



green light

The quasi-quarterly newsletter of Georgia Interfaith Power & Light
Volume 1, Number 2
May 2005

Executive Director's Report

Well, things are moving right along here at GIP&L. We are working on a lot of organizational matters including setting up membership guidelines and a list of activities for congregations to take part in. Since our last newsletter, we've also had our Second Anniversary Celebration and been involved in a host of Earth Day activities. Check the rest of the newsletter for details on those things. I also invite you to take a look at the back page, where you will find a copy of my "Vision for GIP&L," which was delivered (in spirit) at the Second Anniversary Celebration (I had the flu and could not actually make it to the meeting myself). As you read it, think about your own ideas about what GIP&L can and should be doing, and then share them with us! We'd love to know what we can do to help you and your congregation as we work towards a "faith-based grassroots energy revolution"!

Congregation Bet Haverim Honored!

Congregation Bet Haverim in Atlanta has been honored with a Creation Care Award from the National Religious Partnership for the Environment for their "One for Each Night" campaign. This is an innovative project that promotes energy conservation through the use of compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs). The bulbs are sold in packs of eight with a study guide in the weeks leading up to Hanukkah. The study guide, written by Dan Cohan and GIP&L Steering Committee member Bill Witherspoon, then guides congregants to replace one incandescent bulb with a CFL every night of Hanukkah after lighting their Hanukkah candles. The guide includes information on the environmental benefits of using CFLs along with a lightbulb joke and a blessing for each night. Members of the congregation contributed lightbulb jokes and Rabbi Joshua Lesser wrote the blessings. This program was such a great success in its 2003 debut that it was continued in 2004 and led to a spin-off program, "Preparing for a New Light" for Christian congregations to use during Advent.

Congratulations on your wonderful work,
Congregation Bet Haverim!!!

Take Action!

** Looking for something you can do to support energy conservation in your faith community? How about a D*I*Y (Do It Yourself) Energy Audit? There are many aspects of an energy audit that you can do yourself, such as evaluating your use of lighting and heating/cooling systems. Are you lighting or conditioning rooms that aren't being used? Consider timers and programmable thermostats to help control your energy usage. Are you using too much energy for lighting? Try replacing incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescents. Even better, make good use of daylight and windows in your home or building to cut down on the amount of artificial lighting you need. These are just a couple of quick suggestions. To get more detailed information, check out the EPA's Energy Star Guide for Congregations at http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=small_business.sb_congregations. Not all of the recommendations are suitable for the Do-It-Yourselfer, but many of them are. The entire text of their guide is also available as a pdf file on our information CD. Look under "Action Steps" on the main menu.

** Looking for something you can do to support energy conservation in your home?

Try out our guidelines for Living By Kyoto. Check out our Cool Our Planet pledge where you can check off steps you are willing to take to conserve energy and reduce your output of CO₂:

<http://gipl.org/documents/CoolOurPlanetPledgeGIPL.pdf>. Be sure to let us know what you decide to do and how much CO₂ you'll be keeping out of the atmosphere by e-mailing us at khinman@gipl.org. This document is also available on our information CD under "Action Steps."

Second Annual Meeting - Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church Honored

GIP&L held its second annual celebration meeting on March 8th at Central Congregational Church. With the help of Rabbi Joshua Lesser and Rev. Betsy Flory we sang, prayed, and read the Psalms. Dr. Katy Hinman, our new Executive Director, gave (in absentia due to the flu) her vision for the organization. Georgia Power, represented by Mr. Jeff Bursleson, talked about the new efficiency program on home duct sealing and infiltration control (see report from Policy Committee). Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church was given an award for being the first congregation to have an energy audit. The award was accepted by a delegation headed by Minister John Russell, head of the church's facilities staff. We gave thanks for the successes and challenges of the past year and we look forward with hope to the gifts of the coming year.

Energy Audit Program Update

Our Energy Audit Pilot Program is progressing well. We have completed three audits: Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church in Norcross, St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Atlanta, and St. John's Episcopal Church in College Park. We have two more audits left to go. So far, the project is a great success. We are learning a lot about the process and have been able to find good steps for these churches to take, from small Do-It-Yourself projects to larger system updates. We are in the process of determining the best way to expand this project to include more congregations. If you are interested in getting information about an audit e-mail khinman@gipl.org.

