



CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT PACKET

Congregations in Texas can protect human health, preserve God's creation, and do their part to ensure a prosperous future for Texas.

Become a Breath of Life Congregation! Make a commitment and take action to save energy and reduce air pollution.

This packet will show you how.

PACKET CONTENTS

Breath of Life Overview
Congregational Breath of Life Covenant
Breath of Life FAQs
Ideas for Saving Energy and Reducing Air Pollution

Instructions for Completing the Breath of Life Covenant

The Covenant form is located on the inside back cover of this packet.

Signing the Breath of Life Covenant is as easy as 1-2-3!

STEP ONE: DECIDE TO TAKE ACTION

A committee or other group chooses what action your congregation will take to reduce pollution. You can choose from options listed on the insert “Energy Efficiency and Clean Energy Solutions” or other lists.

The committee that makes decisions on congregational energy use is usually the committee that handles “building and grounds” decisions. The senior clergy in the congregation also usually help make those decisions.

Don't forget: the very cleanest energy is the energy you don't consume. Before you start exploring more complex projects like green power purchasing or solar installations, be sure your congregation has done all it can to save energy through common-sense strategies like improving insulation. An energy audit can help you uncover major energy “leaks” in your building, or you might know of obvious building tune-ups that would make perfect weekend work-day projects. Increasing energy efficiency also saves money, leaving your congregation with more resources to devote to your core mission.

STEP TWO: SIGN THE COVENANT

Don't hide your light under a bushel! After you've decided what actions your congregation will take to reduce pollution, sign the Breath of Life Covenant. Your signed covenant makes your congregation a Breath of Life Congregation, and it lets state and federal officials know your congregation is advocating for clean air through direct action.

Breath of Life is a unique program. Not only do the pollution reductions your congregation achieves save you money and help protect human health—by signing the Breath of Life Covenant, you are helping the State of Texas meet federal air quality standards and encouraging clean, sustainable growth for our state. Your covenant lets officials know that YOUR congregation is stepping up to the plate to reduce air pollution.

Texas lawmakers have taken numerous actions to reduce air pollution in our state, but laws alone aren't enough. Clearing the air in Texas will take **voluntary** actions by congregations and other groups.

Someone must sign the covenant who is allowed to speak for the congregation or group that is pledging to take action. That could be a clergy person, a committee chair, or the leader of a group like a Sunday school class.

If a group like a women's unit or Sunday school class pledges to take action, their whole congregation will become a Breath of Life Congregation if the congregation so desires.

STEP THREE: SEND IN THE COVENANT

Make a copy of the covenant and send it to the Breath of Life Program Coordinator. Breath of Life staff will follow up with you to see if you need any help fulfilling your pledge and to verify that you accomplish what you plan.

The Breath of Life program forwards congregational covenants to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Texas' state-level environmental protection agency. TCEQ staff will determine how your congregation's actions contribute to Texas' overall air pollution reduction goals.

QUESTIONS?

Breath of Life program staff are available by phone or email to answer your questions and offer suggestions.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY IDEAS FOR CONGREGATIONS

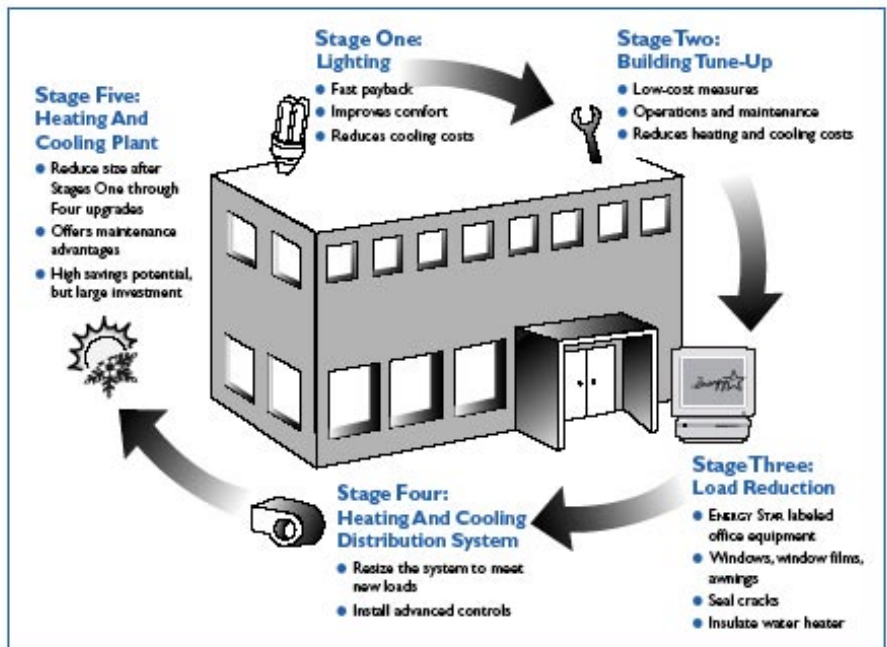
The information on this handout is adapted from various existing handbooks and websites, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's publication EPA 480-B-00-003, "Putting Energy into Stewardship." Not every item suggested is equally applicable to all areas of Texas; use common sense and check with your utility provider on which projects are most effective in your area.

