



# MASSACHUSETTS Interfaith Power & Light

PRAY | ACT | MOBILIZE

FAITH IN ACTION FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

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September 2022

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Dear friends,

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Director*

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## Inspiration

As summer gives way to autumn and programming begins to resume, our newsletter features several opportunities for connection, for learning, and for engaging in action and advocacy in the weeks ahead.

MassIPL eagerly looks forward to welcoming you to our *Love.Earth.Justice.2022* event, in person in Worcester or online, on Sunday afternoon, October 16th. We are working closely with our co-sponsor and Faith Action Network partner, Worcester Congregations for Climate and Environmental Justice, to present a multi-faith worship service and several workshop options for learning and engagement on today's most important and timely topics.

Mark your calendars now and register soon, details are below!

Thank you for helping us spread the word about the event so we can reach as many people as possible. Please share or forward this information to others in your faith community, especially the folks who can include this in your congregation's newsletter or calendar listings. Together, let's inspire more people to Pray, Act, and Mobilize for a livable climate!

With the weather beginning to turn cooler, reliable, energy efficient heating for our Houses of Worship and homes is on our minds. Charting a pathway towards becoming carbon neutral is critical now more than ever before. To help guide you, we share summaries and highlights of what the MA climate bill and the federal Inflation Reduction Act mean as you weigh the options for moving towards Net Zero.

September means "Back-to-School!" and we must bid a fond farewell to our summer intern, Sophia Gosselin-Smoske, an Environmental Science major at Endicott College. We are most grateful for her dedication and work on an analysis quantifying the carbon reduction opportunity in the faith-based organization sector. Those numbers, like a picture, are worth a thousand words!

Thank you for joining us!

## Pray

Connect environmental justice to your faith tradition through prayer, worship, and reflection



**Love.Earth.Justice. 2022**  
**Multi-faith Worship and Workshops to Make a Difference**  
**A remote accessible event**

**HOLD THE DATE!**  
**Sunday, October 16, 2-5 pm Eastern**  
**First Unitarian Church of Worcester**  
**90 Main Street, Worcester, MA**  
*(Logo credit: Jamie Garuti)*

Co-sponsors MassIPL and Worcester Congregations for Climate and Environmental Justice (WCCEJ) invite you to *Love.Earth.Justice.2022*, an afternoon of celebration, engagement and skill-building for climate action and resilience.

We will gather at First Unitarian Church in Worcester at [90 Main Street](#) to celebrate creation and community, mourn all we have lost, and call each other to faithful action. We begin with a worship service lifting up prayer, song, and reflection from diverse faith traditions, and a sermon by [Rev. Vernon Walker](#), Executive Director of [CREW: Communities Responding to Extreme Weather](#). Two 50-minute workshop slots follow the service, each offering two workshops simultaneously.

Contact Miriam at [mcohen@massipl.org](mailto:mcohen@massipl.org) with any questions.

**RSVP for  
Love.Earth.Justice.2022**

**Attend the Green Team Summit online**  
**Sunday-Wednesday, Sept 11 - 14**  
**Keynote Address by Katherine Hayhoe:**  
**Sunday, Sept 11, 6:00-7:30 pm**



**Our IPL sister affiliate in Illinois, Faith in Place, is hosting this free event in person and online. Event kicks off with a Keynote Address and live Q&A with [Dr. Katherine Hayhoe](#), author of *"Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World"*. Dr. Hayhoe is also chief climate scientist for The Nature Conservancy, and a distinguished professor and chair at Texas Tech University.**

The full [agenda](#) includes a variety of spiritual and practical sessions such as "Healing Centered Justice", "Interwoven: Exploring Environmental Justice from a Faith Perspective", and "Green Team Networking."

**Register for the Green Team**



Healthy Planet, Healthy People

**Healthy Planet, Healthy People: Living Laudato Si' in Home, Community and Parish.**  
**Saturday, Sept. 24, 10am-noon**

An online conference presented by the Boston Catholic Climate Movement. Keynote speaker, Dr. Philip Landrigan, is a pediatrician and epidemiologist and directs Boston College's Program for Global Public Health and the Common Good. He will connect the dots between "Climate Change, Pollution and Children's Health." Breakout sessions include Eco-spirituality: Prayer and Liturgy, Gardening for God, Greening Energy Bills, Advocating for Environmental Justice, Waste-Watchers, and more.

