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 listen to what God wants us to be and to do. During Lent this year, Earth Ministry and Washington Interfaith Power & Light invite 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 a fast from carbon? 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 no longer debate 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.
3. The largest component of greenhouse gases is carbon dioxide, which comes from the burning of fossil fuels during the generation of electricity and from the modes of transportation that we use.
4. Unless we reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases, the impact of these increases 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.
5. God created this Earth, declared it to be good, and expects us to care for creation and to maintain its goodness for future generations.

While we are heavily dependent on carbon, it’s not as hard as you might think to “fast from carbon.” 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) which include the following:

- information on global warming in Washington State — including likely impacts and local opportunities to address this 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

This resource has several possible uses: as a weekly bulletin insert, 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.
Ash Wednesday

Impact of climate change on Washington State:
“Even with moderate reductions in the rate of current global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, Washington can expect these climate impacts: higher temperatures - increases in annual temperature of, on average, 2.2°F by the 2020s (compared to 1970 to 1999); changes in precipitation patterns - wetter autumns and winters, drier summers, and small overall increases in annual precipitation in Washington, as well as increases in extreme high precipitation in western Washington; lower water supply in summer months - decreases in spring snowpack by nearly 30 percent are projected across the state by the 2020s, 40 percent by the 2040s and 65 percent by the 2080s. Earlier snowmelt and earlier peak river flow are projected to affect municipal water supplies and agricultural water availability.”  (WA Dept. of Ecology, “Focus on Impacts of Climate Change in Washington State"

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)

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.
First Week in Lent

Impact of climate change on Washington State:
“Washington is home to an incredible diversity of native wildlife species, including 372 birds, 127 mammals, 21 reptiles, 51 fish and 25 amphibians. Rising temperatures and sea level in the state will likely change the makeup of entire ecosystems, forcing wildlife to shift their ranges or adapt. Scientists project that a 3-degree Fahrenheit rise in average August temperatures could cause up to 20 percent of the Columbia-Snake River Basin and coastal watersheds in Washington and Oregon to become too warm for salmon, steelhead and trout species.” (National Wildlife Federation, “Global Warming and Washington”)

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.” (From the Presbyterian Hunger Program, 2006, http://www.pcusa.org/environment/climate-change.htm)

Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:8-9

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 it 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!
- Turn down your water heater; 120 degrees is usually hot enough. Wrap your water heater in an insulating jacket if the water heater is over 5 years old or has no internal insulation.
- Adjust your thermostat down 2 degrees in winter and 2 degrees up in summer, and you’ll fast from about 2,000 pounds of carbon dioxide.
- Put out some bird food. Birds will almost certainly find it wherever the location. Enjoy the gift of these and other creatures on God’s Earth.
- If you are using this resource in a group setting, share with each other how you have been “fasting from carbon” during Lent.
Caring for Creation:
A Prayer and Action Guide
for a Lenten Fast from Carbon

Second Week in Lent

Impact of climate change on Washington State:
“Our analysis of the impacts of climate variability on the Pacific Northwest coastal zone suggests that some important climate-related factors to consider are sea level, air and sea surface temperatures, winter precipitation, and storminess. In particular, the following conditions increase the risk associated with various coastal hazards: increased sea level increases the risk of coastal erosion; increased winter precipitation increases the risk of coastal riverine flooding and of landslides; southeasterly winter storms increase the risk of coastal erosion; and the co-occurrence of these three conditions increases the likelihood of large, damaging coastal erosion and flooding events.” (Climate Impacts Group, “Climate Impacts on Pacific Northwest Coasts”)

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

Scripture Reading: Psalm 121:1-2
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 nature shows its magnificence around you! If you drive 20 miles less each week this Lent, you will have fasted from 120 pounds of carbon dioxide.
- Obey the speed limit when driving. Every 10 mph faster reduces fuel economy by about 4 mpg, a figure that remains fairly constant regardless of vehicle size.
- Take a walk in your community. Greet your neighbors with a smile. Listen to the birds, look at the trees, and feel the rain, snow, or sun on your face. Rejoice in all creation!
Caring for Creation: A Prayer and Action Guide for a Lenten Fast from Carbon

Third Week in Lent

Impact of climate change on Washington State:

“Heat-related illnesses and mortality are likely to increase when temperatures exceed thresholds of 100 degrees, especially without air conditioning and when nighttime temperatures remain high. Higher summer temperatures are likely to result in more smog in urban areas. Respiratory conditions are aggravated by smog, as well as by: heat waves, air pollutants from coal-fired plants, automotive emissions, and forest fire particles. As temperatures rise, Seattle, Spokane and other urban areas come closer to violating Clean Air Act standards. Warmer temperatures and weather extremes may play a role in expanding the range of diseases spread by insects, such as mosquitoes carrying West Nile Virus and ticks carrying Lyme disease.”


