



Caring for Creation: A Prayer/Action Guide

For a Lenten "Fast from Carbon"

Traditionally Lent, the 40 days before Easter, has been a time of self-evaluation, repentance, and renewal. Typical spiritual practices include prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. This year, New York Interfaith Power and Light invites you to "fast from carbon," that is, to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide you put into the atmosphere.

Why should you consider doing this?

There are at least five reasons:

1. The carbon dioxide we are putting into the environment, in the form of "greenhouse gases," is changing the climate of God's creation, our planet Earth. Scientists are no longer debating the basic facts of climate change.
2. The sources of these greenhouse gases are largely produced by human beings and the society we have created. The largest component of greenhouse gases is carbon dioxide which comes from the burning of fossil fuels, that is, from the generation of electricity and from the modes of transportation that we use.
3. Unless we reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases, the impact of these increases in greenhouse gases will be devastating for our planet, for its people—especially the poor and vulnerable—and for the plants and animals that have lived here for millions of years. Time is critical.
4. God created this earth, declared it to be good, and expects us to care for creation and to maintain its goodness for future generations.
5. And it's not as hard as you might think to "fast from carbon," although of course we cannot give up carbon entirely as it is so intertwined with our existence. But we can use this Lent season to reflect on the amount of carbon dioxide we each generate and to commit to reducing that amount.

For each week during Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday, we have prepared a spiritual reflection that includes a teaching about global warming in New York State—likely impacts and local opportunities to address the threat; a statement by the faith community; a reading from the Revised Common Lectionary for the given week; a prayer; and one or two actions to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide you generate.

This Lent by "fasting from carbon," we can demonstrate discipline in our lives, as Christ demonstrated discipline in resisting the temptations presented in the wilderness.

We are grateful to Linda Rimer, a member of Chapel of the Cross Episcopal Church in Chapel Hill for sharing with us the concept of "fasting from carbon" and for the ideas presented above.



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Ash Wednesday



Impact of global warming on New York State.

Upstate New York's traditionally cold, snowy winters favor a variety of winter sports, and the warm summers appeal to thousands of anglers and campers each year providing a boost for the upstate local economies. Precipitation and climate in New York has also contributed to successful livestock farming, as well as contributing to the success of crops such as apples, grapes, feedgrains, and vegetables. Each of these unique features is threatened by projected changes in climate.

In general, New York's climate will grow considerably warmer and probably drier during this century, especially in the summer. As a result of these changes, by 2030 New York's summer climate is expected to feel like that of present day Ohio. By 2095 summer will feel like the climate of present day Illinois and winters more like Pennsylvania.

(from *Union for Concerned Scientists*: http://www.ucsusa.org/greatlakes/glregionnew_cli.html)



Statement by the faith community: Episcopal

We are called to be good neighbors and act with love and care for all of what God called "Sacred". The natural greenhouse effect set up by God has been disrupted and the imbalance is causing temperatures to rise. Global warming means not only higher average temperatures, but also changes in weather patterns, precipitation, and ranges of plants insects and animals. Such changes would threaten natural resources, human health, already endangered species, and fragile ecosystems. Although no person would be immune from the consequences of climate change caused by global warming, the world's poor would be especially vulnerable.

(From a resolution adopted by the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, 2001.

http://www.ecusa.anglican.org/1866_70059_ENG_HTM.htm)



Reading for Ash Wednesday: Psalm 103: 8-14

Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger, abounding in kindness. God does not always rebuke, nurses no lasting anger, has not dealt with us as our sins merit, nor requited us as our deeds deserve. As the heavens tower over the earth, so God's love towers over the faithful. As far as the east is from the west, so far have our sins been removed from us, so the Lord has compassion on the faithful. For he knows how we are formed, remembers that we are dust.



Prayer: God of all, grant us humility that we may remember that we are formed by You—dust to dust, ashes to ashes. Help us to hear and understand the call to be good neighbors, to act with love and care for all that You call sacred.