There are many different steps your congregation could take to reduce air pollution. Some strategies save money right away, some represent new costs, and some require a significant up-front expenditure but result in a substantial benefit over time.

Where should you start?

Most energy efficiency and clean air experts agree that you should start with the "low-hanging fruit"—the things you can do right away that will start saving you money. Then you can move on to more complex projects. Many congregations agree to use whatever savings they realize from "easy" efficiencies on future projects that may require capital outlays or professional installation.

You might want to have a professional energy audit conducted for your congregation. If so, the best place to start is with your electric utility provider. Your provider might offer energy audits to customers; if not, they can tell you how to find a contractor who can do the audit for you.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY IDEAS BY AREA

Lighting

- Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent lamps
- Convert exterior lighting to high-pressure sodium or metal halide lighting
- Upgrade fluorescent fixtures with T-8 fluorescent lamps and electronic ballasts
- Remove or disconnect unnecessary lights
- Convert exit signs to LED
- Lower light levels where appropriate, such as around computer monitors
- Install occupancy sensors in areas, such as bathrooms, that are frequently unoccupied
- Install timers or photocells on outside lights

Water Use And Water Heating

- Install a water heater insulating blanket and wrap the first 3 to 6 feet of hot water supply pipe with pipe insulation
- Install faucet aerators and efficient showerheads
- Select native or other low-water plants for landscaping
- Find and fix leaks

Refrigeration

- Repair doors and seals so they close tightly
- Make sure fans and equipment are not obstructed

- Combine refrigerated goods and disconnect unneeded refrigerators

Building

- Install weather stripping, caulking, or seals on openings that create drafts
- Add or repair insulation to create a continuous blanket around building

Heating And Cooling Systems

- Clean and replace filters regularly
- Set back your heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems when the building is unoccupied. This includes setting the fans to "auto" rather than "on"
- Repair leaks in system components such as pipes, steam traps, and couplings
- Make sure radiators, convectors, air intakes, and air diffusers are not obstructed so that air can flow freely
- Reduce your water heater settings to the minimum required temperature

ENERGY EFFICIENCY IDEAS BY COST (FOR HOME AND CONGREGATION)

Free: Things That Cost Nothing and Save Cash

- Turn down water heater thermostat to 120°F.
- Turn off lights when leaving a room.
- Set thermostats to 68 to 70°F in winter when you're home, and down to 62°F when you go to bed or when you're away. Set thermostats to 76 to 78°F when home and 82°F when not home when running the air conditioner in the summer (Programmable thermostats do this automatically—see below).
- Use energy-saving settings on washing machines, clothes dryers, dishwashers, and refrigerators.
- Don't waste water, hot or cold, inside or outside your home.
- Clean your refrigerator's or freezer's condenser coils once a year.
- Air-dry your clothes outdoors.
- Close heating vents in unused rooms.
- Repair leaky faucets and toilets (5 percent of water "use" is leakage).
- Close drapes (and windows) during sunny summer days and after sunset in the winter.
- Remove underused appliances like garage refrigerators from service and have them recycled.
- Remove halogen torchieres from service.

Simple and Inexpensive: Things That Will Pay for Themselves in Lower Energy Bills in Less Than a Year

- Install a water-saving 2.5-gallon-per-minute showerhead (\$15).
- Install water-efficient faucet heads for your kitchen and bathroom sinks (\$2 each).
- Install a programmable thermostat (\$26).
- In the attic and basement, plug the air leaks a cat could crawl through, and replace and reputty broken window panes (about \$20).
- Clean or change the air filter on your warm-air heating system during winter and on air conditioning units in the summer (\$2-\$15).
- Install an R-7 or R-11 water heater wrap (\$12).
- Insulate the first six feet of hot and inlet cold water pipes (\$6).
- Install a compact fluorescent light bulb in the fixture you use the most (\$15).

