



40 Days of Lenten Action to Live with Respect in Creation

Introduction

At this juncture in human history, climate change has become one of the most critical issues of our time. Recently, we have experienced powerful hurricanes, forest fires, deep freezes, and record breaking temperatures. Scientists from all over the world are giving us a warning that we must change our ways. Pope Francis has stated, "Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods; it represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day." Canada's Citizens for Public Justice remind us that "Climate change is a matter of faith and justice."

Our response to human induced climate change needs to be multifold. Here are two key dimensions.

First we are called upon "to live with respect in Creation." We need to develop a clear awareness of our connectedness to the web of creation, a deep appreciation of its beauty and fragility, and an attitude of humility so that our children and grandchildren will still have a beautiful planet to live on. God has entrusted us to be faithful stewards of this planet.

We also need to honour the beauty of the earth by reducing our individual and communal impact on creation - our carbon footprint.

This can be done in a multiplicity of ways just some of which are named in the actions for Lent we have assembled here.

There are forty actions, one for each day of Lent, reflecting this dual approach. You do not need to follow them in numerical order and we encourage you to choose the order for yourself. Each action is marked by a symbol indicating the type of action being put before you. For Sundays, and the final days of Holy Week there are reflective and prayerful actions as well. Almost all of the actions can be undertaken alone, but do consider doing this with a friend or in a group – encourage each other along the way and compare!

For centuries, Christians have undergone spiritual practices during Lent to experience what Jesus has gone through in the desert to prepare for his ministry. During this Lent, let us rise to the challenge of climate change one step at a time and join together in solidarity with other Christians and with others on our planet. Theologically, economically, and ecologically, let us walk gently upon the earth this Lenten season and may you discover profound appreciation and gratitude as you connect with God, our earth, your neighbours, and yourself!

Actions

1. Run the laundry washing machine on cold/cold setting and during off peak times. Of the total energy use and greenhouse-gas emissions produced by a single load of laundry, approximately 75% of it comes from warming the water itself.
2. Unplug electronics that are not in use. Many electronics draw power when off (it's called "phantom power" and can account for up to 10% of a household's energy use). Place electronics on a power strip and turn it off in between uses.
3. Drink tap water or install a water filter at home (e.g. Brita filter) instead of buying bottled water. Bottled water produces more than 1000 times more carbon emissions than tap water (mainly from packaging and transport) and creates unnecessary plastic waste.

4. Check the tire pressure on your car. Under inflated tires lower fuel efficiency. You can improve your gas mileage by 0.6% on average—up to 3% in some cases—by keeping your tires inflated to the proper pressure.
5. Consider skipping the dryer when you wash your clothes. If you run the dryer 200 times per year you could save nearly half a ton of carbon emissions by hanging clothes to dry instead.
6. Are you separating your waste properly? Review your local guidelines and do a test check of your recycling and green bins.
7. When driving, obey the speed limit. Higher speeds use up more energy and are more dangerous. Most vehicles operate at the highest fuel efficiency when travelling between 50 and 80 km/h. Above this range, vehicles consume increasingly more fuel the faster they go. At 120 km/h, a vehicle uses about 20% more fuel than at 100 km/h.
8. Try a meatless Monday. Lowering meat consumption to within accepted health guidelines could reduce global food-related emissions by nearly a third by 2050. Widespread adoption of a vegetarian diet could cut emissions by 63%.
9. Turn down your thermostat by at least 1 degree. This can reduce your energy bill by 1-3%. Lowering it by 5-10 degrees overnight can lead to even more significant savings of 10-15%.
10. Take a break from the TV and internet. Unplug your wifi, go for a walk, play a game, read a book.
11. Give up disposable cups and drinks in plastic bottles. Carry a travel mug and/or reusable water bottle.
12. Cut your shower time by two minutes – it will save nearly 20 litres of water PLUS the energy required to heat it.
13. Carry your own non-plastic cutlery. Disposable cutlery and straws are among the worst plastic pollution culprits. Get in the

habit of carrying your own cutlery with you and leaving a set in the car.

14. When buying clothes:
 - Choose second hand clothing, saving money and giving the clothes themselves a longer lease on life.
 - Choose natural fibres like organic cotton or wool. Synthetic fabrics create microfibre pollution when washed.
 - Invest in quality, minimizing the demand for cheap items that will end up in landfill.
15. Watch the video, “The Story of Stuff” <https://tinyurl.com/youtube-storyofstuff>. Then do an inventory of your closet. Are there items you wish you had not purchased? Why? What can you do differently? “The one who knows that enough is enough will always have enough.” Lao Tzu.
16. Examine your cleaning supplies. How many of them are environmentally friendly? Take a look at the Environmental Defence report on the toxic chemicals in conventional cleaning products: <https://environmentaldefence.ca/report/full-disclosure/>
17. When using the dishwasher, let your dishes air-dry. The heated drying cycle uses at least 15% more energy.
18. Look through your shopping cart and see where your food originates. Aim to buy more local and in-season produce and plan to visit a farmers’ market and chat with a local farmer. Check out what’s in season in Ontario with Food Down the Road’s helpful chart: <https://tinyurl.com/seasonalavailability>
19. Keep track of how much food waste you create. Eat leftovers and avoid wasting food. In Canada, \$31 billion worth of food ends up in landfills or composters each year, much of it directly from supermarkets. France recently banned supermarkets from wasting food, requiring them to sign agreements with charities instead. Write your MP to urge similar action in Canada.

