

COMPOSTING 101 FOR THE CHURCH

Let Nothing
Be Wasted



THE MISSION OF EEN

The Evangelical Environmental Network inspires, equips, educates, and mobilizes evangelical Christians to love God and others by rediscovering and reclaiming the Biblical mandate to care for creation and working toward a stable climate and a healthy, pollution-free world.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to inspire, equip, educate, and mobilize congregations and individuals to engage in composting as an act of Christian discipleship.

PART 1 - INSPIRING YOUR CHURCH TO COMPOST (PG. 3)

PART 2 - DEVELOPING A COMPOSTING 101 EVENT (PG. 5)

PART 3 - EQUIPPING YOUR CHURCH FOR LASTING IMPACT (PG. 8)

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“God's creation includes an unseen—to the naked eye—universe below our feet. I believe that part of our Godly mandate is to care for the soil, the part of creation that sustains all life.”

— REV. TIM OLSEN, EEN UPPER MIDWEST COORDINATOR



Dear friends,

Scripture tells us that creation, humanity together with the rest of God's created world, is very good. (Genesis 1:31) When we see it, we are able to understand "the invisible qualities of God—his eternal power and divine nature." (Romans 1:20)

It may seem surprising, but composting is a prime example of God's creation displaying His glory and redeeming love. It's a process where trash is turned into treasure. Through composting, things we often consider waste—like yard trimmings, kitchen scraps, and cardboard—are transformed into nutrient-rich "black gold." When added to soil, this nourishing finished compost "helps the soil absorb and retain nutrients and moisture, and protects plants from diseases and pests. Better moisture retention means less watering, allowing you to conserve water and reduce runoff pollution."^[1]

Composting is miraculous and brings glory to our Creator.

With this toolkit, we hope to introduce you and your church family to the joys and benefits of composting. We pray it will be useful to you for God's glory and for the good of His creation.

Blessings in Christ,

REV. DEAN VAN FAROWE, EEN OHIO OUTREACH COORDINATOR



[1] "Basics and Benefits of Composting," from the Cornell University Extension - Tompkins County, NY, pg. 1: <https://ccetompkins.org/resources/compost-basics-benefits-of-composting>



PART 1

INSPIRING YOUR CHURCH

THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS AND
COMMUNITY BENEFITS OF COMPOSTING

RESPONDING BIBLICALLY TO FOOD WASTE

God in His wisdom has given us the process of composting to turn our food and yard waste into wonderful soil, enriching our gardens, farms, and creation. He has revealed the value of soil and of stewardship in the Scriptures. (For a full list of scripture passages, please see Appendix A.)

It is evident in scripture that when we engage in composting, we are living faithfully “on earth as in heaven,” even as we await the full renewal of creation when Christ returns.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS OF COMPOSTING

- In the U.S., an estimated 30%-40% of food is thrown out.
- The U.S. is also the largest producer of trash.
- The largest percentage of that trash is food, which makes up an estimated 24% of our nation’s waste.

The church, serving as a community of new creation, can contribute to the solution to this problem by composting—both as individuals and a church community. We are called by Christ to “let nothing be wasted,” (John 6:12) yet too often that is what we do. Composting is an opportunity to be wise stewards of God’s wonders through the reduction of waste and promotion of soil health.

(For more examples of food waste impacts and the benefits of composting, see Appendix B.)

“When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, ‘Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.’”

— JOHN 6:12 (NIV)





PART 2

ACTIVATING YOUR CHURCH

HOSTING A COMPOSTING 101
EVENT

STEPS FOR HOSTING A COMPOSTING EVENT

STEP 1 - FORM A PLANNING TEAM

Team members can be members of your church or part of the larger Christian community. It may be helpful to have at least one person who has experience with composting, gardening, or waste-free living as a member of the team.

STEP 2 - PARTNER WITH A LOCAL EXPERT

Identify composting educators or master composters to be instructors for your event. *Expertise and a quality presentation is essential.* Seek a local expert to give a presentation about composting. You might seek expertise in your congregation, your municipality, or through an internet search. Some possible leaders include:

- County conservation experts or state extension officers
- Farmers, master gardeners, or master composters in your area
- Practitioners from composting companies or co-ops

STEP 3 - SELECT AN EVENT LOCATION

Consider meeting at a participating church, a farm or garden, or another suitable location. If Composting 101 does not take place at a garden, farm, or home compost pile, consider arranging a visit to one as a follow-up activity to enhance participant learning.

