



Interfaith
Partners for the
CHESAPEAKE



Alliance *for the*
Chesapeake Bay

Collaborating with the Faith Community

www.interfaithchesapeake.org

www.allianceforthebay.org

Why connect the environment & faith community?



From the Environmental Side

- a. Access to Property
- b. Community Centers
- c. In-road to Underserved Communities
- d. Distribution of Message to large audience
- e. Broadens Coalitions

From the Faith side

- a. Fulfills core faith tenet
- b. Brings resources to help meet goals
- c. Attracts new members
- d. Broadens Coalitions



What is the Trees for Sacred Places Project?



- A partnership with IPC and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- Funded by a grant from MD DNR to fulfill the goal of increasing buffers in the state (Governor's Buffer Challenge)
- Engagement of faith communities in care for creation through planting trees... and as a stepping stone to more faith-filled action!

What does Trees for Sacred Places offer?



FREE:

- Native Trees
- Tree Planting Plan tailored to the congregation's site
- Workshop on:
 - spiritual and theological foundations for earth stewardship
 - environmental and ecological education about watershed
- Instruction on tree planting, care and maintenance

What does a congregation have to do?



- Schedule a site visit with the Alliance to develop Tree Planting Plan
- Schedule and promote attendance at the Workshop
- Approve and Sign an MOU
- Recruit volunteers for the Tree Plantings
- Maintain Trees after Planting Day

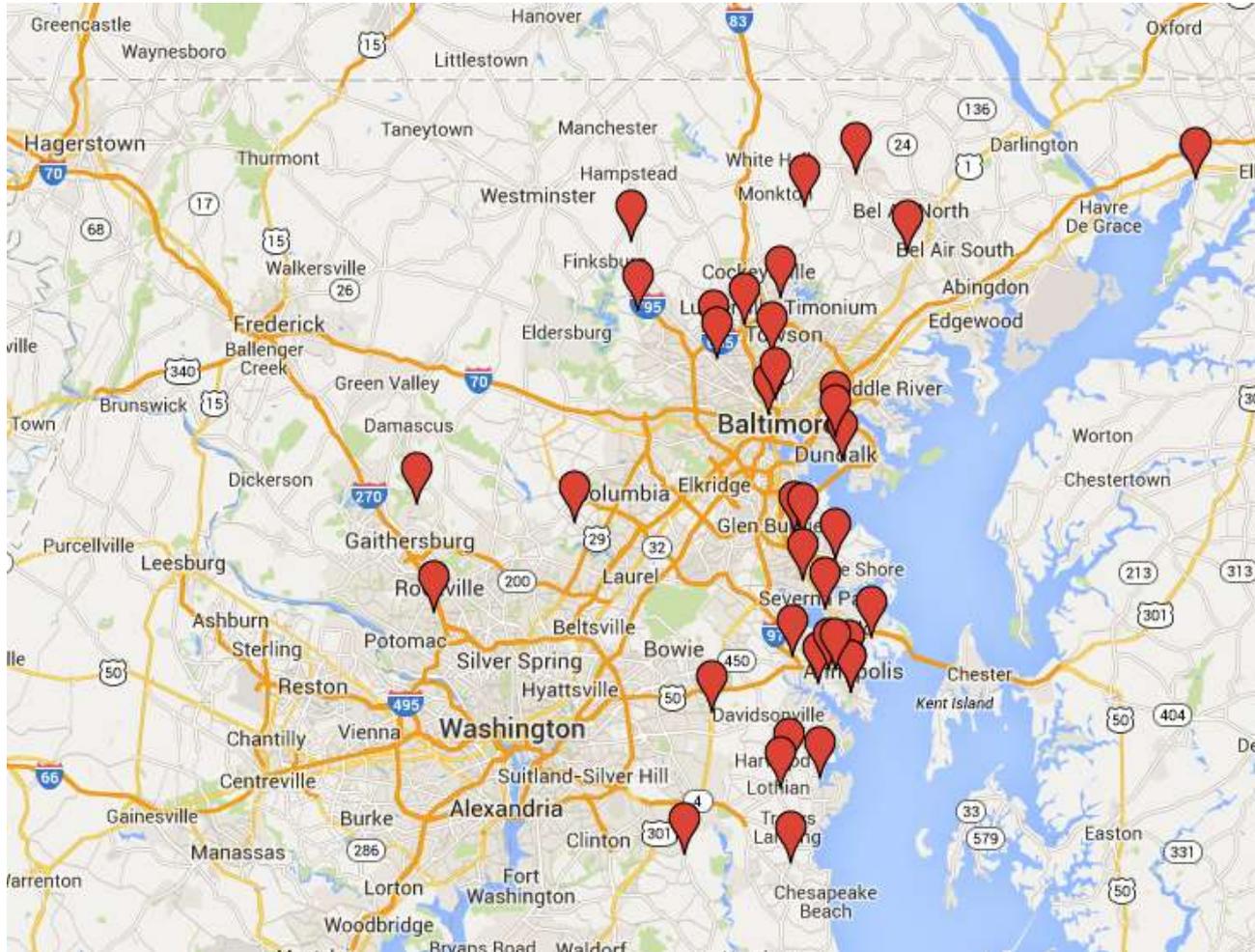
Environmental Results?

