

Meet the 2016 Cool Climate Awardees!

CIPL is honored to award the following congregations for their excellence in caring for and protecting Creation through the following ways:

Energy Efficiency and Conservation:

Beth Chayim Chadashim, Los Angeles - Winner

- Repurposed sanctuary compliant with LEED standards
- Solar panels that supply 85% of the synagogues power needs installed on a heat deflecting roof
- High efficiency lighting and HVAC system
- Electric Vehicle charging station
- Solar shading and solar-powered Ner Tamid
- Energy Star appliances
- Low-flow toilets and waterless urinal
- Recycling and food composting

American Martyrs Catholic Church and School, Manhattan Beach – Honorable Mention

- 30-kilowatt solar system on Science Building
- Use of energy-efficient lighting
- Master plan to include 300-kilowatts of clean, renewable energy and drought-tolerant landscaping
- Composting at Pancake Breakfasts
- “Walking School Bus” encouraging walking to school
- School recycling program
- Event on “Laudato Si” and setting up of Green Team

Christ Church, Santa Rosa – Honorable Mention

- Switched to energy-efficient lighting
- Installed new low-flow toilets
- Installed a solar system
- Maintains organic produce garden for distribution to community
- Conducted Earth Day-themed worship service

Green Building:

First Congregational Church, UCC, Palo Alto – Winner

- 43.71 kW system, estimated to cover 97% of the church’s electrical needs during daylight hours
- Replacement of roof and strengthened insulation
- Use of energy-efficient lighting
- Replacement of grass and shrubs with drought tolerant landscaping, resulting
- Use of drip irrigation and “Smart” controller to control water flow

- Monthly reduction of water use by 51%, resulting in hundreds of thousands of gallons of water saved

St. Anthony Catholic High School, Long Beach – Honorable Mention

- 72-kilowatt solar system
- Installed energy-efficient lighting
- Use of air filters, allowing capture of particulate matter
- Use of double-pane windows and bathroom occupancy lighting sensors
- Drought-tolerant, native landscaping with drip irrigations

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Parish, Palo Alto – Honorable Mention

- Two solar systems totaling 62 kilowatts of clean power
- Switched to energy-efficient lighting
- Employs drought-tolerant landscaping, greatly reducing water usage
- Underwent an energy audit
- Has a standing Green Committee
- Strong educational and advocacy action, including legislative visits on climate and energy policy; presentation on “Laudato si”; and Earth Day celebration with list of actions to take and resources

Climate Education:

Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Bayside – Winner

Humboldt is a true leader – and example – of all-around climate education evidenced by its current areas of emphasis: War and Peace, Universal Health Care, Mass Extinction/Global Warming and Civil Liberties. Its very active Green Team puts the UU principle of the inter-connectedness of all life into living action not only for members of the congregations but for its surrounding community as well. It held an Earth Day Fair as well as Earth Day Service. Pastor Bryan Jessup has proclaimed in sermons the importance of action on Creation protection. Humboldt UU adopted energy- and water-saving measures, such as high-efficiency lighting and low-flow toilets and encouraged their members to take similar measures. The congregation is also a visible sign to its neighboring community through its use of solar, drought-tolerant landscaping and the recent planting of 40 California native trees.

Aloka Vihara Forest Monastery, Placerville – Honorable Mention

Centered on education of the inter-connectedness of all creation, Aloka Vihara Forest Monastery “walks the talk” through action aimed at creating a world in which all of Creation is respected and nurtured. The monastery is part of the Buddhist Climate Action Network, which led a march in Sacramento prior to the 2015 UN Climate Talks, urging “vigorous and effective actions to address the climate crisis.” One of the lead organizers of the march and members of the monastery, Sister Santacitta, integrates ‘learning from nature and bringing faith traditions to the climate movement’ in her ecological education and has been a key advocate in CIPL lobby delegations in Sacramento.

Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California – Honorable Mention

The Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California is a strong partner in advocating for climate justice in Oakland while also raising consciousness through the visual arts. As a longtime member of California Interfaith Power & Light the Center fosters greater understanding and collaboration with two other CIPL member congregations in the Faith Trio co-hosting with them a prayer gathering before a recent climate march. The Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California recently hosted a powerful exhibit - "Rite of Passage" Environmental Art Exhibition, curated by Minoosh Zomorodinia and Arash Shirinbab. This summer, ICCNC members participated in a public discussion responding to "Pope Francis and the Care for Creation in the South Asian Context" by Rev. Thomas Massaro at the Newman Center in Berkeley.

