

# Interfaith coalition pushes conservation of energy

CHURCHES, TEMPLES MOBILIZE EFFORTS FOR THE SUMMER

By Dana Hull  
 Mercury News

At Montclair Presbyterian in Oakland, teens are selling energy-efficient light bulbs after Sunday church services to raise money for their youth group. Congregation Shir Hadash in Los Gatos has decided to install solar panels on the roof of the synagogue's offices.

They are among churches and temples across California that are mobilizing as an interfaith coalition to emphasize energy conservation and efficiency. With more than 50,000 congregations reaching 15 million people, Interfaith Power and Light could emerge as a formidable force in the race to save energy this summer.

"With California at the crossroads, now is the time to lead the way," said the Rev. Sally Bingham, co-founder of the new coalition and environmental minister of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. "The choice is clear: clean energy solutions for the short and long term, or dirty fixes that set the stage for a larger crisis in the future. As stewards of the Earth we want to lead by example."

Though some churches and synagogues are simply promoting the virtues of conservation, others are pushing a green agenda that includes solar power and other forms of alternative energy. Many congregations are already active around the issue of global warming, and say they are alarmed by President George



BEN MARGOT — ASSOCIATED PRESS

Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown installs low-wattage bulb Tuesday in St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Oakland.

Bush's recent decision to withdraw from the international climate-change treaty.

Religious leaders also say that biblical teachings stress the need to protect Earth.

## Wake-up call

"Conservation does make a difference," said John B. Cobb, professor emeritus at the Claremont School of Theology. "We hope that this is a wake-up call and a reminder that human beings are living beyond the sustainable limits."

The Share the Light! campaign kicked off Tuesday with a morning news conference in Sacramento and an afternoon briefing at St. Augustine's Church in downtown Oakland. While some churches are con-

ducting energy audits of their places of worship, others are setting up emergency funds to help members pay rising utility costs. St. Augustine's has already dispensed cash to some parishioners, many of whom are senior citizens.

"We take seriously the governor's call to conserve, and we envision the religious community leading the way," said Scott Anderson, executive director of the California Council of Churches. "This grows out of our concern for God's creation. Our misuse of energy can damage the planet."

## Welcome help

State officials welcome the help. Conservation is considered key if the state is going to weather the summer, and outreach efforts are critical. A number of churches have volunteered to help the state distribute energy-efficient light bulbs in low-income communities in the coming weeks.

"The involvement of the faith community is a tremendous boost to the administration's effort to get the word out," said Mary Nichols, California's secretary of resources. "They can reach people that government can't, and often frame the message of conservation in terms of generosity and concern for others."

## IF YOU'RE INTERESTED

Congregations interested in joining Share the Light! may call the California Interfaith Power and Light, (510) 444-4078 or go to [www.interfaithpower.org](http://www.interfaithpower.org).

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# COURT | Judge rules against arbitration

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presented Santa Cruz County Tuesday, said he was not really surprised. "I've always thought that our legal position was right," he said. "So I was pleased."

The league previously has asked for rulings on the issue from an appeals court in Fresno and from the state Supreme Court. Both courts declined to rule at that time.

Antonio Ruiz, who argued the case on behalf of the deputies' bargaining agent, Local 3 of the International Union of Operating Engineers, was surprised. He said the local-control sections of the state constitution "are not absolute," and that the Legislature has a right to make laws that contravene it for "a broader state purpose."

"I think this is going to be

extremely cumbersome — disruptive," Ruiz said. "This thing is going to throw into disarray the negotiations going on throughout the state."

"It's going to cause one huge headache."

Ruiz said that because the appeals process is slow, it will be "at least six months until

If upheld, the ruling would remove a weapon from the negotiating arsenal of public safety employees.

we get a hearing" before the 6th District Court of Appeal in San Jose. Deputies and union officials pointed out that the process leaves in place a contract that expired 10 months ago.

"You pick up stuff from the looks of people's faces," said union representative Tom

O'Brien, "and even the county people didn't look happy. They're concerned. I think they're very concerned."

Sen. John Burton, the San Francisco Democrat who sponsored the bill, seemed less concerned. "This ain't the final decision," he said through a spokesman. "SB 402 will be upheld down the line."

Deputies in Napa County also have requested binding arbitration, but Napa County administrators have agreed to the request. Some cities and counties have adopted binding arbitration laws on their own. The league's position, though, is that it shouldn't be mandated by the state.

Contact David L. Beck at [dbeck@sjmercury.com](mailto:dbeck@sjmercury.com) or at (831) 423-0960.

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