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Action: *One simple thing to do to reduce global warming.*

Change a light: Replacing one regular light bulb with a compact fluorescent light saves 150 pounds of carbon dioxide a year (up to 730 pounds over the life of the CFL). If you replace a bulb each week of Lent, you will have “fasted” from 900 pounds of carbon dioxide for the next year.

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First Week in Lent



Impact of global warming on New York State.

Agriculture:

Among the potential impacts of climate change with implications for agriculture in New York are:

- **Changes in Crop Yield** – Some crop yields may increase, but higher ozone levels, severe storms and floods, hotter and drier summers, and more droughts may hurt most crops and increase pressure on water resources.
- **More favorable conditions for some pests** - Warmer winters with longer freeze-free periods, shifts in rainfall, and extended growing seasons may create more favorable conditions for pests.
- **A decline in maple syrup production** - With the climate projected to become unfavorable for maple trees by the end of the century, syrup production is likely to decline.
- **An increase in risk for perennial crops** - Further climate variability is particularly problematic for perennial crops, such as such as fruit trees and vineyards, because adjustments cannot be made as flexibly and long-term investments in the crops and specialized equipment are at risk.
- **A decrease in livestock productivity** - High temperatures and extreme weather events, such as heat waves, droughts, and blizzards, have severe effects on livestock health.
- **An increase in soil erosion and runoff** - Heavy rains and flooding could lead to an increase in farmers' costs to maintain soil fertility as well as contribute to off-site costs, including nutrient overloads and pollution to local water ways.

(from Union for Concerned Scientists: http://www.ucsusa.org/greatlakes/glregionnew_cli.html)



Statement by the faith community: Presbyterian USA

Global Warming is likely to increase hunger. It will hit the poor hardest. Climate change (or global warming) is already affecting and will dramatically impact food production patterns... We are called as Christians to love our neighbors and how we, individually and corporately, react to climate change and our own role in causing global warming demonstrates this witness to God. While the link may not appear obvious at first, reducing our energy use, particularly our use of fossil fuels, is one way of demonstrating our love for our neighbors.

In June, the General Assembly passed an action calling on Presbyterians to live a carbon-neutral life by reducing our use of fossil fuel energy and purchasing offsets to make up for the amount we still contribute to carbon emissions, the main cause of global warming.

(From the Presbyterian Hunger Program. 2006. <http://www.pcusa.org/hunger/features/climate.htm>)



From a Reading for the First Sunday in Lent: Deuteronomy 26

“When you have come into the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have occupied it and settled it, you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land which the Lord, your God, gives, and putting them in a basket, you shall go to the place which the Lord, your God, chooses for the dwelling place of his name....Then you shall declare



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before the Lord, your God...I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, O Lord, have given me.”



Prayer: God of all, grant us the wisdom to know that the soil which nourishes us with “first fruits” belongs to, and comes from You, and that it is to be cultivated for the good of all, not only for those with the means for production.



Action: *One simple thing to do to reduce global warming.*

Purchase green energy. Help build a clean energy future by purchasing renewable energy through the following utility’s renewable energy programs:

- Central Hudson Gas and Electric
- Consolidated Edison of New York
- Long Island Power Authority
- National Grid
- New York State Electric and Gas
- Rochester Gas and Electric

A wide variety of options exist, so it’s easy to choose one that’s affordable.

If your utility doesn't offer a renewable energy choice...

You can also purchase Green Tags through NYPIRG (New York Public Interest Research Group). For more information, go to <http://www.nypirg.org/fbg/wind/default.html>.

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Second Week in Lent



Impact of global warming on New York State.

Human health concerns related to climate change result from a complex set of interacting human and environmental factors. These concerns are particularly serious for the elderly and other vulnerable populations (the very young, the poor, and those whose health is already compromised). Among the potential impacts are:

- **Increased risk of heat-related morbidity or mortality** - The ill-health effects of heat waves may also be compounded by other problems, such as high humidity and poor air quality. In order to avoid the worst health impacts, residents will need to improve warning systems and preparations.
- **Decreased risk of cold-related morbidity or mortality** - Cold-related health risks are likely to decline over time, as the frequency of extreme cold weather periods during winter decreases.
- **A potential increase in ground-level ozone** - Weather conditions conducive to high ozone levels will occur more often over the next decades, and high heat days may lead to decreased air quality and an increased incidence of respiratory disease.
- **Increased risk of waterborne infectious disease** - Extreme rainstorms can swamp municipalities' sewage and stormwater capacities, increasing the risks of water pollution and waterborne infectious diseases.
- **Increased risk of vector-borne infectious disease** - Future changes in rainfall or temperatures could encourage greater reproduction or survival of the disease-carrying insects, which include ticks and mosquitoes.

