

# Eco Mindfulness for Gatherings

By: Regina Koda

I'm often asked why I'm so passionate about GREENING our local running & triathlon events and my answer is simple... I believe it is our responsibility to protect God's creation for current and future generations. Both large & small scale athletic events rarely consider environmental impact when planning a race, and the amount of waste produced from each event is sizeable. From water bottles & shirts to food waste & medals, these events can have a detrimental effect on our environment.

At an event, the #1 way to GO GREEN is to encourage the athletes to take accountability, reduce their carbon consumption and ask them to spread the word about GREENING, and the same applies to the church and its members. It's known as the "ripple effect." Change enacted locally is passed to other communities, where practices are shared and broadened. I commend you for addressing "Leaner & Greener" at the Diocesan Convention since it allows change to take place on a much wider scale and provides the resources for every church to get the GREEN ball rolling!

At an event, the race director & committee determines what GREEN initiatives they can implement that are practical, economical & the most effective. Each church must do the same. The first step is to establish a GREEN Team to incorporate & oversee GREEN initiatives.

## At an Event

## At the Church

Recycle water bottles, aluminum can, cardboard/paper & latex swim caps	Offer recycling container for paper & plastics throughout the Church & offices. <b>St. Mark's has limited the number of plastic water bottles at their offices and church events.</b>
Use compostable wares	Use compostable wares, not Styrofoam and plastics. <b>St. Mark's uses compostable cups in their offices and for events before &amp; after services.</b>
Compost food waste	Compost food waste from the church kitchen & events. Start a community garden without the use of harmful pesticides & create a worm farm. Produce from the garden can be used for Church meals, sold at a local Farmer's Market, and used as snacks in the Pre-school or Youth programs.

Re-use and share signage & equipment with other races.	Re-use and share supplies & equipment with other churches.
Provide a Souls4Soles collect box for old shoes & donate discarded clothing to local shelters.	Offer containers for church patrons to drop off gently worn shoes & clothes to be donated to local shelters. Have an annual Church Garage Sale. Don't throw out unwanted household items, clothes, furniture, etc. Go to <a href="http://www.freecycle.org">www.freecycle.org</a> , a non-profit organization that helps connect communities that want to "recycle" unwanted items. <b>St. Mark's collects such items and donates them to the local Salvation Army, brings them to the migrant farm workers, or sends them to their thrift store to be sold and have the proceeds go back to ministry work.</b>
Provide recycled bags for race gear.	Provide recycled bags in gift shop, at church thrift store, etc.
Give finishers medals made from recycled products: glass, wood, tree saplings, stainless steel water bottles, etc.	Sell products made from recycled products and from local artists/vendors in gift shop, at thrift store & farmer's markets. <b>Will show water bottle for sale.</b>
Minimize paper, do online registration (Active GREEN site), limit amount of flyers & brochures in race bags.	Eliminate as much 'paper' correspondence as possible. Send newsletters via email, reduce amount of 'bulk' in printed literature, print on recycled paper, use soy or vegetable based inks. Use recycled paper products in church kitchen, bathrooms and at events.
Provide organic race shirts. Conventional cotton farming is one of the most destructive farming activities and it uses the second highest amount of pesticides of any crop, mostly of which are carcinogens.	Provide organic t-shirts for staff, at events and in the pre-school & youth programs.
Take steps to offset the carbon footprint one creates by traveling to an event. Provide VIP parking for carpoolers, coordinate bus transportation, provide bike racks, etc. Use fuel efficient vehicles on race course.	Take steps to offset the carbon footprint one creates by traveling to church or an event. Drive less and choose a vehicle with high fuel efficiency or a hybrid, encourage bike/carpool/bus to Sunday Worship. Post a listing on Rideshare: <a href="http://www.rideshare.us">www.rideshare.us</a>
Use biodiesel and/or solar powered generators for electricity needs (music, microphone, lights, etc.).	Use renewable energy (wind, solar, geothermal, methane, tidal) sources rather than fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas).
Provide cell phone recycling envelopes in race bags.	Collect and recycle old cell phones- proceeds from phones can go to a charity of your choice. <a href="http://www.recellular.com/recycling">www.recellular.com/recycling</a>
Educate participants on how to be GREEN and the effect each events has on our environment.	Discuss the importance of GREEN in regular worship services, youth programs and bible studies. It is imperative that we encourage everyone to live a sustainable lifestyle (sustainability is the ongoing capacity of natural and social system to thrive

	together). If you are interested in knowing how GREEN you are, you can take an ecological footprint quiz at <a href="http://www.myfootprint.org">www.myfootprint.org</a>
Use local organic vendors at finish line to provide post race snacks.	Select food that is locally and organically produced. Environmental injustices can be seen all across the world--placing toxic waste sites & sewage treatment plants near low-income housing, and spraying pesticides on fields in which migrant farmers work. Buying fair trade & organic products benefit local growers and their families.
Use environmentally friendly chemicals in port-potties and stock with paper products derived from 100% Recycled content.	Use environmentally friendly cleaning products.

One of the biggest ways churches can love their neighbors is to become more energy efficient, or “GREEN”. By completing the parish ecology audit, using less energy, conserving, recycling & reusing the church will cut back on costs leaving them with more money for other areas of mission.