



## Spirit Audit – Congregational Questionnaire

Welcome to the Spirit Section of the Audit process! This section provides you with the opportunity to learn about what you are already doing – and what opportunities exist – in the following areas:

- Worship
- Religious Education
- Spiritual Practices

As you respond to these questions, try to identify the 2-3 most important priorities or opportunities that appear in relation to each section, and write these priorities down. This will help you identify the steps you want to include in your Action Plan at the end of the auditing process. To successfully complete the audit, you will need to involve additional members of your worship and religious education committees, as well as your ordained leader. **This audit will take approximately one hour to finish, and requires detailed and complete answers.** We recommend that everyone helping to complete this audit be made well aware of this beforehand, and be prepared to dedicate the time and effort needed.

### Area 1 – Worship

*Worship is at the heart of the life of religious communities, and offers an important opportunity to deepen your members’ awareness of Creation and its Creator. The following questions are designed to help you think about ways that your house of worship can integrate environmental themes into your services of worship in a manner that is suitable for your particular setting.*

		Yes	No
<b>Do your worship services:</b>			
Take place outdoors during any time of the year?		Yes	
<i>If yes, please describe</i>	<i>Last summer, we had our first every weekend Shabbaton, a camping trip where we celebrated Shabbat together. 50 people participated in this pot-luck event that included praying in nature, hiking, studying, and more. A second Shabbaton is scheduled for summer 2013 with 75 people scheduled to attend. We also have Sabbath services in the park and courtyard during the summer months.</i>		
<i>If not, does your institution’s location provide opportunities to do this?</i>			
Include environmentally-oriented prayers?		Yes	
<i>If yes, please describe at least 2 prayers</i>	<i>At both weekend Shabbatons, guided meditations through the use of the Psalms are used to help people connect with the “awe-ness” of nature and appreciation of God’s existence in the world (Psalms 148 and blessings for creation). This has also been incorporated into a newly started contemplative service that allows for</i>		

	<p>praising God in appreciation of the environment, its vastness and beauty. This includes Psalms and a selection for Shabbat known as “El Adon—Master/creator over all things created.” Annually, we hold a service in the park called Tashlich, an opportunity to celebrate the start of the new Jewish year (Rosh Hashanah) and a time of renewal/forgiveness.</p>
<p><i>How often are environmentally-themed prayers included in worship?</i></p>	<p>At least monthly in the contemplative service; at least quarterly for various services, Tashlich, and the like.</p>
<p>Include passages from sacred texts that speak to environmental themes, with these themes framed for members in terms of modern environmental issues?</p>	
<p><i>If yes, please cite at least 2 examples of these passages and how these themes are made evident for members. If you follow a lectionary or pre-set selection of readings from sacred texts, consider the passages within this framework.</i></p>	<p>From Shabbat morning liturgy  Creation reflects the rule of God, who is praised by the breath of all life. God’s greatness and goodness fill the universe; knowledge and wisdom encircle God’s presence. Exalted is God by creatures celestial, enhanced and adorned by the mysteries of heaven. God’s throne is guarded by truth and purity; God is surrounded by mercy and love. Good are the lights our god has created, fashioning them with insight and wisdom. Endowed by God with power and vigor, they maintain dominion amidst the world. Abounding in splendor, emanating brilliance, their radiant light adorns the universe. Rejoicing in rising, gladly setting, they rush to obey their Creator’s will. God is acclaimed by beauty and glory, God’s sovereignty sung by celebration and praise. God summoned the sun, whose light shone forth, then gave to the moon its cyclical glow. The stars and planets, all bodies of the heavens acclaim God with praise; celestial creatures give glory and greatness.</p> <p>Psalm 148  Hallelujah.  Praise be the LORD from the heavens; praise Him in the heights. Praise be Him, all His angels; praise be Him, all His hosts. Praise be Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all be stars of light. Praise Him, be heavens of heavens, and be waters that are above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the LORD; for He commanded, and they were created. He has also established them forever and ever; He has made a decree which shall not be transgressed. Praise the LORD from the earth, the sea-monsters, and all deeps; Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind, fulfilling His word; Mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars; Beasts and all cattle, creeping things and winged fowl; Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all judges of the earth; Both young men and maidens, old men and children; Let them praise the name of the LORD, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven. And He has lifted up a horn for His people, a</p>

