



green light

The quasi-quarterly newsletter of Georgia Interfaith Power & Light

Volume 3, Number 2

Summer 2007

Executive Director's Note

Another busy several months at Georgia Interfaith Power & Light and there's no sign of slowing!

Thank goodness!

We're so excited about all the great things going on, and we hope you'll take the time to look over all the great articles in this issue to find out what we've been up to and how to get involved.

Don't forget that our next Congregational Representative Training is **THIS SUNDAY August 26 from 2 to 5 pm** at the Atlanta Friends Meeting (atlanta.quaker.org). For the first time we will have **TWO** tracks – one for congregations that are just starting out and one for congregations that want to build up existing programs. This second track will include information on some **NEW** programs, including a great opportunity to be involved in our Cool Congregations program for congregational small groups. Feel free to bring multiple folks from your community and send someone to each track if you want. Visit www.gipl.org/events.html for more information.

Get Ready for the GIPPYs!!!

Mark Your Calendar for October 18! That's the date of the Second Annual Georgia Interfaith Power & Light Awards (the GIPPYs)! More environmentally aware than the Oscars, more glamorous than the Emmys, more prestigious than the Grammys! Okay, we made all that up, but really how likely are you to make it to the Oscars this year anyway?

Nominations for GIPPYs are now open! If your congregation (or one that you know of) has done something to care for creation, let us know! It doesn't have to be the biggest or best project in the state, as long as it demonstrates that you are taking steps to be good stewards of the earth. Just drop us an e-mail at info@gipl.org and tell us why your congregation should get a coveted GIPPY.

Our keynote speaker for the awards ceremony will be Dr. Michael Battle, the president of the Interdenominational Theological Center. ITC is a consortium of historically black seminaries here in Atlanta and has recently made a commitment to "become the living embodiment, spiritually and physically, of *TheoEcology* for the world, healing humanity's prime estrangement, our divorce from nature."

ShopIPL.org – NEW Online Shopping cart!!!

As you may know, GIPL has been working with other state Interfaith Power & Light groups to develop a national shopping cart where faith communities can buy energy efficient products at a discount. Now, through a grant from the EPA and a partnership with Energy Federation Incorporated (EFI), we are proud to announce the opening of ShopIPL.org. This online shopping cart offers Energy Star rated lighting products, programmable thermostats, water conservation products, and even rechargeable batteries.

ShopIPL.org is an especially good resource for consumers who are new to the idea of energy efficiency. The site includes detailed descriptions of products and explains how they save energy.



Many products are offered with quantity discounts, allowing participating congregations to easily order products at competitive wholesale prices. In addition, just for being a friend of GIPL, you can get an extra 10% off all prices by entering the special promotion code **ShopIPL** at checkout. A portion of the proceeds from ShopIPL.org go to support Georgia Interfaith Power & Light's programs, and we will be tracking the results and emissions reductions from purchases to reward those congregations whose members are making the biggest reductions in their energy use and carbon emissions. If your congregation doesn't appear on the pull down list during registration or ordering, that's okay - you can still use the shopping cart. But please let us know so that we can make sure your faith community is added and will get credit for the purchases and emissions reductions that members make.



Energy Star Tax-Free Holiday

Georgia's ENERGY STAR tax holiday is back for its third year! **October 4th through 7th**, you can pay zero sales tax on ENERGY STAR-certified products less than \$1500.

ENERGY STAR rated products include dishwashers, clothes washers, room air conditioners, ceiling fans, compact fluorescent light bulbs, dehumidifiers, programmable thermostats, refrigerators, doors and windows. To earn the ENERGY STAR, products must meet strict energy efficiency criteria set by the US Environmental Protection Agency and the US Department of Energy. Since they use less energy, these products save money on electricity bills and help protect the environment.

More Grants Available!!

We had a great response to our first round of GIPL Energy Improvement Grants, but there's still money left to give! Through an extremely generous donation from the Kendeda Foundation, we are offering matching grants of up to \$25,000 for religious communities that wish to make energy improvements to their facilities. Funds can be used for projects ranging from replacing light bulbs to getting that super-efficient HVAC unit installed.



Applications for the next round of grants are due **November 15, 2007!** For more information and application documents, go to www.gipl.org/grant.html.

