

Caring for Creation: A Prayer and Action Guide For a Lenten “Fast from Carbon”

Iowa Interfaith Power & Light
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.

The spiritual practice of fasting, accompanied by prayer and meditation, moves us to be more open to the will of God in our lives. Fasting helps us to listen to what God wants us to be and do. During Lent this year, Iowa Interfaith Power & Light invites you to try a “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—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 these seven reflections to consider the amount of carbon dioxide we each generate and to commit to reducing that amount.

For your “fast from carbon,” we have prepared seven spiritual reflections (Ash Wednesday and the six Sundays of Lent) that include the following:

- ❖ information on global warming in Iowa—likely impacts and local opportunities to address the threat
- ❖ a statement by the faith community
- ❖ a scripture reading followed by a prayer
- ❖ actions for individuals to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide generated
- ❖ suggestions for congregational activities

We are also providing additional documents that you may find useful for your congregation throughout the year.

This resource has several possible uses: as a weekly bulletin stuffer, as a follow-up to a showing of a video (e.g., *An Inconvenient Truth* or *Kilowatt Ours*), as a focusing prayer for parish meetings, or as a discussion starter around climate change issues.

We are grateful to North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light and Linda Rimer, a member of Chapel of the Cross Episcopal Church in Chapel Hill for sharing the concept of “fasting from carbon” with us and for the ideas presented above.



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Ash Wednesday

Iowa’s Climate Change Emissions

Iowa has the 15th largest per capita carbon footprint in the United States. Together with five other Midwestern states we contribute 5% of the world’s CO2 total. The majority of our emissions are attributable to electrical generation. Our high electrical generation emissions (32%) is due to our reliance on coal, which releases high amounts of carbon dioxide in addition to adding mercury and arsenic to our environment. We receive roughly 80% of our power from coal. Coming in second is agriculture, accounting for 22% of our greenhouse gasses. Livestock manure produces methane and fertilizers produce nitrous oxide. Transportation is also a significant factor, making up 18% of our emissions.

www.iowaipl.org

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.org1866_70059_ENG_HTM.htm)

Scripture Reading: Joel 2:12-13

Yet even now says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart
With fasting, and weeping and mourning; rend your hearts, not your garments,
And return to the Lord, your God.
For gracious and merciful is God, slow to anger, rich in kindness,
And relenting in punishment.

Prayer: Gracious and merciful God, as we “fast from carbon,” grant us the humility and the inspiration to move through authentic mourning for the destruction of so much of your Creation. Move us to accept our obligation to restore your Creation, and to act with love and care for all that You call sacred.

Actions:

- ❖ Change your light bulbs: Replacing one incandescent 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 for each of these reflections, you will have “fasted” from 1050 pounds of carbon dioxide for the next year.
- ❖ Reuse items: repair them, donate them, sell them. Reusing is even better than recycling because the item does not need to be reprocessed before it can be used again.
<http://www.epa.gov/msw/reduce.htm#reduce>
- ❖ Educate yourself and your congregation: view the DVD *The Story of Stuff*. You can watch it and download it at no charge on the web at <http://storyofstuff.com/>.

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First Week in Lent

How Climate Change Will Impact Iowa

We will see more precipitation extremes such as short periods of intense rainfall leading to flooding and prolonged periods without rainfall resulting in droughts, increased average temperature and greater temperature variability, stronger storm systems, including tornado activity, flourishing of weeds less susceptible to herbicides, increases in wildfires and higher absolute humidity. www.iowaipl.org

Unprecedented flooding, drought, and tornadoes will be expensive for our state both in terms of recovery funding and loss of productivity. The Mississippi River flood of 1993 cost over \$1.56 billion dollars in direct damages and costs, the state’s costliest disaster ever until the floods of 2008, which costs are considerably higher, and still being tabulated. By late August 2008, the flood damage had caused \$500 million dollars in infrastructure damages and impacted nearly 5400 homes just in Cedar Rapids.

