There is no set way or best method to begin a program to green your congregation. There are many ways that congregations get involved. The Green Congregation Program can be initiated by the pastoral leadership, the staff, the governing board, or a social concerns committee. This program gives the steps for several interested lay people to initiate the program by forming a Green Team.

It may be best for the committee for greening to have its own group rather than be one part of a larger committee agenda. We call it a “team” to distinguish it from a standing committee that has certain tasks in one area. The difference is that the role of a Green Team is not to do all the projects related to care for creation. Rather, the Green Team serves as leaven and functions as a catalyst for all the committees and groups in the congregation to take responsibility for care for creation in their area of responsibility and involvement. The task of the Green Team depends on the partnership of other individuals and groups in the congregation. The goal is for the entire congregation to take ownership as a “Green Congregation.”

1. **Find out who might be interested in joining a Green Team:**
   - Personal invitation
   - Announcement
   - Educational program

2. **Getting organized**
   - Gather a small group of people (2 to 8) to serve as a Green Team.
   - Become familiar with the Green Congregation program. Read the Manual. Check the Web site.
   - Inform/invoke the pastor(s)/staff as to your interest and commitment.
   - Approach the church governing board for authorization to proceed.
   - Choose a name for your Green Team (See “Names and Symbols”)

3. **Develop an Action Plan for the congregation in several or all of these areas**
   - Worship
   - Education
   - Building and Grounds
   - Discipleship at Home and Work
   - Public Witness and Community Involvement

4. **Next steps**
   - Work with the appropriate committees/individuals to carry out the Action Plan.
   - Meet regularly (monthly) to follow the Action Plan and to develop new projects
   - Promote with members your identity as a congregation that cares for creation.
   - Consider using some of the “Eight Strategies for Engaging the Whole Congregation”
   - Consider a congregational project to benefit the community/city of location

5. **Other tasks**
   - Review the “Strategies and Principles” for the Green Congregation Program
   - Discuss “What Church Leaders Should Learn about the Caring for Creation”

6. **Long term concerns**
   - Find structural ways to assure the long term life and activities of the Green Team
   - Adopt the Green Congregation Mission Statement.
   - Apply to be recognized as a Green Congregation in the Green Congregation Program
Promoting Care for Creation in Your Congregation: A Checklist

One key way to give your parish an identity as a congregation that cares for creation is to keep announcements, suggestions, and reminders before the congregation.

1. **Employ seven media.** Experts say that if you want to get a message across, do it in seven different media. Here are some:
   - Bulletins
   - Newsletters
   - E-mails
   - Announcements/talks in worship
   - Bulletin boards
   - Phone calls, word of mouth
   - Develop a prominent section of your church website
   - Local newspapers.

2. **Brief items of information and inspiration.** In the various media listed above, put informative materials before the congregation on why we care and what to do. These are available online to be placed regularly in bulletins or newsletters.
   - Bible Verses (52 for the weeks of the year)
   - Eco-tips (52 for the weeks of the year)
   - Brief articles on Environmental Stewardship by John Berge for newsletters
   - Excerpts from your social statements (52 available from the ELCA “Caring for Creation”)
   - Enter each week an item or action your congregation does for Earth-care
   - Stewardship of Creation: A Thirty Day Devotion: available as bulletin inserts

3. **Sign.** Put up a sign outside identifying your congregation as a green congregation or a creation-care center or a partner in Lutherans Restoring Creation.

4. **Mission Statement.** Incorporate care for creation into your mission statement and include the mission statement in the weekly bulletin or post it prominently in the church.

5. **Display.** Put a care for creation display in the narthex where people enter and leave the church. Rotate the content. Have a member of the LRC team present to comment and answer questions.

6. **Challenge.** Engage the congregation in a challenge: How many CFL lights can the congregation as a whole replace in their homes? Keep a rising chart of numbers in the church entrance. Announce how much burning coal and emissions have been prevented. Or ask members to sign onto a covenant with creation.

7. **Disciplines.** Use the seasons of the year to engage the congregations in study or practices. For example, engage members in a carbon fast in the Lenten season or agree to connect with nature in the spring time of the Easter season.

8. **Property project.** Choose a project on church property that brings the care for creation commitment before the community: garden, orchard, rain garden, solar panel, meditation garden, labyrinth.

9. **Earth Community on your property.** Identify all species of plants and animals as your earth community and declare them to be your worshiping partners.

10. **LRC Partner.** Sign up to get recognition as a partner of Lutherans Restoring Creation. Have the governing board and whole congregation adopt the statement of Green Congregations and develop an action plan. Receive a certificate honoring your efforts. Display it.

*Be consistent and stay the course. Eventually, you will be able to change the ethos of the congregation so that care for creation becomes an integral and natural part of your identity and mission.*