

## **How We Saved the Earth**

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**None of us knew quite what to expect of our congregation's first Small Group Ministry.** Our church is medium-sized, with about four hundred members, counting friends, and "snowbirds." This was an opportunity to meet and interact more closely with one another. **We all shared an interest in environmental issues**, the topic our leaders, Lea Hall and Klaus Obermeit proposed.

Eleven of us gathered in our co-leaders' home. A candle was lit; there was a reading and we listened to some chosen music. We were read "the rules." The "don't interrupt" rule and mindfully listening around the circle made some of us, used to jumping in with an idea, uneasy and tentative.

Speaking one at a time, we found early on that we all were intensely interested in the issue of **global warming**. We began to list all of our concerns and fears. Nearly all of us felt overwhelmed; several suggested there really wasn't anything we could *do*. Was there? That was the major question. Some said, "We can take some small action." We weren't so sure.

By the second and third gathering (we met twice a month for four months last spring), we'd developed a long list of possible actions for our church and for the community. Each one took on tasks: contact all the churches in Sarasota to see if we could join forces; design bumper stickers; do some serious reading and internet research; help some members with an existing trilogy of church services to be called "The Earth Trilogy"; contact local environmental groups.

**Half way through our small group meetings, our attitudes changed completely.** The daunting task of learning the harsh realities about the potential effects of global warming, along with educating both ourselves and others about the still possible limitations of that change with our own actions, led us all to believe we could effect change. **Our sessions became more animated, even jovial, as we worked together and put our energies into specifics. Not every one of our efforts worked out, but most did.**

Was our Small Group Ministry unusual, given its serious focus? Perhaps, but perhaps not. After all, we did follow through on our stated goals and the goals of SGM. We passed on meaningful information and action and each of us, enjoying each person's passion, energy and wit, ended up learning about and appreciating each other. **I certainly look forward to my next experience.**