(from *Union for Concerned Scientists*: http://www.ucsusa.org/greatlakes/glregionnew_cli.html)



Statement by the faith community: Orthodox

God's creation delivers unsettling news. Earth's climate is warming to dangerous levels To continue to walk the current path of ecological destruction is not only folly; it is sin Churches, as communities of God's people in the world, are called to exist as representatives of the loving Creator, Sustainer, and Restorer of all creation. We are called to worship God with all our being and actions, and to treat creation as sacred. We must engage our political leaders in supporting the very future of this planet. We are called to cling to the true Gospel - for "God so loved the cosmos" (John 3:16) - rejecting the false gospels of our day.

From "God's Earth is Sacred: An Open Letter to Christians in the United States" Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) July 2005.



From a Reading for the Second Sunday in Lent: Genesis 15

God took him (Abram) outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so," he added, "shall your descendants be." Abram put his faith in the Lord, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness.



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Prayer: God of all, grant us the ability to trust in your promises, the compassion to love and restore creation for future generations, and the insight to reject “false gospels” that encourage consumption patterns that are destructive to the web of life.



Action: *One simple thing to do to reduce global warming.*

Plant a tree. A single tree will absorb one ton of carbon dioxide over its lifetime. Resolve to celebrate “new life” by nurturing your trees and planting new ones!

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Third Week in Lent



Impact of global warming on New York State.

Property and Infrastructure - Cities and other heavily developed areas are particularly vulnerable to the risks of climate change. This vulnerability is a result of a unique combination of exposure and sensitivity to a changing climate, and the ability of populations to adapt to these changes. Among the potential impacts of climate change with implications for property and infrastructure in New York are:

- **Increased frequency of heavy rainstorms** - More frequent heavy rainstorms will likely lead to more floods, exacerbated by stream channeling and more paved surfaces. This could result in greater property damage, place heavier burdens on emergency management, increase cleanup and rebuilding costs, and exact a financial toll on businesses and homeowners.
- **Increased frequency of flooding** - An increase in the frequency of storms, and flooding in particular, could overwhelm municipal water-related infrastructure.
- **Decreased lake levels** - Despite more frequent heavy rain events, lake levels are expected to drop due to higher rates of evaporation. Lower lake levels will have costly implications for shipping and other economic activities on Lakes Ontario and Erie.

(from Union for Concerned Scientists: http://www.ucsusa.org/greatlakes/glregionnew_cli.html)



Statement by the faith community: United Church of Christ:

(United Church of Christ) recognizes the dangers of global warming and our biblical mandate as stewards of God's creation to be diligent in our efforts to decrease the emission of greenhouse gases;

- affirms the greater responsibility of industrial nations and especially the United States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
 - encourages local churches, Conferences and national agencies to engage in efforts to educate and advocate for ratification of the Kyoto Climate Change Treaty and to address their own lifestyles (institutional and personal) to assure the minimum production of wastes that threaten the environment;
- (From "Statement on Global Climate Change," Twenty-second General Synod.

<http://www.interfaithpower.org/TDSunitedChurch.htm>)



From a Reading for the Third Sunday in Lent: Luke 13

The parable of the barren fig tree. And he told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. [So] cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not, you can cut it down.'"



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Prayer: God of all, we give thanks for your trust in us as we strive to bear the fruit of justice for your creation. Give us the courage to cultivate our individual and congregational commitment to renewing your creation through our study, prayer and actions.



Action: *One simple thing to do to reduce global warming.*

Drive less. You'll save one pound of carbon dioxide for every mile you don't drive! Walk or bike during Lent this year, and watch as spring unfolds its magnificence around you! If you drive 20 miles less each week this Lent, you will have "fasted from" 120 pounds of carbon dioxide.