Benefits for whole ecosystem/ harmony in Creation
Contributes to: health & healing the web of life

- Total Trees Planted to date: 1,700
- Other environmental ripple effects:
 - Volunteerism
 - Additional native plantings and habitat restoration



Engagement Results? Impact Over Time



Multifaith Engagement ...

40 congregations
engaged in tree-
planting of these
faiths:

Christian:

Presbyterian

Baptist

Episcopalian

United Methodist

Lutheran

Catholic

Jewish

Sikh

Thank you to the Congregations Participating in the
10,000 Trees Project!

Annapolis Friends Meeting

Baltimore Hebrew Congregation

Baltimore Sikh Society

Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore

Emmanuel Monastery

Chizuk Amuno Congregation

Christ Episcopal Church, West River

Congregation Ner Tamid

Covenant United Methodist Church

Damascus United Methodist Church

Epiphany Episcopal Church

Friendship United Methodist Church

Gallery Church Baltimore

Geneva Presbyterian

Maryland Presbyterian Church

Pearlstone Center

Saints Philip and James Parish

Salem Lutheran Church

Salem Lutheran Church (Catonsville)

St. Margaret's Episcopal Church

St. Mary Anne's Episcopal

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church

Temple Emanuel of Baltimore

Union Baptist Church

Faith-based Outreach: Learnings

1. Go for the low-hanging fruit first

- Congregations that are already engaged in environmental efforts
- Congregations that are registered as Earth Care Congregations or other denominational certifications
- Plan/ suggest event to highlight and coincide with a religious or secular environmental holiday
- Faith community of a board member



Logistical Concerns

- Volunteer Recruitment:
 - Many congregations have dwindling populations or elderly populations (Benedictine Sisters of Emmanuel Monastery)
 - Some congregations are relatively new and don't have cohesive volunteer groups yet (Gallery Church of Baltimore)
- Planting Day:
 - Time Commitment
 - Maintenance Concerns



Story

Temple Emanuel, Reisterstown

Rabbi Rhoda Silverman:

The workshop was a wonderful addition to our Tu B'Shevat programming and will serve as good reflection piece come May when we get to the actual planting.



Story

St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, Annapolis with an active Green Team



Story

St. Andrew's United Methodist School, Edgewater

A school-wide Earth Day celebration



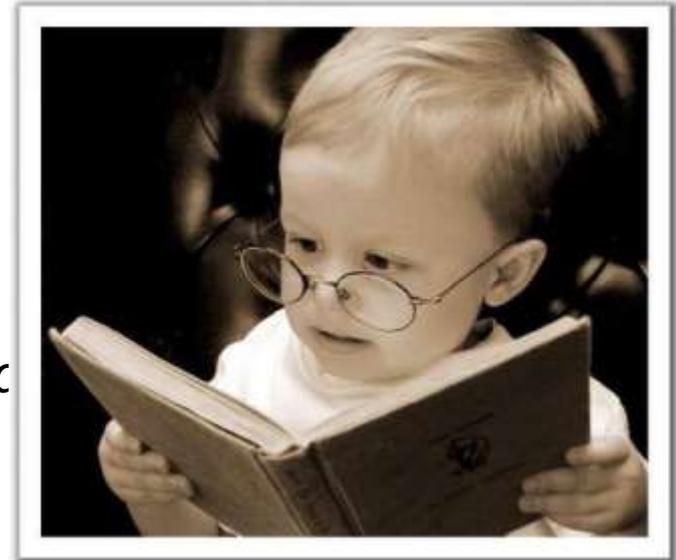
Lessons Learned



- Understand their motivation
- Understand the barriers
- Understand their nuances
- Understand their language

