

Lent Carbon Fast 2014

Introduction

97% of the latest scientific research from across the world suggests that global warming caused by human activity is gathering pace. The consequences of this, such as weather chaos, are already hitting vulnerable countries and communities, and the implications for global food supplies, security and displaced people are of enormous proportions. A potential temperature rise of 2°C combined with other environmental pressures such as growing demands for energy, population growth, the rapid extinction of species and pervasive pollution, together raise deep questions for the future of our species.

As Phillip Fletcher, Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Division of the Archbishop's Council, said last year:

"The fifth assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) represents the carefully considered consensus of expert scientific opinion on what is happening to our climate, and what it implies for the future. We should be deeply concerned about the effects.

The world is warming; this is directly linked to the sharply increasing concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere. And the main cause of that is so extremely likely as to be virtually certain: it is our activity as the human race, primarily in burning fossil fuels and deforestation. Each of the successive IPCC assessments has broadly confirmed the conclusions of its predecessors."

Yet our Christian tradition prompts us to view the Earth as a holy place full of divine grace. The Biblical Covenants call us to be partners with God and all living beings, and to protect and preserve the non-human world. We are summoned to respect limits to human economic growth and greed, and to seek justice for everyone, remembering that much poverty is environmentally related.

As Christians, we are always called to care – to care about and to care for Creation. We are invited to live more simply, reduce our ecological footprints and live in deeper harmony with all life on God's earth.

These are challenging tasks but as people of faith we can demonstrate hope. There are many actions we can take personally, communally and in our churches both to mitigate against and adapt to climate change. The Shrinking the Footprint campaign is one amongst others which encourages us to reduce our energy use. We can invest in alternatives to fossil fuel. We can shop, eat and travel more sustainably and to work with others towards local resilience at a time of transition.

A programme of concerted effort to reduce our CO₂ emissions in Lent has now been agreed in Dioceses across the South West. We surely cannot stand by and watch as the future of the world and its coming generations is endangered by our excessive behaviour. Let us challenge and change our lifestyles and lead by example towards a better world for God's sake.

WELCOME TO THE 2014 CARBON FAST

The Carbon Fast is environmental action which witnesses to the whole community our Christian responsibility to care for creation and protect the vulnerable.

It is intended to become a part of our Lenten spiritual devotion, and also to help us discover the financial benefits of stewarding resources. But above all, it is meant to offer a challenge in the face of growing climate change.

All the dioceses in the South West have set a target to achieve a 40% reduction in gas, electricity and fuel during Lent 2014. This is a real challenge. But the 40 days of Lent, starting on Ash Wednesday (5th March) are 40 days during which you can take it on and make a real difference. Take a look at the Carbon Fast Challenge Poster for some ideas and start right now.

Some of us have been taking green actions at home, work and church for many years and will be very familiar with the basic ways of cutting waste and recycling. For others, the ideas outlined below may be new and untested. Most actions are not 'one-offs' and may be carried out over days, months and years. The longer term savings may not be immediate. We hope that the cumulative effects of these kinds of activities will make a difference – both to your lifestyle and to the future of God's wider creation.

If you find you have been carrying out an action for ages, please try to encourage new people to pick up your example and do the same. One action each week is highlighted. These are the six which are likely to make the biggest impacts to reducing your carbon, and if you only take one weekly action, we suggest this would probably be the most effective. (for those who fly regularly to stop doing so could be more significant)

You may be surprised at how much difference even the smallest steps will make.

To begin, you might like to use a Carbon Calculator. This can assist you in checking your own energy use and emissions, and then reducing them. Our suggestion is <http://www.quaker.org.uk/climate-impact-calculators> but there are other calculators available.

This material has been produced with thanks to and in co-operation with Tearfund in the South West.

WEEK 1: CELEBRATING CREATION

In the beginning God created the universe and the world... Majestic and wonderful, it reflects God's holiness and greatness. We are created lovingly to enjoy it – to marvel at its beauty and share with all the creatures that dwell on it. The whole creation reveals the glory of the Creator. This week's actions help us to appreciate the world as God's and to deepen our communion with God through the Earth.

5 MARCH

To begin the Lent Carbon Fast remove one light bulb in your home and live without it during Lent as a reminder of what you're doing.

6 MARCH

Switch to a green power supplier. The SW Dioceses have a deal with Gloucestershire-based Ecotricity. You can also change to 100% green electricity or green gas – or both. Ask your Diocese for details.

7 MARCH

Compost. Put nutrients from your food waste back into the soil, not into methane-emitting landfill. If you don't have a garden, investigate other options like wormeries. Value being able to share your spare food with other creatures.