For details and to register, click on the button or go to

<https://tinyurl.com/HealthyPlanetPeople>

*Register for Healthy Planet, Healthy People*

### **Environmental Justice Is Racial Justice** **Thursday, Oct 20, 1:30-3:00pm**

Across our country and our world, communities of color are impacted first and worst by pollution and climate-driven disasters, and among the strongest advocates for change. Learn how your faith community can stand with them. Join a panel of leaders on the front lines of environmental justice featuring Dr. Robert Bullard, Rev. Mariama White-Hammond, Rev. Dr. Deborah Conrad, and Rev. Betsy Sowers (Moderator).



The event will be recorded and made available to all registrants, so sign up even if you can't be present at 1:30pm on October 20!

*Register for Environmental Justice is Racial Justice*

Hosted by the [Creation Justice Community](#) of [The Alliance of Baptists](#), endorsed by [Churches Thriving for Racial Justice](#). Co-sponsored by [Creation Justice Ministries](#), [The American Baptist Creation Justice Network](#), [Environmental Justice Ministries - United Church of Christ](#), [Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light](#), [UU Mass Action](#), and [Southern New England Conference UCC Environmental Ministries Team](#).

## **Act**

*Lower the carbon emissions of your house of worship and your home*

**Two Words Every House of Worship Needs**

## to Know about the Inflation Reduction Act: Direct Pay

You've likely read about the \$369 billion dollar investment in addressing climate change that is the major feature of the IRA (see links at the end of this story for a short list of articles and webinars we think are good summaries).



But there is one provision that MassIPL wants to make sure you know about:

### DIRECT PAY.

This provision is specific to non-profit organizations, turning the tax credit for investments in solar, weatherization, and other carbon-reducing actions into a check for the amount of the tax credit. Since our organizations don't pay taxes, in the past we haven't been able to benefit from tax credits. Now we can!

For example, if you install a solar panel system that costs \$70,000, the government will send you a check for \$21,000, lowering your out-pocket cost to \$49,000. And for the first time, you can also get the 30% incentive for battery installations. A number of other investments will also qualify for direct pay.

The Catholic Climate Covenant is hosting a webinar on the IRA on September 13 at 1:00 pm. titled "A Powerful Opportunity for the Faith Community". [Register for this webinar.](#)

Check out these links with detailed information about this provision:

[Renewable Energy World article](#)  
[Collective Sun webinar](#)

These tax credits and incentives are equally important in supporting us to make our homes more energy efficient and lower carbon:

- Rewiring America, which had a hand in writing the bill, offers [this calculator](#) for homeowners as well as [this explainer](#).
- The Boston Globe has this article about how [these incentives support decarbonizing our homes](#).

One caveat: various government agencies must now write the rules and procedures for claiming these benefits and there are some limits and requirements. Stay tuned for updates as the guidance is published over the next few months.



### Quantified: The Carbon Reduction Opportunity in the Faith-Based Building Sector

Photo credit: [Matthias Heyde](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The buildings that faith-based organizations operate emit 277,669 metric tons of CO2 annually, according to a new analysis by MassIPL. Direct emissions (from the burning of natural gas and heating oil) emit 170,879 tons, accounting for 2.25% of the direct emissions of all commercial buildings in the state. Indirect emissions (from the use of electricity) account for another 106,970 tons.

The faith-based building sector is included in the "small commercial" sector in the MassSave program, but this is the first time its carbon emissions have been calculated separately.

"This report proves that the faith-based organization building sector is a significant contributor to carbon pollution in Massachusetts," according to Jim Nail, president of MassIPL and director of the study. "This is a great opportunity to reduce carbon emissions as we have seen many of our members achieve 50% or more reductions through smart planning and strategic

investments. But the current energy efficiency incentives don't address the unique challenges our members face in buildings that are often more than 100 years old. We plan to use this report to seek additional funding to help our members transform their buildings."

This analysis uses data from the Energy Information Administration's Commercial Building Energy Consumption Survey (CBECS) and Residential Energy Consumption Survey (RECS) as well as the Massachusetts Building Sector Technical Report and data from over 80 Environmental Stewardship Assessment reports MassIPL has conducted. MassIPL calculated the carbon emissions not only of over 2500 worship buildings but also 174 schools, 119 parsonages, and 53 office buildings operated by faith-based organizations.

Thanks go to our intern, Sophia Gosselin-Smoske, for all her work crunching the numbers! And to the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center's Clean Energy Internship program for financial support.

