



Caring for Creation: A Prayer/Action Guide For a Lenten" Fast from Carbon"

Who we are: NC Interfaith Power & Light, (formerly *Climate Connection: Interfaith Eco-Justice Network*), works with people of faith as they strive to link their love for the Creator with their care for creation, particularly in ways that address the threat of global warming. We believe that protecting God's Creation is a moral responsibility.

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, the NC 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 North Carolina—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.

Joanne Kennedy Frazer



Caring for Creation: A Prayer/Action Guide for a Lenten "Fast from Carbon"

Ash Wednesday

 ***Impact of global warming on North Carolina.***


"Our state has kept pace with the global trend of increasing emissions of global warming pollutants, and North Carolina also stands to face the consequences of global warming. Low estimates suggest that annual temperatures in the Southeast will increase by 4.1°F over the next century, unless actions are taken to reduce emissions of global warming pollutants....(which) would make the climate of central North Carolina similar to that of central Florida. Scientists examining the impacts of global warming have identified several categories of effects: temperature increase, sea level rise, public health consequences, ecosystem responses, shifts in agricultural productivity and overall economic dislocation. North Carolina will experience each of these—though the severity will depend on the choices that we make about our global warming pollution today." (Environmental Defense. "Understanding Global Warming for NC." P. 10)

 ***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_HTML.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.

 ***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.

Joanne Kennedy Frazer



Caring for Creation: A Prayer/Action Guide for a Lenten "Fast from Carbon"

First Week in Lent

 ***Impact of global warming on North Carolina.***

"Rising seas will significantly impact North Carolina's coast. Warmer atmospheric temperatures cause sea levels to rise in two ways: 1) through warmer ocean waters expanding and 2) through the melting of snow, glaciers and polar ice caps. From 3,000 years ago to the beginning of the industrial revolution, sea levels around the globe remained nearly constant, rising only about 0.01–0.02 cm/yr. Since the industrial revolution, sea levels along most of the U.S. coast have risen 10–12 inches.... (It is estimated) that global sea-level will rise by about 19 inches over the next century.... Rising seas inundate wetlands and other low-lying lands, erode beaches, intensify flooding and increase the salinity of rivers, bays and groundwater tables. A higher sea-level will increase the vulnerability of coastal and low-lying areas to severe weather, allowing storms such as Hurricane Isabel to inflict even greater damage.... Billions of dollars worth of buildings and real estate are currently threatened by erosion. The steady erosion of wetlands and barrier islands such as the Outer Banks makes the coastline even more susceptible to erosion and storm damage."
(Environmental Defense. "Understanding Global Warming for NC." P. 11)

 ***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 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 offsets from NC Green Power (www.ncgreenpower.org). For only \$4.00 more on your monthly utility bill, you can add one block of 100 kWh's of clean energy onto the electric grid, replacing 100 kWh's of conventional power. To discover the reduction in emissions that can result from your participation, go to www.ncgreenpower.org/signup/calculator.html.

Joanne Kennedy Frazer



Caring for Creation: A Prayer/Action Guide for a Lenten "Fast from Carbon"

Second Week in Lent

 ***Impact of global warming on North Carolina.***

"Increased temperatures are expected to lead to health problems. Warmer temperatures will increase the number of very hot days, causing an upswing in heat-related deaths and illnesses such as heat stroke. The heat wave that gripped Europe in the summer of 2003, causing between 22,000 and 35,000 deaths, is a reminder of how vulnerable sensitive populations can be to increases in temperature. The warmer weather is also expected to bring an increase in disease-carrying insects. Mosquitoes carry a number of life-threatening diseases including West Nile Virus and malaria. Other health risks from climate change include illnesses from water supplies contaminated by increased flooding and the possible overflow of hog waste lagoons." (Environmental Defense. "Understanding Global Warming for NC." P. 10)


 ***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.

 ***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!

Joanne Kennedy Frazer



Caring for Creation: A Prayer/Action Guide for a Lenten "Fast from Carbon"

Third Week in Lent

 ***Impact of global warming on North Carolina.***

"Warmer temperatures may worsen North Carolina's air quality. Oxides of nitrogen released from power plants and automobiles react, in the presence of sunlight, with other chemicals in the air to form ground-level ozone or smog. Some of the gains achieved by reducing this pollution in the Clean Smokestacks Act will be erased as warmer summers increase ground-level ozone formation and the number of unhealthy air days.... A 1999 study estimated that during the summer months of 1997, smog pollution triggered 1,900 hospital admissions for respiratory illness, 630 emergency room visits for asthma and 240,000 asthma attacks in North Carolina." (Environmental Defense. "Understanding Global Warming for NC." P. 11-12)


 ***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.'"

 ***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.

Joanne Kennedy Frazer



Caring for Creation: A Prayer/Action Guide for a Lenten "Fast from Carbon"

Fourth Week in Lent

 ***Opportunities for North Carolina to address global warming:***

"North Carolina can begin to reduce its contribution to the global warming problem by reducing its dependence on fossil fuels. Conservation, efficiency and the development of renewable energy not only reduces pollution but also reduces imports of fossil fuels from out-of-state."
(Environmental Defense. "Understanding Global Warming for NC." P. 14)

 ***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 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.

Joanne Kennedy Frazer



Caring for Creation: A Prayer/Action Guide for a Lenten "Fast from Carbon"

Fifth Week in Lent

 ***Opportunities for North Carolina to address global warming:***


"Smart growth and clean vehicles. In North Carolina, the transportation sector emits more than 33% of global warming pollution. A documented relationship exists between land-use patterns and the amount people drive. A smart growth approach to development, which encourages land-use planning, mixed use development and transportation choices can reduce dependence on driving and decrease global warming pollution from transportation. Additionally, cleaner cars are needed as North Carolina's population continues to grow. Putting cleaner cars and alternative technology vehicles such as hybrids on the road can help to reduce global warming pollutants as well as smog-forming pollutants and carcinogenic air toxics." (Environmental Defense. "Understanding Global Warming for NC." P. 16)

 ***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,
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%.

Joanne Kennedy Frazer




Caring for Creation: A Prayer/Action Guide for a Lenten "Fast from Carbon"

Sixth Week in Lent


 ***Opportunities for North Carolina to address global warming:***

"Global warming poses a serious problem for North Carolina. Yet even though solutions are at hand, many policymakers hesitate to address this issue. The facts of global warming science are not yet reflected in policy, and North Carolina's decision makers are having difficulty matching solutions to the problem. This is because discussions of how to address global warming have persistently been more politicized than informed." (Environmental Defense. "Understanding Global Warming for NC." P. 18)

 ***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.

 ***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.***

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

Become informed about opportunities to affect change in the political arena. Join the NC Interfaith Power & Light/Council of Churches climate listserv to keep track of global warming public policy issues, and learn how to affect legislation that could save millions of pounds of carbon dioxide. Contact aloyd@nccouncilofchurches.org and ask to be included in the email network.

Joanne Kennedy Frazer