8 MARCH

Trace the journey made by the food on your plates for one meal. Reflect on what and who has enabled this food to reach and nourish you. Don't take them for granted. Share any surpluses with others when you can.

10 MARCH

Find ways to garden in or with your church or community. Regenerate a forgotten wasteland or help weed a neighbour's garden. Invite others to garden for you. Grow things you can all eat and enjoy. Take on an allotment. Plant a community orchard. Swop seeds with friends and neighbours.

11 MARCH

Place your hands on the trunk of a tree. This living plant is part of God's creation too. It absorbs carbon and produces oxygen. It may provide food, fuel or habitat. Plant a new tree somewhere as a gift to the next generation. Collect tree seeds to give to others.

WEEK 2: EXPRESSING CONCERN

'The Lord God took the human and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it' (Genesis 2:15). We are called to care about and care for the Earth. As you attempt each action this week, use it as an opportunity to reflect on and pray about what it means to be concerned for the whole inhabited planet as God commanded.

12 MARCH

Cut food miles. Don't buy any food that you know has been imported by plane. If labelling is unclear, ask! Support local farmers, growers and producers. Use small, independent shops. Think of buying food from as near your community as possible or even growing more of your own.

13 MARCH

Borrow or buy an energy monitor. Watch your energy use for the next month and see where you can decrease your consumption. Turning down a thermostat or radiators by 1 or 2 degrees can make significant savings. You might even switch off a radiator in little used rooms. Do not leave windows open when your heating is operating!

14 MARCH

Challenge yourself not to fly anywhere for the next year – or for longer if you already operate a no-fly home. Aircraft emissions of CO₂ are particularly dangerous as they are produced at high altitudes.

15 MARCH

Purchase products from reconstituted and recycled resources – paper, clothing, furniture, glassware, etc. You will help shrink the footprint of raw materials and support the recycling economy.

17 MARCH

Fix some foil on radiators at home or in your workplace to reflect heat.

18 MARCH

Save heat and light in your house or workplace. Keep doors closed when rooms not in use. Use draught excluders and close curtains to prevent heat loss through windows. Do not leave computers on. Change all light bulbs to more energy efficient ones – including LEDs. Change to an efficient boiler and upgrade appliances to AA ratings when you can.

WEEK 3: LOVING OTHERS

We are commanded as Christians to love God and to love others (Matthew 22:39), and there is no limit to the meaning of 'others'. These may be other living creatures, or vulnerable places, or at-risk communities or future generations. Battling with climate change means thinking about the impacts it will have not just on us but also on our neighbours across the world, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable.

19 MARCH

If you drive, look at ways of reducing your car's impact. Unnecessarily low tyre pressures consume more fuel, as do faster speeds. Try driving at 50mph not 70mph or take a green driving course. Investigate alternative fuelled cars when you change your vehicle – gas, electric or biodiesel (using waste cooking oil).

See www.vegoilmotoring.com and info@cat.org.uk

20 MARCH

Use eco-friendly cleaning materials for washing, polishing and cleansing. These are less harmful to the environment and break down more quickly and more naturally than stronger chemicals. Poisons reaching ecosystems can result in catastrophe for people and places thousands of miles away.

21 MARCH

Are you reusing or recycling everything you can? Investigate what your local council has on offer, e.g. plastic packaging and carton recycling can be available at shopping centres. Today in the SouthWest it is possible to recycle almost anything – batteries, polystyrene, light bulbs, computers, mobile phones, garden and food waste – as well as more obviously glass, paper, plastics and metals.

22 MARCH

Find out about a food rescue project and how you might support it - for example Devon & Cornwall Food Association <http://www.devonandcornwallfoodassociation.org/> and FareShare South West <http://www.faresharesouthwest.org.uk/>. These projects prevent produce from being destroyed and redistribute to community groups, saving good food and reducing emissions from landfill.

24 MARCH

Talk to your church leader about the Climate Justice Fund to suggest they support it, or talk to Tearfund about another way your church could help to fight climate change and support poor people who are already suffering. Visit www.climatejusticefund.org. Or if your own Diocese or church is supporting an overseas climate project support that.

25 MARCH

Register to stop junk mail which wastes paper and energy via Mail Preference Service (MPS) (www.mpsonline.org.uk) or Royal Mail www.2royalmail.com/you-home/controlling-your-mail . You can do the same for the Telephone Preference Service (TPS) 0845 703 4599.

WEEK 4: SEEKING JUSTICE

'Let justice flow like a river, righteousness like a living stream' (Amos 5: 42).