STEP 4 - CREATE A BUDGET

A sample budget and potential budget considerations may be found in Appendix C.

STEP 5 - CREATE AN EVENT OUTLINE

A sample event outline can be found in Appendix C.



EVENT AGENDA COMPONENTS

A) Start with Worship and/or Scriptural Teaching

- Sing songs that celebrate and worship God our Creator. The Climate Vigil Songs [album](#) and [worship guide](#) from The Porter's Gate Worship Project is an excellent option.
- Share a creation care devotion or message. You can use the soil stewardship scripture in Appendix A or reference EEN's [creation care resources](#).

B) Teach Composting 101

- Have a local composting expert give a Composting 101 introduction and demonstration.
- Share [free resources, such as this one](#) from the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District in Ohio.

C) Put Learning Into Action

- Provide participants, either as a gift or by selling, with at-home composting equipment.
- Help participants determine where their food and yard waste will go. Will they use their own bin? Do their towns or neighborhoods have curbside pickup? Is there a drop off at a farmers market or a community facility?
- Share contact information for local experts, master composters, gardeners, etc. so folks have someone to turn to with their questions.
- Share how and where to spread finished compost after it turns into soil.

D) Include Food and Fellowship

- Consider using compostable or reusable dinnerware, and make sure to have a compost bucket.

STEP 6 - PUBLICIZE YOUR EVENT

Start by determining a target audience. Plan how you will advertise to this audience using bulletins, social media, personal invites, email, etc. Before sharing about your event, create an easy registration process that makes the most sense for your audience.

STEP 7 - CREATE A RUN OF SHOW AND TEST RUN YOUR EVENT

STEP 8 - CONTINUE PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPANTS

Provide written information about how to compost ([see sample here](#)), a list of composting resources (see Appendix F), and a contact list of local practitioners who can answer questions.



PART 3

EQUIPPING YOUR CHURCH

SET UP YOUR CHURCH FOR LASTING
IMPACT

MAINTAINING MOMENTUM AFTER YOUR EVENT

SHARE SUCCESS STORIES

Consider how you can share inspiring success stories and keep the momentum going after the event. Examples include:

- Creating a social media hashtag and encouraging participants to post updates and photos about their composting progress.
- Letting your church know about the composting program through church media, announcements, etc. Communicate why you're doing this and how it will work. Ask your church family to participate in and pray for this initiative.

PLAN AN ONLINE OR IN-PERSON FOLLOW-UP EVENT

Follow-up events are an encouragement to folks who are beginning composting for the first time and may feel uncertain. For example, you might plan to have a Q&A session with your expert or plan home visits to see the bins of your participants.

Another idea is to meet again in 6 months at the church garden, a local community garden, or nearby farm to deposit finished compost together and celebrate this practice of creation care.

SCALE UP: BEGIN COMPOSTING AT YOUR CHURCH

A) Set Up a Composting Team - You will need trained individuals to handle your compost, from inside your church's building to an outdoor bin or composting drop-off location.

B) Set Reasonable Goals for Reducing Food and Yard Waste - For example, you might place a composting bucket in your church's kitchen; count how many buckets go out each month and try to increase that number.

C) Set Up Food Waste Collection Bins - Put composting bins or buckets in visible places with signs to distinguish them from trash bins. Monitor them each week, and adjust their location if needed. Sorting stations are available for purchase from conservation districts or online.

D) Create a Plan to Deposit Food Waste in an Outdoor Composting Bin/Station - You can also purchase a composting subscription.

E) Celebrate Your Composting Efforts - Include the finished product in church flower beds, or invite members to take it home to add to their gardens. Celebration is necessary; we want our communities to understand the blessing that composting is. This is a way we help sustain the soil that gives life!

