

how green is your church?



Join in the "How Green Is Your Church?" 2018 campaign and win \$1,000 to help your community of faith be greener!

In the summer of last year, members of the joint-social justice committee of the two Toronto presbyteries agreed to develop a program encouraging communities of faith to systematically deepen their environmental awareness and commitment. The "How Green Is Your Church?" 2018 program is the outcome.

There are two ways to get involved and we hope many of you will take both steps!

Step 1. Individuals and groups can take on the challenge of the **40 Days of Lenten Action to Live with Respect in Creation**. There are actions for each day of the season that can be undertaken by individuals, groups or the congregation as a whole. Please share the information provided widely in your church – there is a reproducible flyer in the package. All the material will be available online as well to make it easily accessible

Step 2. Building on the 40 day experience, make a longer term commitment to becoming a green church by aiming for certification through the **Greening Sacred Spaces Green Certification Program**. This program offers three levels of certification – light green, medium green and deep green - with a wide-range of actions to select from.

The 'How Green Is Your Church' team is offering three prizes of \$1,000 each for the best plans (one for each certification level). Award applications should be submitted by May 1st 2018 with the expectation that the plan should be carried out over the following year.

Detailed information about both steps in the program, and a background reminder regarding the critical status of our environmental situation are included in this package and can be downloaded at :

<http://www.tucc.ca/uploads/HowGreenIsYourChurchPackage.pdf>. If you have any questions you can contact Ali Hayes of TUCC (ali@tucc.ca) for help.

Take up the challenge and make a difference!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Won Hur'.

Won Hur (for TSEP/SW Presbytery)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donna Lang'.

Donna Lang (Faith & the Common Good)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ali Hayes'.

Ali Hayes (TUCC)

We are glad to have Faith & the Common Good and Toronto United Church Council as partners in this project. They'll be known to you through their Greening Sacred Spaces & Green Awakening networks. Additional funding has been provided through the Sustainable Energy Loan Fund.



**Faith & the
Common Good**



Getting started with the 40 Days of Lenten Action to Live with Respect in Creation.

Below are some ideas to engage the members of your congregation in the 40 Days of Action. The hope is that the members of your congregation who take part will begin to come together around environmental issues, sharing experiences, discussing, and eventually forming a group who can take the lead on the congregation-wide certification planning project.

- Circulate the 40 Actions for Lent in your faith community and put up a sign up sheet for participants on your bulletin board.
- Encourage members of your congregations to find a partner and challenge each other to do the 40 days of action.
- Check in with each other regularly. If you miss a few days of action, it's okay – just do as many as you can!
- Include messages of encouragement in your faith community announcements.
- Consider setting up a mini-contest in your faith community to keep each other motivated.
- Post about it on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or other social media. Include a photo and a sentence: "I am doing 40 actions for a greener Lent!" or "I am _____ to green my Lent!" Please use hashtag #howgreenisyourchurch.
- Remind your team that they can follow up on the Lent experience by making a green certification plan and submit it by May 1st 2018 to be eligible for a \$1,000 prize to help with implementation.



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? Check out the City of Toronto guide at <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/recycling-organics-garbage/houses/what-goes-in-my-blue-bin/>. 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. ✝️ Read the story of Lazarus and the rich man, Luke 16:19-31 and consider how you might support those on the front lines suffering due to climate change. Read the Christian Aid report on the effect of climate change on coastal populations at <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/about-us/act-now-or-pay-later-protecting-people-coastal-cities> or learn about the

Environmental Justice Foundation's campaign to protect climate refugees: <https://ejfoundation.org/what-we-do/climate>.

12. 🌐 Look at a picture of the earth. What does it evoke in you? Astronauts in space find it deeply spiritual when they look at the earth from space.
13. 🌐 97 percent or more of actively publishing climate scientists agree that climate-warming trends over the past century are extremely likely due to human activities. What is evoked in you? Why aren't we acting?
14. 🏠 Cut your shower time by two minutes – it will save nearly 20 litres of water PLUS the energy required to heat it.
15. 🏠 Watch the video, "The Story of Stuff" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GorqroigqM>. 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: <http://fooddowntheroad.ca/content/seasonal-availability-chart>
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. 🙏 Give away something you don't need to someone who will appreciate it.
22. ✝️ Pray for decision makers to act justly, to protect climate refugees from the effects of changing climate. See the resource provided in #11.
23. ✝️ Give Gratitude for what we have – including beauty and abundance in creation.
24. 👁️ Take a walk in a park or forest or by a lake. Use all five senses to experience creation around you. I.e. what does it smell like? How many different shades of green do you see?
25. 🛒 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.
26. 🍽️ Refrain from eating out for one week a month. Invite a friend over for dinner instead. 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.
27. 🗑️ 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.
28. 🚗 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://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/pg/bgrd/backgrounfile-13043.pdf>
29. 🚗 Carpool or take public transit to church for a month. Smart Commute has an online service where you can match with other people looking to carpool <https://explore.smartcommute.ca/#/>
30. 🏠 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.
31. 🏠 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.
32. 🏠 Calculate your personal carbon footprint at <http://www.carbonzero.ca/calculate> or <http://offsets.greeningsacredspaces.org/>.
33. 🙏 Invite your church 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 <http://www.tucc.ca/uploads/HowGreenIsYourChurchPackage.pdf>).
34. 👥 Join a group for people concerned about climate change and contribute to the dialogue. Toronto Climate Action Network has a great list of regional and city groups. <http://tcan.ca/our-members-0>.
35. 🏠 Insulate your water heater tank with a cover to save 25-45% of heat loss. It can be purchased at hardware stores. Turn down the heat setting by a half notch and again in a month when the weather gets warmer.

36. 🗣️ Visit Citizens for Public Justice’s “Give it up for the earth, Lent 2018” website: <https://cpi.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. 🏡 Plan to include native, pollinator friendly plants in your garden this year. 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. The North American Native Plant Society hosts talks on pollinators and has a great database of native plants www.nanps.org.

Holy Week

38. ✝️ Maundy Thursday: Following Jesus’ example of praying in Gethsemane, take time to pray outdoors.
39. 🌍 Good Friday: Take a look at the photos of endangered species. “These Endangered Wildlife Photos Are Artistic Masterpieces” from gizmodo: <https://gizmodo.com/these-endangered-wildlife-photos-are-artistic-masterpie-1819819926>. What is evoked in you when you see these photos? Pray for the parts of God’s Creation that are dying.
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. Easter Sunday: Reflect upon all the activities you have done during this Lent and how you were better able to live with respect in Creation.

This resource was adapted from a variety of sources. We thank our partner organizations for their inspiration and permissions!