Understand their Motivation

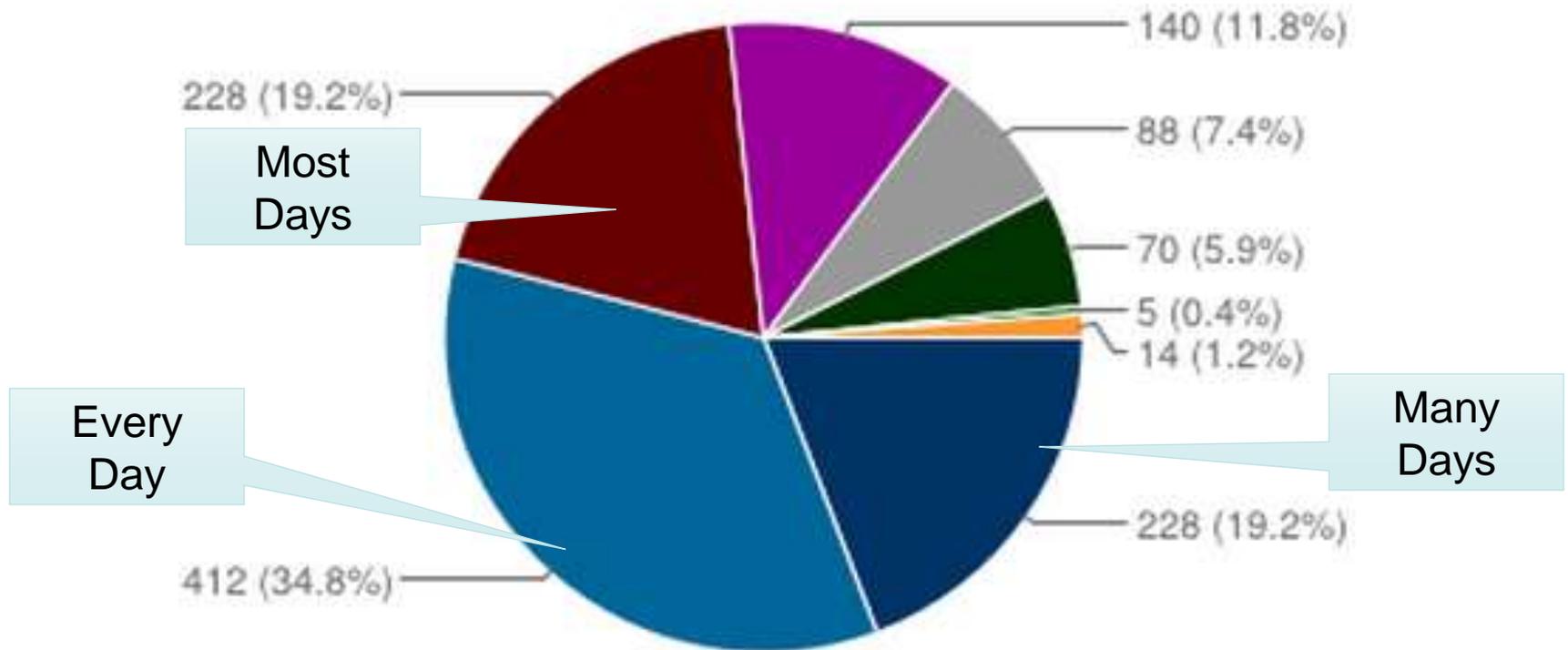
- Do your homework
- Doctrinal Statements
 - *Example from Rabbinical Assembly on Climate Change 2013*
 - *Catholic Pope Francis – name choice and 2015 Encyclical on the Environment*
- *Spiritual desire*
- *Visit their website – talk to their green ministry leader*
- *The Green Bible (by: Zondervan)*



Understand their Motivation

General Social Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center in 2004

“To what extent can you say you have been spiritually touched by the beauty of Creation?”