Statewide, nine Iowa rivers crested at record levels. Damages ranged from the flooding of 16 buildings at the University of Iowa in Iowa City ... to an estimated devastation of 1.2 million acres of corn and soybeans ... to the loss of more than 4,000 hogs. Storms caused 85 of the state's 99 counties to be declared Presidential Disaster Areas. The Rebuild Iowa Office says nearly 40,000 Iowans have registered with FEMA for disaster assistance. And disaster assistance for both residents and governments stands at more than \$1.3 billion. <http://www.iptv.org/iowajournal/story.cfm/416>

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>)

Scripture Reading: Genesis 2

Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the human whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Prayer: God of all, instill in us the knowledge that we are called upon to tend and care for your garden. Grant us the wisdom to cultivate for the good of all, so that all your creatures may be fed from the bounty of your Creation as we insure that even those without access may be nourished.

Actions:

- ❖ 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! Utilities often have programs to help you pay for the cost of the tree.
- ❖ Contact your utility for an energy audit of your congregational facility and of your home. Take the steps they recommend.
- ❖ Educate yourself and your congregation: view the DVD *An Inconvenient Truth* available at video rental stores, or *Kilowatt Ours* available for purchase through their website www.kilowattours.org or borrow it from Iowa Religious Media Services: www.irms.org
- ❖ If you are using this resource in a group setting, share with each other how you have been “fasting from carbon” during Lent.



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Second Week in Lent

Impact on Human Health in Iowa:

“Health risks from winter cold-related causes will decrease, while summer heat-related incidences will increase. By 2080-2100, Iowa could see 30 to 60 days annually of extreme heat days (exceeding 97°F), which will require improved warning systems, more secure power supplies for cooling, and other medical preparation to avoid severe health impacts. By 2030, three-day heat waves could occur two to three times as frequently as today, and by century’s end, Iowans could experience 15 to 25 heat waves per year. Higher temperatures and more electricity generation for air conditioning could increase the formation of ground-level ozone, likely exacerbating asthma and other respiratory diseases. Threats to public health during flood events, such as flood related injuries, temporary loss or contamination of drinking water supplies, or closure of public sewer systems could become more common.” www.ucsusa.org/iowa

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)

Scripture Reading: Psalm 121

I raise my eyes toward the mountains.
From where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord
The maker of heaven and earth.

Prayer: Creator of all, we are called to worship You with all our being and actions and to treat your Creation as sacred. Give us the insight we need to reject “false gospels” that encourage consumption patterns that are destructive to the web of life.

Actions:

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Adjust your thermostat down 2 degrees in winter and 2 degrees up in summer and “fast from” about 2,000 pounds of carbon dioxide.
- ❖ If you are using this resource in a group setting, share with each other how you have “fasted from carbon” recently.
- ❖ Explore and discuss: View the DVD *Renewal* to see how other faith communities are responding to climate change. Available for purchase from <http://renewalproject.net.s17607.gridserver.com/dvd> or borrow from www.irms.org. What can your faith community do?

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Third Week in Lent

Climate Change Impacts in Iowa on Property and Infrastructure

Cities such as Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Sioux City, especially cities along rivers, are particularly vulnerable to the risks of climate extremes. Iowa’s insurance sector could become more vulnerable economically as weather related hazardous events affect their business. More frequent extreme weather events such as storms and floods, exacerbated by stream channeling, levee construction, and more paved surfaces, will likely increase property damage and the risk of landslides, place heavier burdens on emergency management, increase clean-up and rebuilding costs, and exact a financial toll on farms, businesses and homeowners. Storms and flooding will require changes in infrastructure. Municipalities in Iowa will have to upgrade levees, sewer pipes, and wastewater treatment plants in anticipation of more frequent extreme downpours. www.ucsusa.org/iowa

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,” 22nd General Synod, <http://www.interfaithpower.org/TDSunitedChurch.htm>)

Scripture Reading: Psalm 95

Come let us sing joyfully to the Lord, cry out to the rock of our salvation.

Let us greet God with a song of praise, joyfully sing out our psalms.

For the Lord is the great God...

Whose hand holds the depths of the earth;

Who owns the tops of the mountains.