GIP&L Around Town

We have recently developed some new display materials, including a spiffy new banner, to use at ministry fairs, etc., and we've already gotten some great use out of it. GIP&L made appearances at the Regional Council of Churches Small Ministries Fair in East Point, Episcopal Church of the Epiphany's Green Sunday, and Trinity Presbyterian Church's Earth Day Fair. We even won an award for Most Informative Booth at the Georgia Tech Earth Day Celebration! If you know of opportunities where we can get the word out about GIP&L, please let us know!

New website coming soon

You may have noticed that our website hasn't been updated in a little while. That's because we are in the process of website transformation. We will be using new software and a new look to make the website easier to navigate and more user friendly. The metamorphosis should be complete soon, so bookmark www.gipl.org and keep your eyes peeled. (When I say "we" here, I really mean our great webmaster, Doug Barlow. Thanks for all your work, Doug!!)

Steering Committee Elects Officers

In keeping with our newly adopted by-laws, the Steering Committee has officially elected officers. The Officers are:

Chair – Woody Bartlett

Vice Chair – Carol Bartlett

Treasurer – Dan May

Secretary – Melissa Heath

The other members of the Steering Committee are Debbie Shew, Renee Kastanakis, Bill Witherspoon, Marti Breen, Rita Kilpatrick, Leland Collins, and Sue Wootton.

Informational CD

Our Informational CD is now in its third iteration (Version 1.2). It has an interactive auto-play menu and a lot of great information on GIP&L, energy conservation, and actions you can take. It also has resources for Green Sabbath worship services and study guides for adult education classes. If you haven't gotten a CD and would like one (or have an old version and want the new improved one), drop an e-mail to khinman@gipl.org with your mailing address and we'll get one to you.

In Other News

** Did you know that GIP&L is just one of 17 state Interfaith Power & Light groups? For more information on the other IP&Ls, start at www.theregenerationproject.org. From there, you can search for other groups by state and see what activities other states are doing to conserve energy. And if you see something that you'd like GIP&L to be doing, just let us know! There will be a national conference of all IP&L groups in July in Washington, DC.

** Virtual March on Washington – Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Senator John McCain are just two of the more than 13,000 people who have already signed up for the Virtual March on Washington to call attention to global warming and urge the government to take steps to address it. Visit www.stopglobalwarming.org to learn more about this interesting and innovative approach to getting the word out about global warming.

Congregational Activities Committee Report

The task of the Congregational Activities Committee is to look at the work to be done in congregations so that people of faith increasingly think of Caring for Creation as part of their religious experience. How efficiently people use energy will be an important part of this conversation.

The committee will be helping congregations look at their worship services, adult education and Sunday School classes and other activities – all kinds of ways for people to talk with each other and learn about new relationships with the Earth. One of the goals will be to develop and foster active sustainability committees in congregations. Trinity Presbyterian Church has such a committee and will be a model for this piece of the work.

We are developing a “template” for the congregation so that it can begin the educational work on its own. The template will outline many possible congregational activities and suggest resources for the use of each of these activities.

The six members of the committee are always open to ideas and suggestions from you about what might work in your congregation.

For more information on the Congregational Activities Committee, please contact Carol Bartlett (carolbart@mindspring.com) or Katy Hinman (khinman@gipl.org).

Membership Committee Report

GIP&L’s membership committee is developing guidelines for membership and a new version of our congregational and individual covenants. We are working on ways to help congregations become involved with GIP&L on a variety of levels. Once the membership structure is defined, we will be “recruiting” congregations to become part of GIP&L and to take action on energy conservation and creation care. We hope to work on the individual, congregational, and even denominational level to encourage congregations to get involved and to provide resources to these congregations.

For more information on the Membership Committee, please contact Rev. Debra Shew (dshew@episcopalatlanta.org) or Katy Hinman (khinman@gipl.org).

Policy Committee Report

GIP&L’s Policy Committee seeks to forge public policies that will save on the generation of electricity and thus preserve God’s Creation. On May 17, 2005, the Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) approved a set of electrical efficiency measures including one concerning home duct sealing and infiltration control that was designed and sponsored by GIP&L. It seems that one of the leakiest parts of the average home is its air ducts and the outer envelope of the house. Over time, ducts develop leaks with the result that we inadvertently air condition or heat crawl spaces, hot attics and other costly places. With leaking windows and doors, we also air condition or heat the outdoors. Both kinds of leaks run up utility bills and, more importantly, cause the use and generation of even more electricity, which adds deadly global warming gases to the atmosphere. By taking corrective measures we can not only save money but also save God’s creation.