Climate Advocacy:

West Side Missionary Baptist Church, Oakland -

For the past 73 years, West Side Missionary Baptist Church has brought not only spiritual inspiration to its members but practical leadership in relevant issues to the wider community. Long concerned with issues affecting its community, West Side Missionary Baptist Church started BEDROC (Building Equity Discipline and Respect for Our Community) 20 years ago, which offers job training, internships, and academic support for youth. Like Faith Baptist Church, West Side Missionary and Pastor Chambers were instrumental in defeating a proposal to bring dirty coal from Utah for export through Oakland. As a result of the large coalition built in the No Coal in Oakland campaign, there is now a push for expanded "green jobs" training, job placement and education. And West Side Missionary Baptist Church remains at the forefront of these efforts.

Faith Baptist Church, Oakland – Honorable Mention

When the proposal to ship coal from Utah through to Oakland for export to China and other countries, multiple neighborhood, health, environmental, equity and faith groups banded together in stopping it. One of the congregations leading the charge was Faith Baptist Church in Oakland, led by Rev. Curtis Robinson, Sr. Pastor Curtis, along with a vocal and spirited group of faith leaders attended meetings, press conferences, city hall gatherings and made the moral case against the expansion of dirty coal projects with the accompanying damage to public health and the climate. Ultimately, like several cities in California in 2016, Oakland City Council voted unanimously to reject the project.

St. Benedict's Episcopal Church, Los Osos – Honorable Mention

St. Benedict's is an example in its region of advocacy for the swift and just transition from dirty-burning fossil fuels to renewable energy. The church's active Green Team advocates for federal climate and energy legislation, sponsors educational events, such as on the topic of sustainable seafood and supports Creation-themed sermons. In 2016, members of St. Benedict's attended rallies and meetings in an effort to defeat the Phillips 66 refinery in Nipomo Mesa to receive crude oil by train in addition to pipelines. The San Luis Obispo Planning Commission defeated this planned project. In addition, the church is attentive to water and energy use, installing energy-efficient lighting, low-flow toilets and drought tolerant landscaping.

First Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto – Honorable Mention

The Cool Planet Working Group of FPC advocated for the Presbyterian Church USA to divest from fossil fuels. It helped to form the national group, “Fossil Free PCUSA” and advocated in churches, Presbyteries and at the national General Assembly. Members of the Cool Planet team presented its campaign to Presbytery national gatherings in both 2014 and 2016, winning passage of it both times. Work on this divestment campaign has raised awareness and encouraged greater action at all levels on the Presbyterian Church USA.

Green Retreat Center:

La Casa de Maria, Santa Barbara

The mission of La Casa de Maria is to be a sanctuary of peace for individuals and groups as they renew purpose, strengthen community, and increase their effectiveness in the world. This renewal extends to all of Creation around La Casa as well. Owned by the religious order of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the grounds originally served as a beautiful novitiate for young women entering the religious life. After the forced laicization of the majority of the IHM Community, a retreat center was built on the grounds, known for its interfaith dialogues and prominent speakers on crucial justice issues.

The beautiful grounds, healthy and organic food, and downright hospitality make La Casa a very popular and well-known place for education, relaxation and centering. A decade ago La Casa called together a special committee whose job it was to envision a Creation-centered center. The dreams of the committee members have become reality, as today La Casa de Maria has taken, among others, the following measures: placement of two solar systems with plans for more; energy and water efficient guestrooms with low-flow toilets, aerators and energy-efficient lighting; high-efficiency HVAC; and the use of drought-tolerant landscaping. The retreat center is continuing its work with a long-term water stewardship plan that will include rooftop rainwater catchment systems, the use rain or diversion of water for laundry for grey water irrigation and toilet flushing, and increased conservation management through low-flow irrigation and fixture retrofits.

Climate Luminary:

Clando Brownlee, Jr, El Cajon

For more than a decade, Clando Brownlee, Jr. has been an environmental force for good in his church, community and the greater San Diego region. He works in coordination with many organizations, including the San Diego Children’s Coalition, the Green Business Bureau, Zero Waste San Diego, the Rotary and Kwanis Clubs, and even served as president of the nation’s first African-American Lions Club until just recently. His campaign, “Kool Climate Kids”, which was active from 2007-14, focused on environmental education to youth, through field trips to recycling centers, practical community resources on recycling and volunteering at fairs and events.

Amidst the multiple campaigns to which Clando devotes his time and energy, two stand out in particular: the recycling program in his home church of Ablaze for Jesus Christ Christian Fellowship in National City inspires youth to collect and recycle bottles and cans, and the proceeds go to Ablaze for Jesus missions in India; and the e-waste recycling campaigns that Clando coordinates aims to reuse parts and recycle in the U.S., rather than having corrosive and dangerous parts ending up in developing countries. In coordination with Home Depot, Clando assisted in the coordination of many California-wide e-recycling events, which diverted over eight million pounds of e-waste from landfills. In addition, the dismantling and re-use of e-waste parts creates jobs.