Getting Serious: Measures That Collectively Will Cost Up to \$500 and Have Paybacks of 1 to 3 Years

- Get a comprehensive energy audit, including a blower door test, to identify sources of air infiltration.
- Caulk and weatherize all leaks identified by the test. Start with the attic and basement first (especially around plumbing and electrical penetrations, and around the framing that rests on the foundation), then weatherize windows and doors.
- Seal and insulate warm-air heating (or cooling) ducts.
- Have heating and cooling systems tuned up every year or two.
- Install additional faucet aerators, efficient showerheads, and programmable thermostats.
- Make insulating shades for your windows, or add insulating storm windows (or, in a southern climate, shade sunny windows or add solar gain control films).
- Insulate hot water pipes in unheated basements or crawlspaces.
- Replace failed appliances with Energy Star models at little incremental cost.

Going All the Way: Save a Lot of Energy and Money, But Will Take 3 to 15 Years to Pay for Themselves

- **Foundation:** insulate inside rim joist and down the foundation wall to below frostline to R-10. Remember to caulk the rim joist and sill areas first.
- **Basement:** insulate the ceiling above crawlspaces or unheated basements to at least R-19 in cold climates. If your basement is heated, insulate the inside of basement walls to R-10. Basement or foundation insulation is usually not needed in hot climates. You should install a ground vapor retarder if none is present.
- **Attic:** increase attic insulation to R-38.
- **Walls:** adding wall insulation is more difficult and expensive, but may be cost-effective if your house is uncomfortable and if you have empty wall cavities. Installing insulation at high density will also greatly reduce air leakage.
- Install more compact fluorescent bulbs. Put them in your most frequently used fixtures, including those outdoors. (2 or more hours of use per day)
- Replace exterior incandescent lights with compact fluorescents and put them on a timer or motion sensor if they're on more than a couple of hours a night.
- Convert to solar water heating, and perhaps also supplementary solar space heating.
- Upgrade your water heater, furnace, boiler, air conditioners, and refrigerator to more efficient models (refer to Energy Star). Newer units are far more efficient. Upgrading is often cost-effective, and definitely so if you need to replace failing units anyway. Also, if you've weatherized and insulated, you'll be able to downsize the heating and cooling system. If the house is tight, use only seal combustion appliances. If the air handler will be used for ventilation or even when the furnace run time will be long, choose an ECM.
- Upgrade to super insulating or at least low-emissivity windows in cold climates, or low solar transmittance windows in hot climates, if replacement is needed.
- Replace high-flow toilets with modern water-efficient toilets that use 50–80 percent less water.
- Install awnings or build removable trellises over windows that overheat your home in the summer.
- Plant a tree to shade your largest west window in summer. You won't save any money for years, but you'll get an A+ for long-range vision.

CLEAN ENERGY FOR CONGREGATIONS

The information in this handout is taken from a variety of handbooks and websites, including Power Scorecard and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency publication EPA430-K-04-015 "Guide to Purchasing Green Power." More information is available at www.epa.gov/greenpower/buygreenpower.htm

Across America, consumers increasingly have a choice when they buy electricity. With that choice comes the ability to buy green power.

Green power is an environmentally friendly electricity product that is generated from renewable energy sources. Buying green power is easy, and it offers a number of environmental and economic benefits over conventional electricity.

Every day, the generation of electric power produces more pollution than any other single industry in the United States. This pollution is changing the planet's climate and ecosystems in ways that will harm generations to come. Until recently, consumers had little choice about their electricity provider, but now more and more states are offering an opportunity to support cleaner, healthier power supplies.

So how can your electricity choice make a difference to the environment? By choosing low environmental-impact power, you are sending your utility company a clear signal that being able to use electricity produced from cleaner power sources really matters to you.

Your choice will encourage power companies to replace aging fossil fuel plants with facilities that use new renewable fuels and cleaner technologies. You will be proving that, if your current supplier doesn't provide you with cleaner electricity, you will buy it from their competitors.