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,” United Church of Christ 22nd General Synod, http://www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries/)

Scripture Reading: Psalm 95:1-5

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 commitments 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.

• Encourage your congregational leaders to save energy. Contact your local utility for information on getting an energy audit for your house of worship, or calculate your carbon footprint using the online resources available at www.coolcongregations.org.
Fourth Week in Lent

Opportunities for Washington State to address climate change:
“Burning coal, gas and oil produces carbon dioxide, which is a greenhouse gas that warms the planet as it builds up in the atmosphere. Some of the carbon dioxide released today remains in the atmosphere after even 100 years, trapping more and more heat. Washington has the potential to generate 63 percent of its electricity needs from renewable energy sources including wind, biomass, geothermal and landfill gas.”
(National Wildlife Federation, “Global Warming and Washington”)

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 5:7-10
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 shower head (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).
• Go meat-free for the day. The production of meat uses more carbon than the growing of grains, vegetables, and fruits.
• 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.
• Watch a movie, film or documentary about faithful environmentalism and/or energy & climate change, such as Kilowatt Ours: A Plan to Re-Energize America: www.kilowattours.org.
• If you are using this resource in a group setting, share with each other how your “fast from carbon” is progressing. What has been easy for you? What have you found more challenging?
Fifth Week in Lent

Opportunities for Washington State to address climate change:

“Washington state and local governments increasingly use their purchasing power to buy products that are safer for the environment and human health, verifying claims based on independent third party certification programs. As they consider new contracts, most agency Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) programs are focusing on a product’s climate and toxicity impacts over its lifecycle. The Department of Ecology provides technical assistance to state and local agencies.” (Dept. of Ecology, “What we’re doing about it: Washington Communities”)

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.”


Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 37:14

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 www.simpleliving.net for resources.
Sixth Week in Lent

Opportunities for Washington State to address climate change:

“Making changes in our lifestyles and reducing our carbon footprints are immensely important ways of caring for creation. However, in responding faithfully to Jesus’ call for a common life in which no one is left behind, we must also become involved in public policy advocacy. The challenge is powerfully posed in this question: If a single decision in Congress or the Washington State Legislature can either enhance or undo literally millions of individual acts of Christian caring for the Earth, should we not try to influence such decisions? We can, and we must.” ("A call to faithful advocacy," sermon by LeeAnne Beres, Earth Ministry Executive Director, All Pilgrims UCC, February 4, 2007)

Statement by the faith community: Evangelical

“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”). We commend the four simple but urgent claims offered in this document to all who will listen, beginning with our brothers and sisters in the Christian community, and urge all to take the appropriate actions that follow from them: 1) human-induced climate change is real; 2) the consequences of climate change will be significant and will hit the poor the hardest; 3) Christian moral convictions demand our response to the climate change problem; and 4) the need to act now is urgent. Governments, businesses, churches, and individuals all have a role to play in addressing climate change—starting now.” (Excerpted from “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action,” signed by 90 Evangelical leaders in January 2006, http://christiansandclimate.org/learn/call-to-action/)

Scripture Reading: Psalm 118:1-2; 24-25

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:

- Check out the many faith-based environmental stewardship resources available on Earth Ministry and Washington Interfaith Power & Light’s websites: www.earthministry.org and www.waipl.org.
- Take time to write or call an elected official about climate change or another creation care issue. In Washington, you can find your state representative’s email address at www.leg.wa.gov, or call the legislative hotline number at 1-800-562-6000.
- Rejoice in God's gift to the world through Christ our Lord, who reconciles all things on heaven and earth. Commit to continue elements of your carbon fast into the Easter Season and throughout the year.