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## Take the 100% Pledge

With these new incentives at both the State and Federal level, and the evidence this summer that climate change is already happening, now is the time to make a plan and take serious actions to cut the carbon footprint of our houses of worship.

Join us and take the pledge to cut emissions by 50% by 2030 and 100% by 2040!

Get started with the national IPL [Cool Congregations Challenge start-up kit](#) and [request an Environmental Stewardship Assessment](#) from MassIPL which will give a list of short-term and long-term steps you can take based on our evaluation of your house of worship



*Take the 100% Pledge!*

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## Mobilize

*Promote policies for a more just and sustainable world*



**September 24 - 30, 2022**

Join our colleagues at CREW (Communities Responding to Extreme Weather) for a full week of in-depth sessions covering the public health, environmental justice, ecosystem health, and other facets of the climate emergency. Begin with the [Keynote Address, How to Respond To Climate Change](#), presented by David Pogue.

[Check this page](#) for an updated schedule of all events.

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## Key Provisions of the Massachusetts Climate Bill

Signed into law on August 11, the bill has a lot of great



provisions that will further advance Massachusetts' efforts to fight climate change -- and do it in an equitable manner. The headline provisions promote offshore wind and ban the sale of gasoline powered cars in 2035.

Here are a few other provisions we are happy to see:

- Requires the MassSave program to do more to ensure low income communities have access to the program's rebates and incentives.
- Creates a workforce training program with emphasis on minority-owned and otherwise under-represented groups in the clean energy industry.
- Makes electric vehicles -- both autos and public transit vehicles -- more accessible to low income individuals and neighborhoods.
- Removes wood-burning biomass from the definition of clean energy, while adding networked geothermal and increasing funding for clean energy.

WBUR has a [good summary of the bill](#), and [Sen. Michael Barrett's summary](#) is even more detailed.

The bill also requires buildings over 20,000 square feet to report their emissions annually, which MassIPL's research says is about 25% of houses of worship. If your building is in that size range, watch for further guidance on the reporting mechanism and reach out to MassIPL if you need help.

## Are you a Faith Climate Justice Voter? Be sure to get your Faithful Voter Reflection Guide!

[Download a free digital version](#)  
[Printed guides available for purchase](#), \$5 plus shipping.

This guide is intended to spur discussion and discernment. Whether you use it at a kitchen table, in a house of worship, at a community forum, or at an event with political candidates, the hope is it helps you navigate the urgent moral questions raised by this election cycle. The issues addressed here provide a framework for evaluating issues and candidates in a way that prioritizes solutions that promote dignity and the common good. Each section includes suggested questions to guide your conversations and spark ideas for questions to ask political candidates.



Learn more about the guide by watching IPL President Rev. Susan Hendershot's [conversation about the guide](#) and this election season with Climate Reality Project's William J Barber, III and other IPL partners.

*Learn more about IPL's Faith Climate Justice Voter campaign*



## Protect State forests and biodiversity

**Ask the Mass Dept of Conservation and Recreation to protect the public interest:  
Declare Carbon and Biodiversity Reserves**

**Public Comments due September 28th  
Sign the Petition below**

A 10 year review by the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) of how the state's parks and forests are managed is currently underway. In response to today's global climate and biodiversity crises, climate scientists, biologists and activists urge that all DCR land, including the watersheds, become either "parks" or "reserves" where land management is similar to our National Parks, Please take a moment to ask the DCR to make existing "Reserves" permanent and designate undeveloped "Woodlands" and Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP) lands as Carbon and Biodiversity Reserves.

Sign the citizen petition at the link below, or Submit your comments online by Sept. 28th at [www.mass.gov/dcr/public-comment](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/public-comment).

Visit <https://www.savemassforests.com> for a DCR reserves fact sheet and updates.

Sign the petition to permanently protect current state-protected lands

## Inspiration



### EARTH HOLDER SKILL BUILDING

### *In True Dialogue, Both Sides Are Willing to Change*

If you want to save the planet and transform society, you need brotherhood and sisterhood; you need togetherness. Whenever we speak about the environment, or peace and social justice, we usually speak of non-violent actions or technological solutions, and we forget that the element of collaboration is crucial. Without it, we cannot do anything; we cannot save our planet. Technical solutions have to be supported by togetherness, understanding, and compassion.

-- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet* (2021)

Graphic Source:

[Earth Holder Community, A Mindful Earth Justice Initiative in the Plum Village Community of Engaged Buddhism](#)

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