	praise for all His saints, even for the children of Israel, a people near unto Him.	
<i>If no, are there passages where environmental themes could be highlighted for members? Write a brief list of some of these passages.</i>		
Include sermons that address environmental themes on a periodic or regular basis?	Yes	
<i>If yes, please describe</i>	A sermon given annually for the portion of Noah about sustainability, destruction, fragility of the world, the eternal sign of the rainbow as both a reminder to God and to humanity of caring for the world.	
Include hymns or pieces of music that address environmental themes and concerns?		
Appoint the worship space or sanctuary with local or organic flowers, greenery or other natural elements?	Yes	
Integrate plants or animals at any time?		
<i>If yes, please describe</i>	There was a meditation garden that was planted over a decade ago. In 2012, the men's club, some teens, and clergy helped reconstitute that garden as a sacred space for meditation, planting herbs/spices, and a general beatification of our property.	
Emphasize environmental themes in relation to particular seasons, holy days, holidays, or festivals?	Yes	
<i>If yes, please describe</i>	Rosh Hashanah—The birthday of the world and the anniversary of creation. Tashlich in the park as described above. Tu B'shvat—The birthday of nature/the trees. Annual tree planting at Coyote Point and a seder (meal) celebrating the various species of fruits, nuts, vegetables, and the like that give us sustenance.	
<b>Congregational prayer</b>		
If your congregation prays regularly for specific concerns, are environmental issues addressed? For instance, concerns related to your local/regional environment, people suffering from environment-related illnesses, global environmental problems, etc?		No
<b>Environmentally-themed worship services</b>		
If your house of worship has conducted environmentally-themed worship services in the past, do you feel they were well received by the community?	Yes	
<i>Why or why not?</i>	<i>Yes, primarily because they were different from the norm. This was an opportunity for people to experience prayer in a different setting, dressed in a more casual manner, and free to experience the elements while praying.</i>	
<i>What characteristics of those services would you like to emulate for future services, and which would you like to change?</i>	Praying in a circle/in the round, praying around a camp fire, being able to recite a prayer and see what you're praying for/about right in front of your eyes. Being able to smell/see/touch/taste something and then recite a blessing for the act (smelling flowers, hearing the birds chirp, etc.) or what I'd call experiential and spontaneous prayer.	

***In completing the Spirit - Worship Audit, please record the 2 -3 top ideas or priorities for action which you identified:***

1	Continuing with the second annual Shabbaton/camping trip
2	Having more regular opportunities to pray outside in our courtyard
3	Having quarterly services where the sermon/discussion focuses on Jewish tradition and the environment through the lens of prayer and study
4	Reviving the Tu B'shat Seder, a practice that has stopped in several years



## Spirit Audit – Congregational Questionnaire

### Area 2 - Religious Education

*Religious education programs provide opportunities to teach adults, teens and children about the wonder and majesty of Creation, our impact on it, and our tradition's teachings about the earth and our responsibility to it and its Owner. The following questions are designed to help you think about ways that your house of worship can integrate environmental themes into your religious education in a manner that is suitable for your particular setting.*

		Yes	No
<b>Religious-Environmental Education Programs</b>			
Please describe the ways, if any, that your religious education for adults, teenagers and children includes your tradition's teachings about the earth and our responsibility to care for it, and/or provides opportunities for members to strengthen their relationship with God through Creation:			
Adults:	Yes		
Teenagers:	Yes		
Children:	Yes		
Of the environmentally-themed religious education programs you have offered, which ones have worked well and why?	Tree planting in Coyote Point: a family experience so that kids and adults are working side by side. Shabbaton—Experiential and family oriented		
What successful elements from these programs would you like to include in future programs?	In general, we find that a holistic approach with kids and adults seems to work well as it engages the family unit.		
Does your religious community educate its members about local, regional and global environmental issues?			No
If yes, please describe			
Have you invited local environmental leaders to your house of worship to educate your community about their work?		Yes	
If yes, please describe	Jonathan Axlerod—JREC, Jewish Response to Energy Challenge; Josh Sonnenfeld—The Future of the San Mateo County Shoreline and "Save the Bay"; Ruth		

**Outside resources**

Have members of your community been invited to take the on-line Ecological Footprint Quiz ( <a href="http://www.myfootprint.org">www.myfootprint.org</a> ) or some other tool to learn about the impact of their own consumption on the environment?		No
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Learned about the environmental threats facing your county through <a href="http://www.scorecard.org">www.scorecard.org</a> or other means?		No
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**Newsletter/Website as an educational tool**

Does your religious community publish articles in its newsletter or on its website focused on environmental themes, particularly articles referencing sacred texts or religious teachings on the issue?	Yes	
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*Please describe some examples of the content included in these articles. The Rabbi shares comments in his weekly blog and we have a bimonthly newsletter that has a "Green Team" column. Here is one example.*

**[Tu B'shvat @ PSC--Weekend of January 25-27](#)**

**What is Tu B'shevat?**

- Tu B'Shevat, the 15th day of the Jewish month of Shevat, is a holiday also known as the New Year for Trees. Tu B'Shevat falls on Shabbat this year, Saturday (January 26).
- The word "Tu" is not really a word; it is the number 15 in Hebrew, as if you were to call the Fourth of July "IV July" (IV being 4 in Roman numerals).

**Why do we celebrate Tu B'shevat?**

- Judaism has several different "new years." This is not as strange a concept as it sounds at first blush; in America, we have the calendar year (January-December), the school year (September-June), and many businesses have fiscal years. It's basically the same idea with the various Jewish new years.
- Tu B'Shevat is the new year for the purpose of calculating the age of trees for tithing. See [Lev. 19:23-25](#), which states that fruit from trees may not be eaten during the first three years; the fourth year's fruit is for G-d, and after that, you can eat the fruit.
- Each tree is considered to have aged one year as of Tu B'Shevat, so if you planted a tree on Shevat 14, it begins its second year the next day, but if you plant a tree two days later, on Shevat 16, it does not reach its second year until the next Tu B'Shevat.