The generation of electric power produces more pollution than any other single industry in the United States. The most recent (1998) data shows the U.S. electricity industry was responsible for:

- 67% of sulfur dioxide emissions that contribute to acid rain
- 25% of NOx emissions that contribute to urban smog
- 40% of carbon emissions that contribute to global climate change

Among the other major environmental issues linked to electricity are water impacts, generation of wastes, and the disruption of land uses.

Electricity is also playing an increasingly important role in our personal lives and in the economy that feeds us. Electricity powered computer and communication systems are more and more important parts of our lives and our economy. Because we are demanding more electricity service we must avoid increasing the damage to our environment by using electricity efficiently and by obtaining electricity from the cleanest sources available.

How do we meet the energy needs of these people as they lift themselves from poverty while addressing pressing environmental impacts linked to their inevitable increase in power consumption?

No plant is completely clean or green. However, some power plants produce relatively few air pollutants and at the same time cause few land and water impacts at the plant site or in the process of obtaining the fuel or disposing of plant wastes.

Such low impact power facilities are usually sited and operated in ways to minimize damage to the environment. By choosing these cleaner electricity sources, you have the opportunity to meet your electricity needs with a minimum of environmental damage with technologies that are building a foundation for a sustainable energy future.

In some cases, new power plants relying upon state-of-the-art technology produce lower levels of toxic emissions than older plants, even when burning coal or oil, fossil fuels typically considered "dirty."

An important ingredient in any power product is "new renewable/environmentally preferred" electricity supplies. By using new, low-impact renewable resources, the power supplier displaces older, often higher polluting facilities.

Not only do new, cleaner sources of electricity provide significant environmental improvement over most current generating resources, but purchases from new low impact sources create the consumer demand necessary for even more new renewable resources to be constructed. Buying electricity from new renewable generation yields immediate and long-term environmental gains.

Types of Green Power Products

The following three product types are considered green power: green power electricity products, renewable energy certificates, and on-site generation.

Green power electricity products are partially or entirely generated from renewable energy resources. When available, electricity suppliers offer electricity from renewable resources either as a percentage of electricity usage or in a fixed number of units or blocks (usually 100 kilowatt-hours). Either way, this usually results in the purchase of a blend of renewable and conventional power. About 50 percent of retail customers in the United States now have the option to buy green power directly from electricity suppliers serving their area.

Renewable energy certificates (also known as RECs, green tags, green energy certificates, or tradable renewable certificates) represent the technology and environmental attributes of one megawatt hour of electricity generated from renewable sources. These attributes may be sold separately from the associated electricity. If the attributes are separated from the associated electricity, the electricity is no longer considered “green.” Because RECs are sold separately from electricity, they can be purchased from locations anywhere, enabling organizations to choose green power even if their local utility or power marketer does not offer a green power product. Customers do not need to switch from their current electricity supplier to purchase certificates, and they can buy RECs based on any fixed amount of electricity.



On-site renewable generation projects generate electricity at a facility using renewable energy resources. On-site renewable generation can increase power reliability, provide stable electricity costs, and help manage waste streams. Furthermore, in many states, when on-site renewables generate more power than is needed on site, the excess power can be returned to the electric grid for credit from the local electric utility. This process is known as net-metering.

Steps to Green Power Purchasing

Regardless of the type of green power product you buy, the following steps are recommended to help organizations make a green power purchase.

Identify key decisionmakers within your organization.

The more participation you have up front, the easier the purchase will be.

Gather energy data.

Start by figuring out the annual electricity consumption for your organization’s facilities. You can enter your electricity usage into the Power Profiler (<http://www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/powerprofiler.htm>) to determine the current environmental impact of your electricity use.

Outline key objectives.

In trying to find the “right” green power product, it is helpful to know your organization’s objectives for the purchase.

Research product options.

Review the types of products and the common product considerations to determine which product will best meet your key objectives.

The Green Power Locator (<http://www.epa.gov/greenpower/locator/tx.htm>) can give you a list of suppliers and products available in Texas.

Choose the right green power product for your organization!

Organizations that are ready to make a green power commitment can join EPA’s Green Power Partnership, which can help lower the costs and increase the value of their green power purchase.

For More Information

For more information about what green power options are available in your area, visit the Texas Public Utility Commission website at <http://www.puc.state.tx.us/> or call the PUC at 1-888-782-8477

For more information about where to purchase RECs visit the U.S. Department of Energy’s Green Power Network at <http://www.eere.energy.gov/greenpower/markets/certificates.shtml?page=1>



CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT

INTENT

Our congregation believes that clearing Texas air is a priority. As people of faith, we have a special responsibility to be good stewards of the natural world and to protect the health and wellbeing of all God's children. Therefore, as a congregation, we commit to taking concrete actions to reduce the air pollution attributable to the activities of our congregation.

