



# WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

## Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet

*Joanne Kurklin:*  
*“Go green and mean it!”*

**M**ore than 30 years ago, Joanne Kurklin began her connection with the environment when she was hired as a professional hydrologist for the U.S. Geological Survey to examine water quality and quantity. During those years the greatest improvement was in technology: The more advanced the technology, the more “things” they found in water. Through her work experiences she concluded that “we treat water like it’s going to last forever. We all need to be intentional about how we handle our water. If people put things down the drain, it’s going to end up in our water.”



She believes that if we don’t change our behaviors toward water, that one day there will be wars over water. Within certain states, already conflicts and challenges exist over purchasing water, contamination in water, and—in states where there is unused water—where that water remains.

Today, she is the executive director of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches, a group of 16 denominations committed to the mission of making Christian unity visible and of serving neighbors in need. For Kurklin, it is a continuation of her profession and her calling: “I help people see that we need to be taking better care of the gift that God has given us.”

Through this group she works with an environmental task force that studies how water issues affect poor people and people of color. “In most US cities, water treatment facilities are placed where the land is cheaper, and that means people who can’t afford to live in safer areas are faced with the contaminants and repercussions



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of that placement,” she explains. “Typically, those people don’t have a chance to speak out against these decisions. With the Oklahoma Conference of Churches, we advocate for people who can’t speak for themselves or aren’t heard.”

Kurklin is also a part of the United Methodist Women Green Team and works to teach others how to protect themselves and the environment. She says her hope is that United Methodists can be in the forefront of the environmental movement. “I hope that we can go green and mean it. That means recognizing that we’re called to live different lives than we are living; that we unite and realize we all live in the same camp.”

*Joanne Kurklin attends New Life United Methodist Church in Moore, Okla.*

The **US Geological Survey** provides the nation with reliable, impartial information to describe and understand the Earth. As an unbiased, multi-disciplinary science organization that focuses on biology, geography, geology, geospatial information, and water, the U.S. Geological Survey is dedicated to the timely, relevant, and impartial study of the landscape, our natural resources, and the natural hazards that threaten us.

#### **To conserve water, you can:**

- » **Avoid letting the faucet run** while you brush your teeth, wash your face, or shave and you can save up to 4 gallons of water a minute. That’s 200 gallons a week for a family of four.
- » **Take military showers.** A military shower means you turn the water off while soaping and shampooing. This could cut the water use of an average shower from 17.2 gallons to 5 gallons or less.
- » **Wash only full loads** in your washing machine, or adjust the water level to reflect the size of the load.
- » **Purchase appliances** that offer water- and energy-efficient cycle options.
- » **Teach water conservation tips** to your children and youth.

Contact your local water conservation agencies in your area for other tips.

### **MARCH IS WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH!**

For the 2009 Women’s History Month project, the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women honors women who have taken the lead in the environmental or green movement. As we rethink how we live, we understand more and more that taking care of the earth and reversing some of the damage our civilization has done to the earth is inextricably connected to our commitment to God. It’s more than changing light bulbs, switching from paper and plastic to reusable bags, and recycling. It is recognizing that God has entrusted us with the world’s resources, with the condition that we use them according to God’s directions and to God’s glory.



*The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women was established by The United Methodist Church in 1972 to advocate the full inclusion of women in the life of the denomination and to monitor the Church at all levels for gender bias. The Commission offers training at district, annual conference and churchwide events on organizing and empowering women to find their voices and ministries in the Church; works with bishops, superintendents and other church leaders to understand and eradicate institutional sexism; and educates church laity and clergy on dealing with professional sexual misconduct. For more information and resources, visit the Commission’s website at [www.gcsrw.org](http://www.gcsrw.org), or call (312) 346-4900.*

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