Climate Change victims do not need charity as much as justice. But what does this look like for poorer communities and countries hit hardest by climate change but least responsible? Please pray for justice for these poor communities, and as you act during the week please keep praying for your actions to be multiplied so that good change will come about globally.

26 MARCH

Campaign! Pray for bold outcomes that protect people and the planet at the forthcoming COP talks in Paris, France. As you exercise your vote in this summer's European elections consider the positive key role Europe has played in leading the world on reducing carbon emissions. Christians need to challenge narrow-minded perspectives and speak out for the most vulnerable.

27 MARCH

Walk or cycle to work – or wherever you're going – today and this week. Try to choose driving (especially on your own) as a last resort rather than a first choice. Share journeys or vehicles with others. Think of joining a car club if there is one in your area. See details about electric bikes under Additional Actions at the end of the booklet.

28 MARCH

Buy nothing today – or this coming weekend. Have a day free from being a consumer!

29 MARCH

Now have a travel-free day. Stay at home and appreciate the preciousness of your surrounding and the people around you. If on your own, enjoy your own company and do something different for a change.

31 MARCH

Lend or borrow items like ladders, lawnmowers or even cars, instead of buying them new. If you buy a book give it as a present to someone else. Offer to share your equipment, skills and resources to others at church or in the community. Join or start a LETS scheme (Local Economic Trading Service) without using money.

1 APRIL

Arrange to meet your MP as a church group. Guidelines for this are available. Ask them what they're doing in parliament and their constituency to tackle climate change. What are their priorities?

WEEK 5: LIVING SIMPLY

'And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.' (Micah 6:8)

This week's theme and actions are all about how we can live less ostentatiously and walk more in step with God so that we can be a blessing to our global neighbours and the rest of creation. We are called to live simply that all may simply live...

2 APRIL

How sustainable is your furniture at home? Investigate more climate-friendly options – from Freecycle or eBay – or try re-cycled items. Remember to look for FSC approved wood and timber products. Try to avoid filling your house with too much 'stuff'...

3 APRIL

Choose products with little or no packaging and ask a supermarket or shop near you to reduce packaging on food and offer more locally-produced products. Refuse plastic bags and use your own long-life bags when shopping.

4 APRIL

Walk in your local area. Sense the sounds and smells around you. This is God's world, but it is groaning and suffering from pollution. Pick up any litter and recycle it if you can.

5 APRIL

Do not buy bottled water. It is energy and transport intensive and plastic bottles pollute. Water may also have been sourced in a country with a shortage of supply. It is also better to avoid buying water-rich foods such as lettuce from water-poor regions.

7 APRIL

Meat-free Monday. Don't eat meat (or dairy if you're a vegetarian) today. You could even be more adventurous and commit to not eat meat every Monday, or for a whole month. Visit www.tearfund.org/carbonfast to see Tearfund's paper on this issue and some thoughts about different kinds of meat.

8 APRIL

Make do and mend. Re-fashion and mend old clothes and fabrics so they last longer. Create your own clothes. Rediscover knitting and darning rather than always buying new. Share wools, cottons, textiles and other materials at church or with neighbours.

WEEK 6: LIVING CONTENTEDLY

'I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation...' (Philippians 4:12)

In this week, think about how the actions and steps you've taken this Lent can be part of your life in Christ, and how you can live more contentedly. Let us learn to say 'enough is enough'!

9 APRIL

Take care with water at home. Shower rather than take a bath. Do not leave taps running excessively, especially when brushing your teeth. If possible collect rainwater for garden use. Flush the toilets with less water by using a hippo bag or water-filled bottle in your toilet cistern.

10 APRIL

Investigate and invest in some renewable energy. The main options will be solar thermal (hot water) or PV (electricity) schemes, biomass (wood fuels), air or ground-source heating or maybe even a domestic wind turbine. Don't forget to make the most of solar passive heat through south-facing windows and good insulation throughout your property first. See details about plug-in portable PV panels in Additional Actions.

11 APRIL

Pray for grace to live differently from the culture around us and to know that a life filled up with excessive material wealth can be empty. Be generous and enact the principle of 'give away' – pass on goods to others who need them more than you and relieve yourself of being too possessed by your own possessions!

12 APRIL

Try strictly avoiding wheat or go dairy-free for a few days. How does this affect you? What you don't eat will hopefully be available to others and reduce your energy footprint.

14 APRIL

Walk barefoot for a short while somewhere – at home, in the garden, maybe even in public. You will then be in closer contact with God's earth. What do you notice? How do you feel? If you do this regularly you might become more sensitive to life's natural rhythms.