The sea and dry land belong to God, who made them, formed them by hand.

Prayer: Great God of the mountains and the sea and creator of all that is, we give joyful thanks for the gifts of your Creation. Give us the courage to assume individual and congregational commitment to renewing your creation through our study, prayer and actions.

Actions:

- ❖ Buy and eat locally produced food when you can. The average U.S. food product travels 1500 to 2500 miles to get to your table. You can “fast from” 500 pounds of carbon dioxide by supplying 25% of your food from local sources.
- ❖ Consider starting a Cool Congregations stewardship program in your faith community. It’s designed to engage members in caring for creation by reducing carbon emissions as an act of faith. Contact coolcongregations@iowaipl.org for more information or go to www.iowaipl.org
- ❖ If you are using this resource in a group setting, share with each other how your “fast from carbon” is progressing.

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Fourth Week in Lent

Hope: Opportunities for Iowa to address global warming

Though the picture painted in the previous pages may seem bleak, there is a lot of potential within the state of Iowa for change. Reducing our energy use by employing energy efficient measures in our homes, businesses and houses of worship is the first and best way to reduce our CO2 emissions. It’s the cheapest, cleanest, quickest way to achieve the needed reductions. Energy efficiency measures “not only result in significant emission reductions and costs savings, but also offer a host of additional benefits as well. These benefits include savings to consumers and businesses on energy bills, ...reduction in spending on energy by low-income households; reduced peak demand, electricity system capital and operating costs, risk of power shortages, energy price increases, and price volatility; improved public health as a result of reduced pollutant and particulate emissions by power plants; reduced dependence on imported fuel sources; and green collar employment expansion and economic development.” <http://www.iaclimatechange.us/capag.cfm>

Mahatma Gandhi once said that “You must be the change you want to see in the world.” Iowa Interfaith Power & Light is dedicated to helping people transform their lives. Our Cool Congregations workshops measure individual carbon footprints and provides simple ways to reduce them. It also provides participants with the resources they need to take the program to their home congregations. Our Energy Efficiency page offers additional tips on reducing carbon footprints and ShopIPL provides an inventory and discounts on energy saving products. www.iowaipl.org

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)

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

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 live in the light, walking gently on your Earth, looking for ways to replenish what we have taken away, to heal what we have damaged.

Actions:

- ❖ 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 in one year) and washing your clothes in cold or warm water (“fasting from” 500 pounds per year).
- ❖ Educate yourself and your congregation: View *Keeping the Earth*, narrated by James Earl Jones, (available from irms.org) and discuss the relationship between our love for the Creator and caring for Creation.
- ❖ Encourage your congregation to Just Say No To Styrofoam, and invite congregants to carry their own mugs for church fellowship times. Change from using petro-plastics to vegi-plastics; go to www.recyclaholics.com.
- ❖ If you are using this resource in a group setting, share with each other recent results of your commitment to “fast from carbon.”

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Fifth Week in Lent

Hope: Opportunities for Iowa to address global warming

According to experts, Iowa is the 10th windiest state in the US. This means that we have the potential to transition away from coal and become an exporter of renewable energy to other states. Making this transition will cause an economic boon for our state. Communities in Iowa, such as Cedar Rapids and Newton, are already experiencing the benefits of jobs related to wind turbine manufacturing. www.iowaipl.org

The ICCAC (Iowa Climate Change Advisory Council, appointed by the Governor, selected by the legislature) presented a number of options for promoting the development of wind; one of these is implementation of renewable electricity targets, which calls for 30% of our energy production through wind by 2030. <http://www.iaclimatechange.us/index.cfm>

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”, U.S. Catholic Bishops, June 15, 2001, <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.shtml>)

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 37

O my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you upon your land; thus you shall know that I am the Lord. I have promised and I will do it, says the Lord.

Prayer: God of all, let us trust in a resurrection of will to restore Your Creation. And grant us your vision of Creation transformed. Lead us 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.