Understand their Motivation

*The Bay and crabs might not matter –
What does?*

- *Local rivers and streams*
- *Social Justice Connection*
- *Moral Imperative of restoring balance to the web of life*

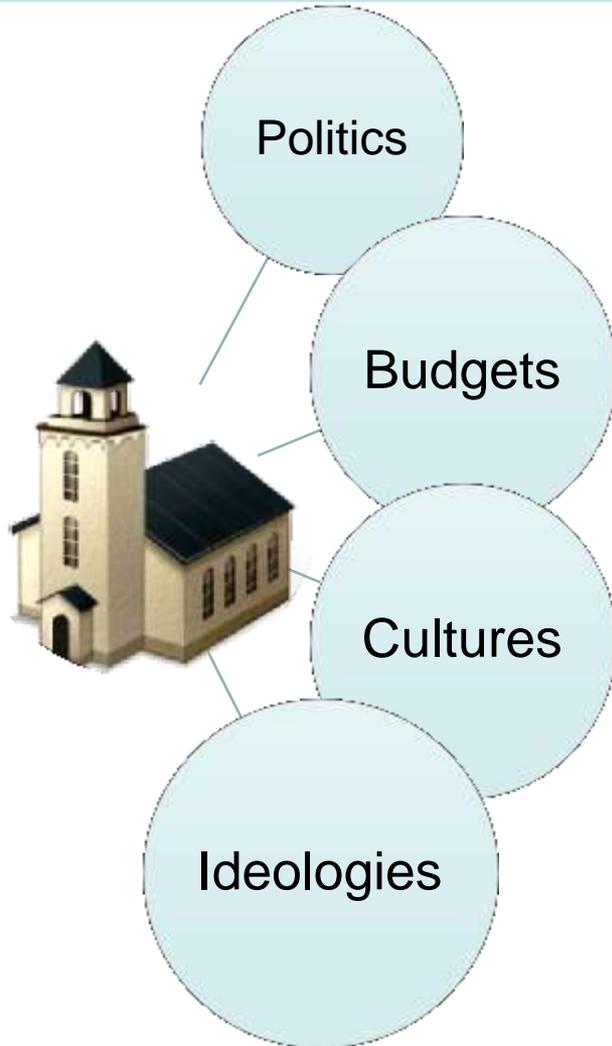
“Keep the weed killer
out of my crab
cakes”

vs.

“God makes the rain,
we make the runoff”



Understand their Nuances



No two congregations are
the Same!

What works at one might
not work at the other!

