website, in virtual displays, and with homebased efforts. We continue to care for our environment with relevant articles, projects to do at home with gardening, picking up litter, recycling or removing plastics, advocating for green fuels, and eliminating toxins such as Round Up, to protect pollinators crucial for our food sources. Please join us in this as everyone can help sustain our planet.

The TREX Challenge grew out of last year’s Green Fair, when some Shrewsbury Borough students came to teach us about the Bench Challenge. They were 8th grade student council leaders who were collecting single stream plastic film under a program from TREX, an international company that constructs recycled plastic decking and furniture, and works with major retail chains to collect the plastic we use and throw away. The Challenge was to collect and sort and weigh 500 pounds of plastic film in 6 months, and the reward was a beautiful Trex bench, worth about \$300. So we took up the challenge, led by the energy and time of Barbara Valenti Bobbie Ridgely, and members of the green team. And we did it and more, collecting 600 in 5 months, and now collecting plastic to donate to other faith groups, including The Presbyterian Church at Shrewsbury, the Reformed Church in Colts Neck, and working with the Unitarian congregation in Lincroft. We have plans to assist area schools in this project, but all is on hold now. We are still recycling plastic and will continue to encourage others, and you can too. 1) remember what is acceptable: bubble wrap, cereal liners, plastic covers for drinks and paper products such as toilet paper and paper towels, and all single use plastic bags (now being used to slow down the spread of covid 19), and plastics #2 and #4. You can drop off at participating stores, such as Acme, Stop n Shop, Target, Whole Foods, Kohls, and Wegman’s, or save in your garage for when our building is again open. Look for some home activities to do in Eblast this week!