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Fourth Week in Lent



Impacts of global warming on New York State:

Water supply and pollution - As climate change takes effect, projected changes in rainfall, evaporation, and groundwater recharge rates will affect all freshwater users. Among the potential impacts of climate change with implications for water supply and pollution levels in New York are:

- **A decrease in lake levels** - As lake levels drop, costs to shipping on the Great Lakes are likely to increase, along with costs of dredging harbors and channels, and of adjusting docks, water intake pipes, and other infrastructure.
- **A reduction in groundwater recharge** - Reduced summer water levels are likely to diminish the recharge of groundwater, cause small streams to dry up, and reduce the area of wetlands, resulting in poorer water quality and less habitat for wildlife.
- **An increase in extraction pressure** - With growing populations and projected drops in lake and ground water levels, climate change is expected to exacerbate an already contentious debate on water withdrawals from the Great Lakes. Conflicts may intensify as water shortages develop and pressure increases for more water for irrigation, drinking, and other human uses.
- **A reduction in hydropower generation** - Reduced water flow and levels is likely to lead to a reduction of hydropower generation in the Great Lakes region by a conservative estimate of 15% by 2050.
- **A degradation of wetlands' flood-absorbing capacity** - More run-off in winter and spring from rain-on-snow events and in summer from intense downpours, cause increased flooding and erosion. These events in turn could increase pollution in lakes, rivers, and streams from municipal and farm run-off.

(from Union for Concerned Scientists: http://www.ucsusa.org/greatlakes/glregionnew_cli.html)



Statement by the faith community: United Methodist Church

The decisions that humans are now making will either enhance or degrade the quality of life on the planet. We have entered an era of greater energy interdependence. As the world confronts global issues such as climate change, energy inequity, and pollution, energy-related problems will require international solutions based upon the values of justice and sustainability....We support strenuous efforts to conserve energy and increase energy efficiency. A transition to energy efficiency and renewable energy sources will combat global warming, protect human health, create new jobs, and ensure a secure, affordable energy future.

(From the General Board of Church and Society Energy Policy Statement, Resolution 5, 2000.

www.umc-gbcs.org)



From a Reading for the Fourth Sunday in Lent: Psalm 32

Happy the sinner whose fault is removed, whose sin is forgiven. Happy those to whom the Lord imputes no guilt, in whose spirit is not deceit. I declared my sin to you; my guilt I did not hide. I said, "I confess my faulty to the Lord," and you took away the guilt of my sin. I will instruct you and show you



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the way you should walk, give you counsel and watch over you. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but love surrounds those who trust in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you just; exult, all you upright of heart.



Prayer: God of all, we confess our complicity in failing to be good stewards of your Creation. We ask your forgiveness as we seek to walk gently on your earth, looking for ways to replenish what we have taken away, to heal what we have damaged.



Action: *Two simple things to do to reduce global warming.*

Use less hot water. It takes a lot of energy to heat water. Use less by installing a low flow showerhead (thereby “fasting from” 350 pounds of carbon dioxide) and washing your clothes in cold or warm water (“fasting from” 500 pounds per year).

Adjust your thermostat. Move your thermostat down 2 degrees in winter and 2 degrees up in summer and “fast from” about 2,000 pounds of carbon dioxide.

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Fifth Week in Lent



Opportunities for New York State to address global warming:

Climate change is occurring mainly as a result of humans adding large amounts of heat-trapping gases, such as carbon dioxide, to the atmosphere. The good news is that practical solutions exist today to address this growing problem, and people in New York can help in many ways. Although some warming is inevitable—as past heat-trapping gas emissions will continue to have a warming effect for decades—the most extreme outcomes for western New York can be avoided if responsible measures are taken locally, nationally, and internationally.

Reduce heat-trapping emissions in New York – Power plants and motor vehicles are the largest source of heat-trapping emissions in New York contributing over 50 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions. By improving the efficiency of our appliances and vehicles, pursuing smart growth strategies, improving land-use practices, and supporting renewable energy generation, we can significantly reduce emissions of heat-trapping gases. For example, programs such as New York's Green Building Tax Credit and Clean Fueled Bus Program as well as new wind projects currently being built in New York can help significantly reduce these heat-trapping emissions.