Our New Carbon Footprint – by Woody and Carol Bartlett

Last fall, we calculated the amount of climate changing carbon dioxide our household put into the atmosphere each year. Woody and Dan May had worked out a simple carbon calculator, which totaled up the carbon released by our automobile travel, our home's electrical and natural gas usage, our air travel and our trash disposal. They borrowed an admittedly arbitrary rating scale based on the average American carbon release. By our calculations, our household released 40,670 pounds of carbon per year. With the average near 60,000 pounds, this was pretty good. But it wasn't down to less than 40,000 pounds, which would make us a Carbon Hero according to the scale. What to do?

While all of this was happening, Georgia Interfaith Power & Light had also been developing with Southface Energy Institute and Georgia Power Company a new program called Home Performance with Energy Star. We put it into action. A Southface-trained contractor came to our house, did a blower-door test and spotted the major envelope leaks in our house and in the heating/air conditioning ductwork. It was fascinating.

They installed this gadget on the front door that featured a big fan in a frame that filled the doorway. Turning on the fan sucked air out of the house. Then we just went around to see where it was coming in. The technician carried a little smoker, which would release a puff of smoke to show infiltration in difficult to see places. But mostly you could feel the wind blowing on you as you stood in front of leaks. We have an upstairs room with an under-the-eaves storage space off of it as well as a drop-down stairway to the attic. Walking into that room reminded us of an approaching hurricane as the air rushed out of it. There might as well have been a two-foot square hole cut in the outside wall!

The technician also had a little gadget he would put on the heating vents to test the soundness of the ductwork leading to that vent. That pointed out a flexible duct in the attic that had worn out as well as the need to seal around all of the vents in the house so that the conditioned air would come into the room and not escape into the attic.

We have two furnaces in the house and decided to replace the worn-out unit upstairs with a new, efficient heating and air conditioning system with a heat pump.

We had the prescribed work done. Woody himself put insulating behind all of the electrical outlets. The contractors replaced the necessary ductwork, installed the new HVAC unit, and added a layer of insulation in the attic and the walls of the under-the-eaves storage area. They put in a blanket over the attic stairs that seals it well. You just have to unzip it to get into the attic. Finally, they did the blower door test again. We were much tighter.

So, did all of this make a difference? First of all, we immediately were more comfortable in the house. We hadn't realized what we had gotten used to. Then last month, we did our carbon footprint again. We compared nine months utility bills with the same nine months the year before. Our electricity use has gone down 28%! And our natural gas use has decreased 19%! We even drove a few less miles which helped. Unfortunately, we have a new granddaughter in Montana so our air travel increased over last year. Still, we now release about 38,800 pounds of carbon annually into the atmosphere – not perfect by any means, but low enough to declare that we have joined the Carbon Hero ranks. Now if we can just find a decent dimmable fluorescent floodlight to put into our recessed lighting cans. Actually, we might have because the new IPL Shopping Cart (www.shopipl.org) has several to choose from. That's our next project.

Global Climate Change: Fact or Fiction?

For those of you engaged in creation care and action on behalf of our planet Earth, there is no doubt you have wondered how to respond to those who question the science or politics of ‘global warming’.

The debate — framed as one between “climate alarmists” and “global warming skeptics” or “deniers” — is admittedly confusing. There is an excess of contradictory information bombarding us from every side. Although global climate change is not the only issue that GIPL works to address, it is the key motivation for our initiatives to help faith communities use less energy. As you, likewise, take the message that faithful people are called to care for the earth into your community; we want to help you understand the debate and know how to redirect the energy it ignites.

Whether or not we can be sure what exact effects global climate change will have, we at GIPL think it is important not to get caught up in the debate to the extent that it detracts from the good work you are doing. Rather, help your community and those on both “sides” understand that regardless of our differences, we should all agree that caring for the earth is a matter of being faithful. For more information on the debate and the science of global climate change, visit www.gipl.org/climate.html for articles and links. And as always, feel free to call us at GIPL for more information or to discuss the issue!

Advent and Hanukkah CFL kits

What better way to show our commitment to stewardship of the earth than by celebrating the holidays with energy-efficient bulbs? GIPL offers kits for both Hanukkah and Advent to get your congregation using Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs (CFLs) and to help them towards an understanding of how their faith calls them to care for creation.

Advent kits are \$20 and include 5 CFLs and the study guide *Preparing for a New Light*. Congregants change one light in their house to a CFL every Sunday of Advent and on Christmas Eve, when they light the candles in their Advent wreath. The study guide includes scripture passages, a prayer, and information on the environmental impacts of energy use for each Sunday, as well as page of Christian light bulb jokes.

Hanukkah kits are \$32 and include 8 CFLs and the study guide *One for Each Night*. Congregants change one light to a CFL every night of Hanukkah when they light the candles in their menorah. The study guide includes a prayer, a Jewish light bulb joke, and information on the environmental impacts of energy use for each night of Hanukkah.