We want our pollution reduction actions to be counted among all the voluntary pollution reduction actions Texans are taking. We agree to show proof that we have accomplished the actions we pledge to do, and to provide any necessary documentation to help state and federal officials calculate how much pollution our actions have reduced.

AUTHORITY

The individual signing this covenant has the authority to sign it on behalf of our congregation. They have that authority because:

They always have the authority to sign documents on behalf of the congregation, OR

The congregation or a committee of the congregation invested them with the authority to sign this particular document

ABOUT OUR CONGREGATION

The following is a description of our congregation's current energy use to help in calculating how much pollution we will reduce by our covenant actions.

Approximate square feet of building space (Include parsonages, day schools, family life centers, supported housing, soup kitchens, clinics, and all other spaces that are part of the congregation's monthly utility bill.) _____

Number of buildings _____ Monthly electricity usage (megawatt hours—available from your utility company) _____

Number and type of vehicles owned by the congregation _____

Gallons of gas per month used in congregation-owned vehicles _____

Special energy needs of this congregation (for example, special uses of the space such as overnight shelter for the homeless, or special building considerations such as large stained glass windows or indoor gymnasium)

OUR PLEDGE

Our congregation pledges to reduce our emissions by completing the actions here listed (attach additional pages if necessary):

CONTACT INFORMATION

Congregation name: _____ Denomination: _____ No. of Members: _____

_____ Referred by: _____ Web Site: _____ Utility District: _____

Covenant Contact: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Congregation's Street Address: _____ City: _____ ZIP Code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Frequently Asked Questions About Breath of Life

What is Breath of Life?

Breath of Life is a program to help Texas congregations reduce air pollution and save energy. By taking concrete action to reduce emissions, congregations can protect human health, preserve God's creation, and help Texas meet federal air quality mandates.

Who should participate in Breath of Life?

Religious congregations are the primary targets for Breath of Life. Schools, daycares, or other facilities connected with congregations also are encouraged to participate. ***Small group ministries within congregations such as women's or men's groups, youth groups, or Sunday school classes can participate on behalf of their congregation.*** For instance, if a youth group does a building tune-up project, that action could count for the whole congregation.

How can my group join in Breath of Life?

To become a Breath of Life Congregation, simply complete the congregational covenant on the other side of this page and return it to the Breath of Life program. Breath of Life staff will verify with you that your congregation has accomplished your emissions reduction activities as planned.

What if my group commits to taking an action and later we decide not to follow through?

Simply let the Breath of Life program know that your plans have changed. Consider taking some other emissions reduction step instead if your original plan becomes unworkable, and remember that you can always add to your commitment later after you've accomplished your initial action.

Should we list actions we already have taken on our Congregational Covenant, or only ones we plan to take?

If the action was recent (within the past six months) check with Breath of Life staff to see if it should be included. One goal of Breath of Life participation is to encourage congregations to "step up" as we sometimes describe in congregational stewardship models: whatever you have done in the past to reduce emissions, challenge yourselves to take on one additional action.

What resources are available to help my group follow through on our commitment to reduce emissions?

The Breath of Life program can help you find experts in your area to help you with energy efficiency, green power, green building, or other activities. www.breathoflifetx.org has links to national, state and local resources, and Breath of Life staff are available to answer questions via email and over the phone.

How will state environmental officials find out about our congregation's commitment?

Breath of Life staff will deliver your congregation's covenant and pollution reduction inventory to the state environmental agency. Officials there will determine how your emissions reductions work to help achieve local and statewide emissions reduction targets.

What kinds of recognition will my group get for participating in Breath of Life?

Congregations that sign the Breath of Life covenant become ***Breath of Life Congregations*** and receive various kinds of publicity and rewards from the Breath of Life program. For a complete list of rewards and promotional opportunities, contact Breath of Life program staff.

Breath of Life Congregations also can receive recognition from the State of Texas "Clean Texas Cleaner World" program, and may be eligible to receive awards and recognition from other programs such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program.

Breath of Life Congregations may also be eligible for recognition from their denomination or faith tradition. Breath of Life program staff can help you find out about faith awards your congregation can receive.