15 APRIL

Avoid using the tumble dryer. Use extra spin on your washing machine to make clothes dry faster. Or hanging washing outside can be healthier, cheaper and leave a fresher feel!

16 APRIL

Buy re-usable products such as refillable water bottles or re-usable sandwich wraps and coffee mugs to cut down your waste and save money. Avoid disposable products as much as possible – at home and in church.

17 APRIL

Dreaming of summer? Book a no-fly holiday or short break and make the most of the UK countryside! 'Staycations' can give us a chance to get to know our own localities better, as well as reducing our travelling. There are also benefits to supporting local jobs and livelihoods. Visiting nearby wildlife conservation areas and projects may teach us things about our local environment too!

As you move towards **Good Friday on 18 April**, it would be a good time to be quiet and experience a no power day – that means no electricity, gas, hot water! If you're not quite ready for that, try an 'embrace the silence day' – no TV, no radio, no phone..... and remember to replace that light bulb you removed with an energy-saving one (if you haven't already)!

Now you've reached the end, spend some time reflecting on and praying about your Carbon Fast experience, giving thanks for all those who have taken part with you. Don't forget to share your experiences with others in your church or congregation.

If you have been following different Carbon Fast actions in Lent do tell us about them...

SUNDAYS IN LENT

Here are suggestions of activities for congregations to follow on the five Sundays during Lent 2014: 9,16,23,30 March and 6 April. One, some or all may be used for your worshipping community as appropriate.

On each Sunday at least please pray in your church for a global response to climate change, giving thanks for individuals, organisations and churches in the UK and across the world that are helping by reducing their emissions through a Carbon Fast. Then look to your own prayerful engagement in both adapting to and mitigating the effects of global warming everywhere. Use the SW Carbon Fast prayer below.

Walk to Church

Make a concerted attempt to encourage lift sharing, walking, cycling, using public transport (where available) to your main church service(s). Transport is a key contributor to greenhouse gas emissions – especially air travel and large gas-guzzling cars. In some religious traditions driving is actually considered as work and on the Sabbath which should be work-free, this may contravene the essence of a day of rest. Walking itself is also a central part of pilgrimage and can be a deeply spiritual experience.

Celebrate Overseas Links

Dioceses, parishes and Mission Communities have overseas links and partnerships and in many parts of the world it is in these countries that the effects of climate change are already so destructive. Droughts in Africa, excessive heat in South America, flooding in Asia, rising sea levels in island nations, melting ice in mountains and at the poles, and so on. Focus your worship on stories from any links you have. How can we be more responsive here to reduce the impact of climate chaos elsewhere?

Mothering Sunday (30th March)

This is the time when we recognise the importance of mothers and mothering for us all. Take the opportunity to recall the 'Mother Earth' tradition and how God's planet holds and sustains us in our human growing. Use appropriate prayers, readings, songs, hymns. Lists of suggestions are available. Remember that God creates the Earth as a hospitable world that nurtures all life – it is central to the divine plan and the home we are given to live in care-fully.

Climate Services

Organise a special liturgy on Climate – orders of service are available. This could be Eucharistic (Communion) or adapted for another liturgical or praise event. *“We believe in God, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things”...* Our Christian tradition emphasises our relationship with God as Creator (e.g. in the Creeds) but our worship can sometimes forget this. Worshipping out of doors or using elements such as stone, plants, fire, soil, water, light, food as symbols can remind us of the earthiness of God.

‘Story Telling’

Invite a speaker or organise a presentation on climate change, possibly as part of the Ministry of the Word. Someone from a local Transition Town Group, Nature Conservation organisation, or Climate Action Project may be willing to join you at church. Or you may have congregation members already involved in a piece of work. Alternatively Tearfund and other agencies have a selection of DVD/video materials. Show a film or use an informative meditation at a Sunday service. e.g. www.tearfund.org/driedup

Warm Sweater Sunday!

Turn your church heating down and wear warmer clothing instead. Light candles, use hot water bottles or hot cushions, keep your scarf and gloves on. Be more physically active during services. Lent encourages us to make sacrifices and not be tempted by excessive comfort. Why not make this into a fun day at church to raise awareness about the issues? More information and ideas at www.tearfund.org/carbonfast

SOUTH WEST CARBON FAST PRAYER

Most loving Creator God who has given us
a world full of delights and wonders;
As we prepare with the grace of self-sacrifice
and self discipline for the great festival of Easter
remind us how to treasure these gifts and to use them with care;
So that all may equally share in the earth's bounty
and all creation may be restored to your image
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

<http://ecochurchsouthwest.org.uk/>