20. Start a compost for your backyard. Food waste generates a significant amount of methane (a greenhouse gas) when it's buried in landfills, but not so when composted.
21. Check labels on toiletries. Did you know that some face and body scrubs contain tiny plastic beads that end up in the ocean? Avoid anything with "polyethylene" listed as an ingredient.
22. Use bar soap instead of liquid hand soap. This is an easy change to make and if you are feeling keen, you can even make your own soap bars.
23. Pray for decision makers to act justly, to protect climate refugees from the effects of changing climate. See the resource provided in #11.
24. Pledge to use a cloth shopping bag instead of plastic or paper bags. Canadians use between nine and 15 billion plastic bags a year. They do not biodegrade and few are recycled. Many are improperly disposed of and end up in the ocean and natural areas where they leach toxins and break into small pieces that can be eaten by animals.
25. Avoid overpackaged, processed, canned, and frozen convenience foods. Stay clear of the three tomatoes sitting on Styrofoam tray and covered with plastic cellophane.
26. Use non-plastic containers for lunches, leftovers, freezing, storage, take-out, and travelling. Request takeaways in your own container instead of a disposable one. Take a container with you when you buy meat, fish, or cheese.
27. Buy glass and/or stainless steel containers for food storage. You can use glass for freezer storage as long as you leave room at the top of the jar.
28. Make it from scratch: try and cook as much as possible from scratch and take your own sandwiches and snacks when you go out. Restaurants are energy-intensive due to cooking equipment, heating, cooling, lighting, and sanitation, often using five to seven times more energy per square foot than other commercial buildings.
29. Today, pick up any litter you see in your neighbourhood or on your street. "Be the change you wish to see in the world." – Mahatma Gandhi.
30. Seek out and use an alternative commute to work, i.e. car share, public transit, biking, walking. Read the Smart Commute report on how to curb traffic congestion and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through better commuting options. <https://tinyurl.com/smartcommutereport>
31. Winter-proof your home with weatherstripping to prevent air leaks and save up to 30% on your energy bill. Don't forget to insulate your exterior electrical outlets.
32. When heating water on the stove, always use a pot with a lid to conserve energy. A pot containing 4 litres of water will boil approximately one minute faster than one without.
33. If you are located in Shining Waters/Region 10 of the United Church, invite your community of faith to participate in the "How Green is Your Church?" program (if this document is not part of a "How Green is Your Church?" package, details can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/howgreen2019>).
34. Visit the Ontario Environmental Commissioner's website at <https://eco.on.ca/>. Read the latest reports on climate change, energy conservation, and other environmental issues. Submit your own ideas to improve environmental protection.
35. Bring your own toiletries: Skip the free travel-size shampoos, soaps, and lotions offered by hotels. Instead, fill up your own reusable travel-size containers at home.
36. Visit Citizens for Public Justice's "Give it up for the earth, Lent 2019" website: <https://cpj.ca/for-the-earth>. Read the Faith and

Climate Backgrounder, make the pledge, and call upon the government to end subsidies to the fuel sector.

37. Plant native, pollinator friendly plants in your garden this year. If you don't have a garden you might consider getting involved with a local chapter of the David Suzuki Foundation's Butterflyway Project, which aims to provide butterfly habitat in neighbourhoods across Canada. 90% of flowering plants, including many food crops, depend on pollinators like bees, birds and butterflies. Climate change, loss of habitat, and pesticide use are having a profound impact on populations of pollinator species. <https://tinyurl.com/butterflyway>

"Holy Week"

38. Maundy Thursday: Following Jesus' example of praying in Gethsemane, take time to pray outdoors, giving thanks for Creation and praying for the earth.
39. Read the New York Times article "Why Half a Degree of Global Warming Is a Big Deal." The article summarizes the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and explains the consequences of a 1.5 vs. 2 degree global temperature rise. <https://tinyurl.com/nyt-halfdegree>.
40. Holy Saturday: Genesis 1: ... "God looked at everything he had made..." Take a walk and notice signs of new life, resurrection, and spring in your neighbourhood. Take pictures of what you see or write about them.

Bonus Item

Ask your church to do a carbon footprint analysis using the Faith and the Common Good/Greening Sacred Spaces benchmarking program: www.faithcommongood.org/energy_benchmarking.

Sundays

1. "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1.) When have you experienced the glory of God in Creation?
2. In prayer, reflect on the beauty of creation and reflect on Psalm 148.
3. Join St. Francis of Assisi in prayer: "The Canticle of Creation."
4. Enter into silence and listen for what God is whispering to you about living with respect in Creation.
5. Read Ezekiel 47:1-9 and give thanks for clean water for bathing, drinking, and preparing food.
6. "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me." Mark 8:34. Reflect on this in context of climate change on the poor.
7. Encourage your minister to give a sermon on an environmental theme. Share a copy of this one, "Our Human Dominion on the Earth" by Professor Emeritus Harold Wells of Emmanuel College, which reflects on God's creation and considers the ecological crisis we face. <https://tinyurl.com/haroldwells sermon>