Contact us for more information and to order kits for your congregation. Please order by **October 31** so we can get the kits to you before the holidays! Call 404-588-9978 or email us at info@gipl.org.

Helping to Shape Our Energy Future GIPL Intervenes in Georgia Power's 20 year plan

Every three years, Georgia Power Company is required to file an Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) with the Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC). The IRP is the Power Company's proposed plan for how they will meet the electric demand and energy forecast for the following 20 years. It includes an analysis of all the energy resource options available to the Power Company, including both supply-side (how the company generates electricity) and demand-side (how consumers use electricity) alternatives.

After the Power Company files its plan, interested parties can participate in hearings on the plan. GIPL intervened in the most recent 2007 IRP and asked the PSC for three things: (1) to require Georgia Power to apply to have its Green Power Program become Green-e certified (see www.green-e.org), (2) to encourage Georgia Power to develop more energy efficiency programs in order to decrease energy demands in Georgia; and (3) to investigate some form of decoupling – a method to allow Georgia Power to initiate demand side management programs while still making profits. We were successful in one out of three – the PSC did issue an Order which requires Georgia Power to file for Green-e certification by mid-September.

GIPL and a number of other the interveners and public witnesses asked the Commission to push Georgia Power to add more energy efficiency programs to its demand-side options. However, in addition to Georgia Power's opposition to including these programs, there are also some consumer groups who oppose their addition. These groups oppose the programs believing they will add cost and force Georgia Power's rates to increase, in spite of evidence showing that efficiency tends to reduce consumers' overall bills because they are using less power. The final order of the PSC included the addition of a few pilot programs proposed by the Company, and a few others, such as a refrigerator and freezer recycling program, and offering assistance to builders and customers related to Federal Tax Incentives for energy efficiency. One of the proposed pilots includes a program to provide light bulbs for GIPL's congregations to install in low-income communities.



Get Involved With GIPL

Want to get more involved with Georgia Interfaith Power & Light? Here's how!

Regional Collaboration

GIPL is working to organize our statewide membership into regional groups to facilitate collaboration and provide resources specific to your area of the state. We already have two groups forming, one in North Georgia and one in the Savannah area, but we are looking to organize groups all around the state, as well as within the metro area. If you are interested in your faith community being part of such a group, or being the representative for regional collaboration call or email us at 404-588-9978 or info@gipl.org.



Can you help spread the GIPL message?

We are looking for volunteers who would like to take the GIPL mission beyond their own congregation into other faith communities. As we broaden our reach throughout metro Atlanta and into all of Georgia, we know that we can be a resource to more communities if some of you who are already committed to these issues work with us! If you are interested in being trained to talk in faith communities about GIPL, the need for environmental protection and justice, energy efficiency and conservation, and the theological and spiritual connection between ecology and religion then contact us at 404-588-9978 or info@gipl.org.

Attention Youth! A conference and Invitation to be on our Advisory Council

This November, GIPL would like to send interested high school and college age youth to Powershift, a conference being held in Washington D.C. to educate and empower youth to work to mitigate global climate change. The cost is minimal for the conference and one of our partner organizations, Greater Washington Interfaith Power & Light (GW IPL) will be teaming with member congregations to provide housing for our participants. The remaining financial commitment is travel to Washington D.C. for the conference.

GW IPL is helping organize the conference and there will be a faith "track" for attendees to learn how to get their faith community in on the action. Georgia Interfaith Power & Light hopes to use this conference as a catalyst to form a Youth Advisory Committee—a group of interested young people who will help GIPL conceive and organize programs and resources for youth groups within faith communities. GIPL will also give scholarships to two interested applicants. Call Jennifer at 404-588-9978 or e-mail info@gipl.org if you or a young adult you know is interested.

Sew your way to brighter holidays!

We need some volunteers to help sew the cloth bags for our Advent and Hanukkah kits! They are easy to make (just two seams!), we'll supply the cloth, and you can do it at home. If you can help out, drop us an e-mail at info@gipl.org or give us a call at 404-588-9978.

Put GIPL in your Congregational Budget

We're at that time of year when congregations are setting budgets for 2008. You can help Georgia Interfaith Power & Light's commitment to creation care by asking your congregation to plan to include support for GIPL in their 2008 budget, and maybe even sign a Congregational Covenant. Visit www.gipl.org/join.html for a copy of the Congregational Covenant and suggested guidelines on congregational donations.