

# Sustainable Eastern Ontario

## Local Churches Going Green

By Kathryn Norman



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For most people, going green isn't the first thing that springs to mind when they think about religion, but it turns out that all major world religions have scriptures supporting care for the natural world, and the local churches in the Alta Vista area are no exception.

Probably the most dramatic example is Emmanuel United Church, which several years ago learned how inefficient their building was with regard to energy, water use, and waste production; and made the tough but worthwhile decision to strip it down to its bones and rebuild to become the first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified church in Canada. Recently, it has been helping members, children, students and summer camp attendees connect with nature through gardening. Seven raised beds on church grounds produce vegetables and herbs, which are cooked in the church kitchen. All waste produced is composted, making this a great way for young people to connect with the food chain.

During these renovations, obviously the congregation at Emmanuel United needed a place to meet, which brings us to our next example, Rideau Park United Church. You may have noticed the Foster's Farm booth in the Rideau Park parking lot this summer, or maybe even stopped to pick up some local produce there. Rideau Park has also done numerous other environmental activities including special programming around care for creation, and rents out office space to the national non-profit Faith and the Common Good, which works with religious communities of all kinds on environmental and social justice issues.

Local food has been a theme for many communities this year, and St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church is no exception with their new veggie patch out front. This community also recently held a textile and electronic-waste recycling event to raise funds while diverting these items from landfill.

The Ottawa Mennonite Church is another local example of an environmentally active congregation; most notably for their longstanding partnership with 10,000 Villages, supporting socially and environmentally sustainable farming and manufacturing around the world.

These are just a few examples of what faith communities in our part of the city have been doing to take care of the planet. To find out more or to learn how your faith community can get involved, contact Faith and the Common Good at [kforster@faithcommongood.org](mailto:kforster@faithcommongood.org).