Southface Energy has especially trained some heating and air conditioning contractors to test and fix leaky homes. The program approved by the PSC will allow for GIP&L to work with a congregation to retain an authorized contractor to service the homes in the congregation who are willing to have this work done. With one contractor working with a whole congregation, we can expect to get wholesale prices for the work. The only qualification is that the home must be ten years old or older and must be a Georgia Power Company customer. In return for its marketing help, GIP&L will get a small fee from Georgia Power. By this arrangement, we hope to correct some of the most glaring inefficiencies in many of our homes and, with our arrangement with Georgia Power, pay for the staff time to make it happen. A win for GIP&L, for all of us and for God’s Creation.

For more information on the Policy Committee, please contact Woody Bartlett (wbartlett@mindspring.com) or Katy Hinman (khinman@gipl.org).



My Vision for GIP&L – Katy Hinman, Executive Director

GIP&L's mission statement is as follows: "Georgia Interfaith Power & Light seeks to engage communities of faith as stewards of God's Creation by promoting energy conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy and related sustainable practices." Just living up to this mission statement is, of course, a full-time job for any organization, but what does it mean in practical terms?

The second half of the statement is relatively straightforward, if maybe a bit general. We have already begun our Georgia Energy Use Pilot Program, providing energy audits to congregations. On the CD which we have available there are even more tips on making energy conservation and efficiency a reality. Educational materials are being developed and we are looking into ways to expand our auditing program to reach more congregations. In the meantime, members of the steering committee have been hard at work developing opportunities for renewable energy, both on the large scale through Georgia Power and on the smaller scale of making resources for solar energy available to congregations. More ideas and opportunities arise almost daily for practical steps that we can take to provide energy conservation measures to our partners. We have the opportunity to become both a source and a distributor of information on a wide variety of sustainable practices, some very closely related to energy efficiency others somewhat more tangentially so.

My vision for GIP&L in this respect is that we continue to gather and develop resources for congregations to use at any stage. Not all congregations may have the money to do a full-fledged professional audit, but perhaps they can use the Do-It-Yourself guidelines we provide. Not all congregations may wish to present a Green Energy Sabbath, but they may wish to incorporate care of creation in their liturgy on a smaller scale. Not all congregations may have the time to do a six-week Sunday school curriculum on Global Warming, but they may want a one-time Wednesday night educational program.

As well, congregations that wish to can get involved in helping GIP&L to encourage policy makers to adopt energy efficiency and conservation measures and to take seriously the demand for renewable energy. We can begin to use the resources that already exist in congregations to help us increase our influence and our knowledge on issues of public policy, as well as on practical issues of incorporating energy efficiency measures in our own homes and congregations.

But let's look back at the mission statement for a moment. The practical pieces are there, but there is a more unique piece to our statement. So far, most of what I've talked about could be taking place anywhere, a school, a business, a community organization. What is it that makes GIP&L special? "Georgia Interfaith Power & Light seeks to engage communities of faith as stewards of God's Creation..." This is where our true mission lies. The practical bits may be the ways in which we do this, but this statement must truly be the purpose behind our mission. We are not doing this because we are merely environmentalists. Many of us may consider ourselves environmentalists, but many of us may not. Rather we are doing this because we believe that we have a role to play as faithful stewards of God's creation. We take this message to faith communities not because that's a good way to reach a large group of people at once, but because we believe that faith communities *must* become engaged in these issues if they are truly to live out their missions.

As stewards of creation, then, it is my vision that GIP&L will continue to reach out, not just practically, but theologically. Our first message should always be, not energy conservation, but creation care. I hope to see GIP&L work not only with individual congregations but with denominations and faith communities on a larger scale to ensure that stewardship of creation is not just a side project that we do if we have time or if there are a few "greenies" in the congregation that need something to do, but that it becomes a central aspect of the doctrine of these faith communities.

We have the opportunity to change the way that people think about creation and the way that they think about their own relationship to creation. By embracing this opportunity, we will truly *engage* faith communities, not just employ them, to be stewards of creation. This will also provide the opportunity for these communities to become involved in creation care in different ways as well. Through partnerships or contacts with other organizations we can increase the benefits of this message of creation care many-fold.

My vision for GIP&L is not just that we will excel at the second part of our mission statement, but that we will also challenge ourselves and the congregations with which we work to view the first part of our mission statement as primary. Without the motivation of faith and stewardship, we are no more than any other environmental organization. However, with the duty of creation care and our call to stewardship behind us, we can become true missionaries to this world.