Actions:

- ❖ 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%. Using your own canvas bags when you visit the grocery store will also reduce waste.
- ❖ Put up a clothesline or use a drying rack to dry your laundry.
- ❖ Use a power strip and turn off computers, televisions, etc. as you end your day.
- ❖ As a congregation, consider establishing a discussion group on simplicity of living. Check the Simple Living Network website at <http://www.simpleliving.net/main/> for resources.
- ❖ If you are using this resource in a group setting, share with each other how you are progressing in your “fast from carbon.”

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Sixth Week in Lent

Hope: Opportunities for Iowa to address global warming

But the real source of hope in Iowa is you. If our state is going to make the changes necessary to prevent and prepare for Climate Change, we will need your help.

Never doubt the difference you can make in the lives of others. Our ability to stem the tide of global warming rests not just in taking individual steps to reduce our global impact; it rests in our ability to inspire others to do likewise. We encourage everyone to have these discussions within their faith communities. Also contact your elected officials.

While our primary goal as an organization is to help individuals and congregations, we recognize that preventing Climate Change will require massive changes in state, federal, and international policy.

www.iowaipl.org

Statement by the faith community: Evangelical

“[We] 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>)

Scripture Reading: 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.

Actions:

- ❖ 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 Iowa Interfaith Power & Light e-mail list to receive our monthly newsletter 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 director@iowaipl.org and ask to be included in the e-mail network.
- ❖ If you are using this resource in a group setting, celebrate with each other the ways you have been “fasting from carbon” this year during Lent.



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Iowa Interfaith Power & Light

Who We Are

Launched in October of 2006, Iowa Interfaith Power & Light (Iowa IPL) is a joint response of Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other faith communities to Climate Change. We work to protect creation and safeguard society's most vulnerable by providing education about global warming, assisting individuals and congregations with carbon footprint reductions, and advocating towards sustainable policies at all levels of government.

What We Do

We encourage Iowans to consider environmental stewardship as a spiritual concern and a religious response to the values of their faith. Iowa IPL is proud to offer the following services to religious communities and individuals:

Presentations on a wide array of topics, including the science of global warming, its consequences on the poor both here, and abroad, and Iowa's unique contribution to the problem.

Workshops for Faith Leaders, such as Cool Congregations, educate about global warming and offer simple ways for individuals and congregations to become part of the solution.

Spiritual and Technical Resources will help your faith community incorporate environmental stewardship into worship as well as the day-to-day operation of your congregation. We also offer assistance in finding sources of green power, tips on improving the energy efficiency of homes and places of worship, and discounts on energy efficient products.

Newsletters provide information about Iowa IPL activities and events as well as updates on climate news and legislation at the state, national and inter-national level.

Action Alerts allow you to make a difference by sending special messages to state leaders at crucial times.

Community Service Projects, such as the weatherization of low income homes, is an excellent way to engage with your local community, help those in need, and prevent global warming pollution. Iowa IPL offers guidance for those interested in starting such projects in their home congregation.

Cool Congregations: An Earth Stewardship Program

People of faith across Iowa are doing their part to prevent global warming pollution in their homes and saving hundreds of dollars in the process. Cool Congregations is a stewardship program of Iowa IPL designed to help congregations engage their members in caring for creation by pledging to reduce their individual greenhouse gas emissions by 10%, a tithe in the Christian tradition. Since it began in January of 2007, over 175 congregations have attended these workshops to learn how to conduct a Cool Congregations program in their own faith community.

Participating households:

Invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy. Save money on bills. Prevent global warming pollution. Gain access to discounted energy efficient products. They do this by attending a series of small group meetings where they: Measure their carbon footprint, Explore ways to reduce their carbon footprint, Make a faith-based pledge and Meet to celebrate their successes and build community!

10% may not sound like much, but if all Iowans reduced their carbon footprints by this amount, the reduction in pollution would be equal to taking 1/3 of Iowa's cars off the road or closing a 750 megawatt coal-fired power plant! For more information on this program, contact Cool Congregations Coordinator Sarah Webb at coolcongregations@iowaipl.org.

Join us today! Call 515-689-1112, or email us at director@iowaipl.org.