COMPOSTING BASICS

WHAT TO COMPOST



Fruit Scraps



Vegetable Scraps



Paper Products



Coffee Grounds



Eggshells



Yard Trimmings

WHAT NOT TO COMPOST



Dairy Products



Meat, Oils, Fat & Grease



Coal



Pet Waste



Diseased Plants



Coated Paper

COMPOSTING TIPS



Add green & brown materials in layers



Keep compost moist but not soggy



Turn regularly to provide aeration

ADAPTED FROM TINYGARDENHABIT.COM

APPENDIX A: WORSHIP RESOURCES

COMPOSTING PRAYERS

Written by Stephanie Roston, EEN 2025 Intern and Member of City Church in Cleveland, OH

For When You are Composting Food Scraps

God, our Provider and Sustainer,

Thank you for the blessing of food. Thank you for the nourishment and enjoyment we have received from each meal, and thank you also for these scraps we were not able to consume. As we return this surplus to the earth, remind us of the ongoing story of redemption written in all of creation: the microbes, worms, and chemistry that you have created to transform death to life. May our own days, whether they seem fruitful or wasteful, also evidence your grace in this way, restoring life wherever we go.

Amen.

For Picking Up and Using Finished Compost

God of life and wonder,

We hold in our hands a common miracle of redemption. Thank you for this rich soil full of nutrients and potential. Thank you for a natural cycle where life can spring from death. Bless the plants that will sprout from this soil. Bless the food, shade, and beauty they will provide. May we taste and see that you are good. May our lives become fertile soil in which the seeds of your love may take root and grow to bless the lives of those around us.

Amen.



COMPOSTING AND SCRIPTURE

The tangible act of composting reveals—and makes real—important scriptural truths in God's word.

Note: all scriptures are listed in the New International Version (NIV) translation.

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” – Genesis 1:31a

God's extraordinary creation includes—and is dependent on—healthy soil.

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” – Genesis 2:15

When we till and work our soil, we seek to make it productive. Composting is a key way to follow God's calling. “When compost is applied, the soil's health increases as microbes grow and become more plentiful.”[1]

“Cursed is the ground because of you; ...it will produce thorns and thistles for you.” – Genesis 3:17b, 18a

We brought sin into God's good world and we acknowledge that we still do.

“But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD.” – Leviticus 25:4a

Because of the curse, the land now needs rest, and we are to provide it. This basic principle of concern for the health of the land leads us to the patient work of composting as one means of stewardship and honoring God.

“And now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, LORD, have given me.’ Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him.”

– Deuteronomy 26:10

Ancient Israel's annual festival of the first-fruits reminds us that the fruit of the soil is a gift from God. Composting, too, is an act of worship.

“When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, ‘Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.’” – John 6:12

When we save our unused leftovers and return them to the soil for its benefit, we are doing the will of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

[1] UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability - www.ies.ucla.edu/project/carbon-sequestration-through-compost/

“The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.” – Romans 8:21

Because of our sin there is a curse on the land, though we believe that decay will not remain forever. Just as Christ was resurrected and his body transformed, so will it be with all creation. This truth is depicted in composting itself, as dead things are resurrected to new life.

“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven.” – Colossians 1:19-20a

Christians are eternally grateful for the blood of Christ that was shed for us. Yet the gospel is even more epic than that; Christ died for *all things* that God created.

“On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” – Revelation 22:2b

John’s vision of the future fills us with hope. God’s people anticipate a glorious time to come with the Lord God, living under healing trees that will grow in redeemed soil for all the nations. (See also Matthew 19:28, Acts 3:21, and Revelation 21:5)

APPENDIX B: COMPOSTING FACTS

- Nearly half of all U.S. landfills are full or have been closed because of groundwater contamination. As one example, the state of Ohio has roughly 25 years of landfill capacity. In 2020, 4,829,689 tons of waste were sent to Ohio landfills from within the state. Establishing new landfills as a long-term strategy is not sustainable due to pollution (groundwater pollution, methane emissions, etc.), maintenance costs, and lack of interest among residents to live near these sites.
- Food waste in landfills releases harmful methane and contributes to the problem of overextended landfills.
- Composting is God’s natural way to reduce waste and promote soil health.
- Compost is full of beneficial nutrients for gardening and more.

- “Composting holds promise in increasing water capacity, rebuilding soil health, and improving air quality. When compost is applied, the soil’s health increases as microbes grow and become more plentiful. These microbes sequester carbon in the soil from photosynthesis.”[1]
- Compost is a proven way to mitigate climate change. “Composting benefits the climate... by reducing greenhouse gas emissions at landfills, by promoting uptake of carbon dioxide by vegetation, and by making our projects and gardens more resilient to the effects of climate change.”[2] Addressing climate change helps us fulfill our Biblical mandate to care for the “least of these,” because the impacts of climate change are most devastating for the poor.