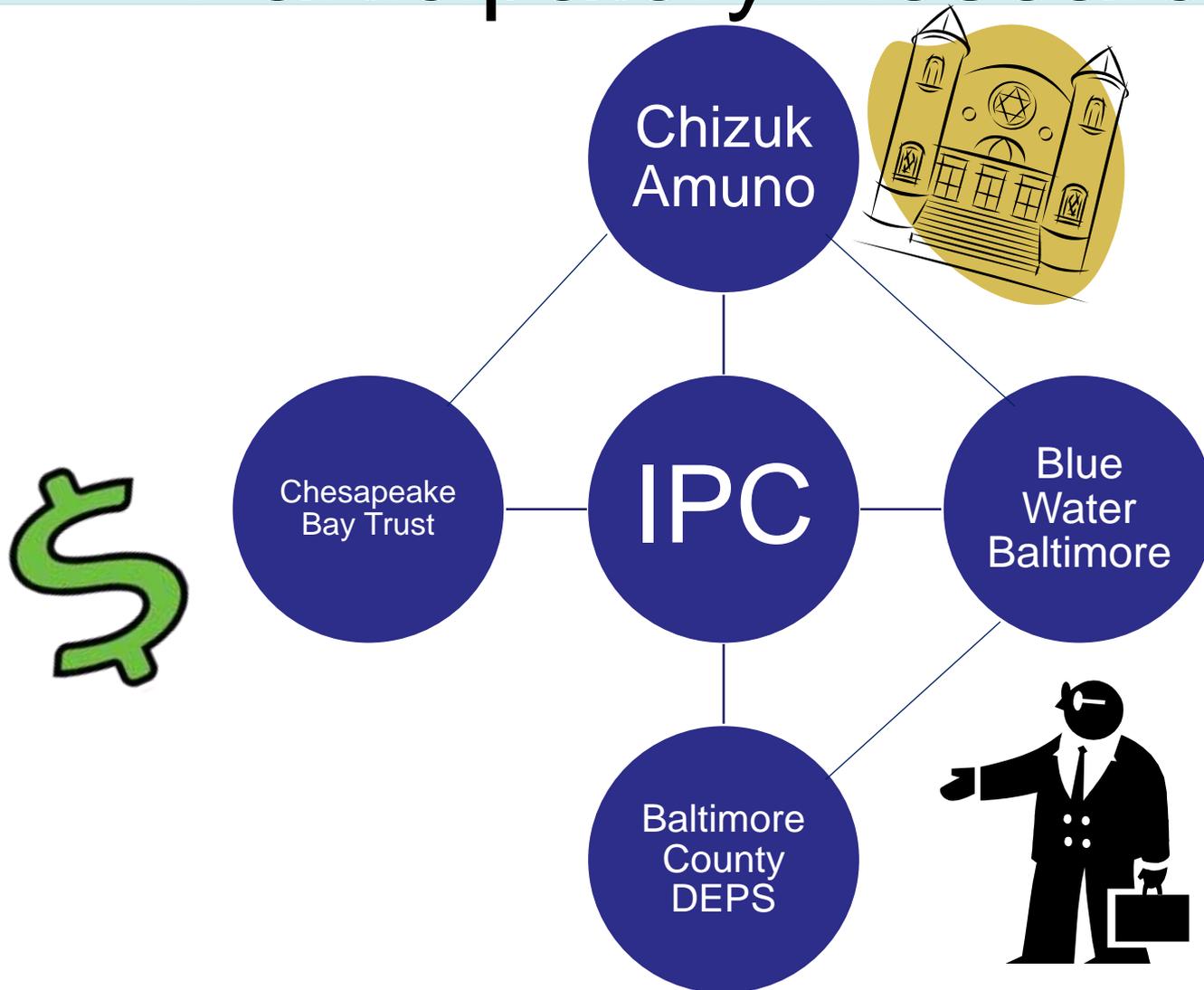
Patience is a virtue 😊

Understand their Barriers

- Technical
- Financial
- Volunteer Time (leverage this as their investment)
- Complicated/costly ongoing maintenance
- If you can help them overcome these, this is partnership-building

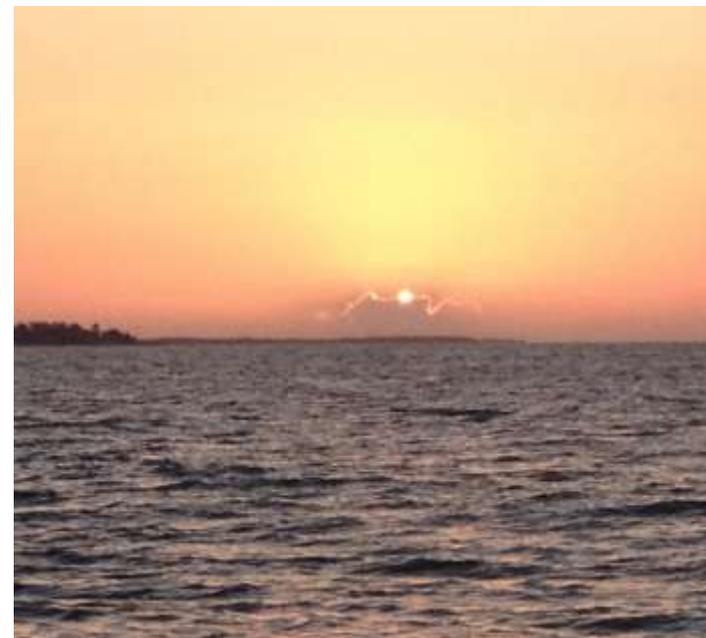


Community-Based Participatory Research



Understand their Language

- Water is Sacred in all religions
- “Creator” is safe to use
- Don’t be afraid to use words like:
 - Love
 - Discernment
 - Calling
- Find your inner spirituality!
- They want to be compelled



Messaging: Tailor for Specific Faith Traditions



Examples:

- Christian – connect water with baptism; broaden “love thy neighbor” to natural world; liberal ideologies: Care for Creation = Care for the Poor;
- Jewish - Tikkun O’lam, repair and restoration of the world
- Muslim - unique role and responsibility of the human to be stewards of Creation; “responsible traveler”
- Buddhist – interconnectedness of all life, compassion for the suffering of the natural and human world

God – the world is a mess. Why don't you do something?!?