Policy at the national level would also support the development of renewable energy sources, further encourage investment in energy-efficient technologies and cleaner burning fossil fuels. These global warming solutions have several other valuable benefits including cleaner air, economic development, and job growth.

Support from state energy policies that promote renewable energy such as New York's statewide climate change action plan currently under development also play an important role in promoting clean energy solutions.



Statement by the faith community: Roman Catholic

At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both "the human environment" and the natural environment. It is about our human stewardship of God's creation and our responsibility to those who come after us.

(From "Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good" US Catholic Bishops June 15, 2001. <http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.htm>)



From a Reading for the Fifth Sunday in Lent: Isaiah 43

Thus says the Lord, who opens a way in the sea
And a path in the mighty waters.
See, I am doing something new!
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
In the desert I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers.
Wild beast honor me, jackals and ostriches,



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For I put water in the desert and rivers in the wasteland
For my chosen people to drink.
The people whom I formed for myself, that they might announce my praise.



Prayer: God of all, you give us a vision of creation transformed. Grant us the will to let go of those behaviors that would keep us from imagining such a renewal. Give us the desire to work with others who understand that faith in you demands working for healing for your creation.



Action: *One simple thing to do to reduce global warming.*

Reduce waste. Avoid buying products with a lot of packaging. You can “fast from” 1,200 pounds of carbon dioxide per year if you cut down your garbage by 10%.

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Sixth Week in Lent



Opportunities for New York State to address global warming:

Minimize human pressures on the environment - The following are key strategies for reducing human stresses:

- Air quality improvements
- Water quality protection and demand/supply management
- Urban and land use planning
- Habitat protection and restoration

Plan for the impacts of climate change - Although there are many steps we can take to reduce the severity of climate change, some changes are already underway and will continue for decades or more. Therefore, society must begin planning and preparing to manage future impacts that cannot be avoided. Such actions include: protecting wetlands, agricultural and forestry practices, as well as improvements in the health care system to accommodate changes in the climate and environment.

Changes in climate variability and weather extremes will need to be taken into consideration when implementing emergency management plans, zoning, and building codes. Resources will be needed to provide increased relief from the heat to the very young, the poor, and those whose health is already compromised. Such measures are particularly important in urban areas.



Statement by the faith community: Evangelical

(W)e recognize both our opportunity and our responsibility to offer a biblically based moral witness that can help shape public policy in the most powerful nation on earth, and therefore contribute to the well-being of the entire world. Whether we will enter the public square and offer our witness there is no longer an open question. We are in that square, and we will not withdraw.

Over the last several years many of us have engaged in study, reflection, and prayer related to the issue of climate change (often called "global warming"). For most of us, until recently this has not been treated as a pressing issue or major priority. Indeed, many of us have required considerable convincing before becoming persuaded that climate change is a real problem and that it ought to matter to us as Christians.

(From: "*Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action.*" Signed by 90 Evangelical Leaders, Issued January 2006. <http://www.christiansandclimate.org/statement>)



From a Reading from the Liturgy of the Palms, Palm Sunday: Psalm 118

Give thanks to the Lord, who is good, whose love endures forever.
Let the house of Israel say: God's love endures forever.
This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice in it and be glad.
Lord, grant salvation! Lord, grant good fortune.



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Prayer: God of all, help us to respond to your never-ending love by giving to us the strength to bear moral witness to the assault on your creation, the audacity to make global warming a major priority in the public square, and the courage to remain steadfast in this effort.



Action: *Two simple things to do to reduce global warming.*

Advocate. As an individual, or as a family, let your local, state, and national representatives know you want legislation that will reduce the impact of climate change.

Become informed. Visit the New York Interfaith Power & Light website at www.nyipl.org for information about how you can prevent global warming in your congregation and at home. And contact ny.ipl@verizon.net to sign up for our monthly email newsletter.

Joanne Kennedy Frazer