**What do you do on Tu B'Shevat**

- There are few customs or observances related to this holiday. One custom is to eat a new fruit on this day.

- Some people plant trees on this day (join PSC at Coyote Point on Sunday, January 27, at 1:30 pm to partake in this wonderful mitzvah.
- One other fun thing is to join PSC over Shabbat and eat things like dried fruit, nuts, and wine.

### Here are some Eco/Green Tips to help Celebrate Tu B'shevat

- Plant a tree in honor of Tu B'shevat - just be sure it's an indigenous tree- fruit trees are great!
- Carpool, walk or ride a bike.
- Buy foods locally - join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). Contact [rabbi@peninsulasinai.org](mailto:rabbi@peninsulasinai.org) to learn more about how you can the CSA at PSC.
- Plant a vegetable garden, or at least some herbs on your terrace or window sill.
- Buy food that's in season-it's less likely to have traveled far (the average fruit or vegetable you buy in the store has made 1,500 mile journey- think of all the fossil fuels burned to get it to you!)
- Reuse your water bottle. Avoid buying bottled water. In fact, reuse everything at least once, especially plastics (egg cartons make great paint trays, yogurt containers are a great way to store food!) Think of some creative re-uses for some of the plastic containers in your home.
- Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs or better yet, LED's - they now come in all shapes and sizes (and dimmable) - save 70% on your electric bill
- Turn off lights and electronics when you leave the room. Unplug your cell phone charger from the wall when not using it. Turn off energy strips and surge protectors when not in use (especially overnight).
- Go to your local library instead of buying new books.
- Recycle your textiles.
- For birthdays and other celebrations make a donation, give theater tickets or guest passes instead of buying and wrapping more "stuff."
- Discuss at your table: What's the best green tip you've adopted lately?

### Other great resources about Tu B'Shevat

- Check out Hazon (creating sustainable communities): <http://www.hazon.org/what-is-tu-bshvat>
- The secret of Tu B'shvat--[Click Here](#)

*How often are these environmental articles published?*

At least every other month

### **Ordained and/or institutional leaders**

Have the ordained and/or institutional leaders at your institution participated in religious-environmental education or training to further their own leadership and expertise in this area?

Yes

*If yes, please describe*

Rabbi Helfand was a rabbinic intern at the Conservative Synagogue Adath Israel of Riverdale when CSAIR went

	through their GreenFaith certification process and became the first Conservative Synagogue to do so. He has also done learning through AJWS, Mazon, Hazon, etc.
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<b><i>In completing the Spirit - Religious Education Audit, please record the 2 -3 top ideas or priorities for action which you identified:</i></b>	
1	More regular columns/articles about Judaism and the environment. At least a monthly or every other month column about what we can do to be green friendly and conscious.
2	Involving the youth in the creation of a spice garden in the meditation garden space
3	Community wide program on recycling/composting/waste in order to educate people on how to do it and what happens to our waste.



## Spirit Audit - Congregational Questionnaire

### Area 3 - Spiritual Practices

*All houses of worship encourage and teach their members to take part in activities - such as prayer, meditation, and retreats – to strengthen their own spiritual lives. The following questions are designed to help you think about ways that your house of worship can integrate more environmental themes into the spiritual practices which your house of worship promotes, in a manner that is suitable for your setting.*

		Yes	No
<b>Spiritual Practices</b>			
Has your community conducted a retreat, revival or reflection/meditation day which takes place outdoors or in a natural setting, or which focuses on strengthening people’s souls through time spent outdoors?		Yes	
Are members of your community encouraged to spend time outdoors as part of their personal practice of prayer or meditation?		Yes	
Does your institution conduct religious-environmental activities that are interfaith and intergenerational?		Yes	
<i>If yes, please describe</i>		The Shabbaton and contemplative services as described above had been extremely well-received and have positively helped connect people to their Judaism and to the environment. This past year we partnered with our local JCC to help out in their garden and it is the hope that that will become a more regular practice. For our annual	

	<p>mitzvah day/day of service, we always have at least one project that is connected to the outdoors (cleanup, tree planting, etc.). This is an area we'd like to focus on in the coming year, specifically to make this a more regular occurrence.</p>
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***In completing the Spirit - Spiritual Practices Audit, please record the 2 -3 top ideas or priorities for action which you identified:***

1	<p>More frequent outdoor services</p>
2	<p>Creating a community spice garden in our outdoor meditation space to be used for Havdallah (ceremony at the end of Shabbat) that will be maintained by our youth</p>
3	<p>Creating a community farmers market with the produce that people grow in their own homes with proceeds going to charity/foodbank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green film series and green speaker's series - to include fair trade founder Paul Rice, and the film Gasland, Food Inc.</li> </ul>