



# Georgia Interfaith Power and Light: ENERGY STAR® Partner of the Year

In 2014, Georgia Interfaith Power and Light (GIPL) became the first faith-based, non-profit to earn the ENERGY STAR® Partner of the Year award for climate communications. ENERGY STAR recognized GIPL for its outstanding efforts to raise the faith community's awareness about climate change. GIPL brings diverse communities of faith together to improve energy efficiency and sustainable energy practices. Their programs support houses of worship ranging from large urban temples to small rural congregations in an effort to reduce environmental impacts and cut energy costs.

As a religious response to global climate change, resource depletion, environmental injustice, pollution, and other disruptions in Creation, GIPL engages faith communities in environmental stewardship through worship, education, and outreach. GIPL also organizes its partner organizations to advocate for sustainable policies in the public sphere. Founded in 2003 by Reverend Woody Bartlett and Carol Bartlett, GIPL is a growing organization with over 500 partner congregations across the state of Georgia.

## Creation Wise

GIPL established Creation Wise, a free, green certification program in order to educate congregations on the necessity of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Its goal is to show the simple ways that congregations can reduce their carbon footprint and encourage their constituents to practice the same within their homes and businesses. The Creation Wise program has 5 categories: Water, Dirt, Waste, Buy, and Power. Each of these categories provides a different resource for congregations who seek comprehensive energy efficiency and sustainability.

- **Water Wise** includes a water efficiency guide, an intergenerational educational class, rain barrel-making classes, and worship resources.
- **Dirt Wise** is a sustainable gardening and food guide that includes instructions for planting a garden, educational sessions for use in group study, and worship resources for congregations to celebrate their garden as a community.
- **Waste Wise** is a waste and source reduction program that includes a sustainable waste reduction & recycling guide, educational classes, an event planning guide, a recycling fundraising guide, and worship resources.

**The Challenge:** Georgia IPL set out to engage Georgia's faith groups in a unified effort to better care for Creation through energy efficiency and climate awareness.

**The Solution:** Establish innovative programs and partner with ENERGY STAR® in address the energy problems of modern congregations.



Members of Georgia Interfaith Power and Light

*"We are not an environmental organization, we are a faith-based organization, so we talk about, as people of faith, what our religious historical traditions say about why we should care about creation, and what God has created."  
-Alexis Chase, Executive Director, GIPL*



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- **Buy Wise** encourages sustainable purchasing practices that include fair-trade, ENERGY STAR certified products, and socially responsible investing tools. This guide challenges congregations to consider the impact of consumer choices and become smarter and more ethical about particular purchases.
- **Power Wise**, discussed in more detail below, is a nationally-recognized energy efficiency program designed specifically for congregations.

## Power Wise

Power Wise provides a variety of services, including low-cost professional energy audits, custom energy efficiency guides, energy data analysis, project support, home energy audit training classes, and an energy improvement matching grant program.

Over the last four years, GIPL has been managing and expanding the Power Wise program, and during this time they've provided low-cost, professional energy audits to 187 congregational facilities. These audits have covered over seven million square feet of space; congregations that have implemented the recommended upgrades are saving, on average, 15% to 25% on their energy bills. These utility savings account for over \$1,000,000, over eight million pounds of carbon cut from the atmosphere, over four million kilowatts, and over 200,000 therms of energy saved. In addition, the Power Wise program helps congregations create ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager® accounts so the congregations can see exactly how much energy they are using and track how much they are saving. Power Wise has also provided over \$650,000 in matching grant funds in order to make upgrades that otherwise would have been cost prohibitive.

Part of the Power Wise program is education. Home energy audit training classes, given to over 750 people to date, instruct participants on how to save energy and money in their own homes. In this class, GIPL shows participants specifically how ENERGY STAR products can help them save money and become more energy efficient.

## Achievements

- In 2014, GIPL received an ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year Award.
- Georgia Interfaith Power & Light, as part of a coalition, successfully worked with Georgia Power which resulted in the formation of the company's Advanced Solar Initiative. This initiative is designed to promote economic growth in Georgia's solar community.
- GIPL worked with the Mayor's Office of Sustainability to provide free audits for 20 interfaith organizations in the City of Atlanta. These audits were funded by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act.



GIPL's Rev. Alexis Chase receives the ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year Award in Washington D.C. from Beth Craig, Acting Director of EPA's Climate Protection Partnership