Matthew West
"Into the Light"

I did.
I created you.

Bringing it all together: Why Tree-Planting works so well?

- Addresses Doctrinal Statements
- Not about the Bay
- About *healing, beauty, legacy*
- Site-customized plans
 - “no 2 congregations are the same”
- Overcome barriers
 - Rosie: “this was the easiest activity I ever planned”
- Spiritual workshop puts it in their language



Anecdotal Responses after Tree-Planting Program

“What’s one action you will take to care for Creation?”

- *Watersedge Baptist: “I will think about trees differently after this! I'm going to plant a tree for the first time in my yard.”*
- *St. Thomas Episcopal: “Plant more trees. Less monoculture landscaping.”*
- *Gallery Church: “Plant more native species.”*
- *Holy Communion Lutheran Church: “Plant native species only! Diminish lawn and increase perennials and native plants. Connect with the small stream on our property.”*

What you can expect from congregations:

- Volunteer base and audience
- New ears – folks who are not “in the choir”
- Follow-through and sufficient communication (if you don’t get this, they’re not ready to be a partner yet)
- May be able to host gatherings at their locations in the future or use their newly installed rain garden as a demonstration garden, etc.
- You can’t expect financial donations or payment for your services



Finding Key Contacts in the Local Faith Community



- Green /Environmental Stewardship Team
 - Social Justice Committee
 - Buildings & Grounds Chair
 - Caveats about approaching Pastor/Rabbi/faith community Leader first
-
- Faith-based environmental groups as sources of networks
 - Interfaith Councils in your County/region
 - Your own watershed volunteers/supporters/board members may also be people of faith – have you ever asked them?
 - Our network

Examples...

- Baltimore Sikh Society - Tree-Planting
- Salem Lutheran – Downspout Planters
- Chizuk Amuno – 3 bioretention systems to capture 2 acres of runoff (\$35,000 grant)
- Metropolitan Memorial UMC – rain gardens in parking lot
- Maryland Presbyterian Church – offsite composting with vendor
- Menu for Action



Imagine the Potential...

- Loudoun County: 176
- Jefferson County (Shepherdstown), WV : 73
- Henrico County (Richmond), VA : 229
- Frederick County (Stevens City), VA: 100
- Maryland : 5,336
- Watershed Wide???

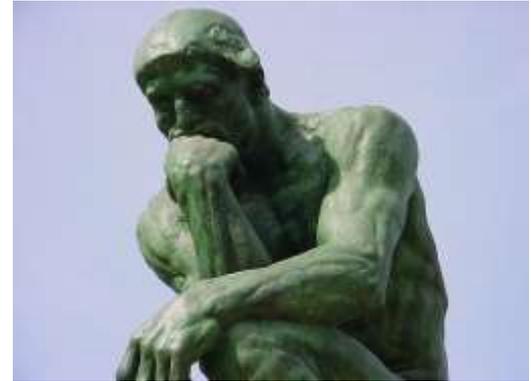
Start the Ripple Effect!



*Data from the Association of Religion Data Archives

Discussion Questions

What next steps would you like to take to engage the faith community in your watershed, your community?



What challenges do you foresee in doing this?

How you might overcome these obstacles? Who within your membership or staff could help you overcome these obstacles? If you need outside partners, who might you partner with to overcome these obstacles?

Brainstorm angles/opportunities for seeking funding for collaborating with the faith community.

www.interfaithchesapeake.org

Jodi Rose

410-609-6852

jodi@interfaithchesapeake.org

www.allianceforthebay.org

Lou Etgen

443-949-0575

letgen@allianceforthebay.org