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE PLANNING

SAMPLE EVENT OUTLINE

TIME	ACTION	PRESENTER(S)
9:00 AM	Meet at host church/site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome, introductions, and worship 	Facilitator
9:15 AM	Bible study/devotion (<u>example here</u>)	Local pastor or team leader
10:00 AM	Presenters teach Composting 101: Why and How to Compost	Master composter or compost company
11:00 AM	Visit a garden/farm that practices composting	Composting practitioner
12:00 PM	Lunch and discussion about home and church composting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn from the Bible that might inspire your composting efforts? • What did you learn that you might incorporate at home or church? • What challenges do you anticipate? 	Faith leader and composting practitioner

[1] UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability - www.ioes.ucla.edu/project/carbon-sequestration-through-compost/

[2] <https://www.compostingcouncil.org/page/ClimateChangeBenefits>

1:00 PM	Distribute compost buckets and bins and discuss how to use them at home/church	Team members
1:15 PM	Conclude with composting prayers	Pastor or team leader

SAMPLE EVENT BUDGET

CATEGORY	FOR __ PARTICIPANTS
Kitchen compost buckets and/or compost bins	
Printed handouts	
Refreshments/meal	
Compostable dinnerware, cups, and plates	
Speaker/church staff fees	
Venue rental	
Other	

Tip: Along with food, rental space, etc., consider giving—or selling at a low cost—compost buckets and/or bins to participants and informing attendees about where they can bring their food and yard waste. Giving your participants the tools they need will help equip them for the ongoing act of composting. Consider checking if your local partners might provide free or reduced cost composting buckets or bins.

APPENDIX D: COMPOSTING BINS AND BUCKETS

COMPOSTING BUCKETS

EXAMPLE	TYPE	SIZE	COST
<u>Your own 5 gallon bucket</u>	Garden	5 gallons	Free
<u>Homemade Bucket</u>	Kitchen	1 gallon	Free
<u>Cuyahoga County "Sure Close" Pail</u>	Garden	1.9 gallons	\$5
<u>Home Depot Bucket</u>	Garden	5 gallons	\$3.98

OUTDOOR COMPOSTING BINS

EXAMPLE	SIZE	COST
The Spruce - <u>15 DIY Bins</u>	Various	Free
Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District - <u>"Earth Machine"</u>	80 gallons	\$50
Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District - <u>GeoBin Composter</u>	Adjustable	\$30
Oriental Trading Company - <u>Tumbler</u>	43 gallons	\$64.99
Yita Home - <u>Compost Box With Aeration</u>	80 gallons	\$139

APPENDIX E: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- Do we want to implement a composting program at our church?
- Are there items from our ministry that can be composted on a regular basis? For example, might we gather food scraps during fellowship gatherings/meals?
- What is the church's process for presenting a new ministry idea? Is there a particular team or person with whom we need to meet?
- What is our long-term vision, and what are the next steps to get there? (For example, one idea is to consider becoming a "zero-waste" church, with composting as a first step.)

PRACTICAL QUESTIONS

- Are there events that occur repeatedly in our space? (One example could be coffee time before/after worship. This might be a good time to start as you may have the same group of people using the same kinds of materials each week.)
- Are food or drinks for church events served using disposable cups/plates? If so, can the church provide compostable/recyclable or reusable dinnerware?
- What buckets/bins will we use to capture food waste (indoors) and bring it to the bin or composting service (outdoors)?
- Who will need to approve of the plan? Facility managers, deacons, or pastors?
- How much will our plan cost? (You may want to begin without requesting money from the church's budget, for example, by opting for reusable dinnerware rather than purchasing a compostable option.)
- Could we begin with a trial period after which we can re-assess the effectiveness of our plan?

APPENDIX F: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1) Host a book club studying *Garbage Theology* by Caleb Cray Haynes.

- Utilize EEN's free reading guide

2) Sign up for EEN's faith and agriculture newsletter, *Regenerate*.

- This monthly newsletter has many articles about sustainable agriculture practices, in which composting plays a key role in wise backyard gardening.

3) Learn about improving soil health from Ohio Gardner.

4) Learn more about composting with the Cuyahoga County Ohio Solid Waste District Composting Guide.

5) Share book resources.

- *Garbage Theology* by Caleb Gray Haynes
- *Good Ground: Volume 2* by Beth Madison

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CreationCare.org | Creation care is a matter of life.

