

Oregon Interfaith Power and Light

Powering Down A Less is More Proposal



Suggestions for caring for Creation during the season
of Lent

Adapted from

A program of Tennessee Interfaith Power and Light

About this program

We ask those celebrating Lent to abstain as much as possible from fossil fuel use. This can be achieved by employing simple energy efficiency measures. Also, if you are able to purchase green power from your local utility, you can rest assured that your power is coming from clean renewable sources instead of fossil fuels. This program is inspired by and borrowed in part from the Catholic Committee of Appalachia.

Goal: To expand our definition of what it means to love our neighbors by protecting their health from coal plant emissions. To love and protect the Creation that God made and called good. In addition, we suggest that reducing our reliance on so-called “time saving devices” (such as computers, palm pilots, dryers, cars etc), may actually encourage our connection to nature, to each other, and to God by pulling us out of the hustle and bustle of daily life.

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Lent Lesson Plan for Youth

Introduction

For young children, the following is good to remember:
What's important is that children have an opportunity to bond with the natural world, to learn to love it and feel comfortable in it, before being asked to heal its wounds. John Burroughs cautioned that "Knowledge without love will not stick. But if love comes first, knowledge is sure to follow." Our problem is that we are trying to invoke knowledge, and responsibility, before we have allowed a loving relationship to flourish..." from "Ecophobia", by David Sobel, EarthEthics, Vol.6, No.2

This material can be adapted for any age.

Goal of the Session: To help students relate to Earth as home, as a listener, as caretaker.
Lent is a time when we try to get in right relationship with God, with our neighbor, and with Creation. So in this lesson we will try to deepen our relationship with Earth.

1) Opening Prayer:

Choose from the following Psalms: Psalm 65,104,136,145,147 and 148 Also: 19:1, 33:5, 66:1, 95:3-5

OR: Lead the children in the following prayer:

Close your eyes and pray silently about your relationship to God and to God's Creation, to the universe and to all of life which shares our home planet. Pray about how you would like the world to be and how you can start living so that the world will be the way you want it to be.

2) Activity: *Where are we from?*

Ask the children to write down their address. Then go around the room and ask each child to read his/her address. Ask them to make the address more complete by adding the following:

- What Country?
- What Continent?
- What Planet: Earth....this is where we are from, this is our home.

What do you love best about your home, Earth?

Spend some time getting their answers. If the discussion does not start on its own, or if the children are reluctant to speak up, you could encourage them by talking about what you like best, or making suggestions such as:

- Playing outside
- Traveling to different cities, states, or countries
- Meeting new people
- Friends and family
- Even video games and TV are a part of our life here on Earth, though you may want to encourage them to think of activities that put them in touch with nature. Or you can illustrate the connection between these types of activities and nature. For example, without nature, we wouldn't have electricity to run video games, nor materials to build them.

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3) Activity: *Listening*

Ask the children to go outside (if it is not possible to go outside, ask them to use their imaginations or hold a globe) and listen to what Earth may be telling them. When they have really listened, ask them: *What did you learn from Earth? What did Earth tell you?*

If the discussion does not start on its own, or if the children are reluctant to speak up, you could encourage them by asking questions such as:

- Did you see any signs that it is going to rain?
- What is the temperature like outside?
- Did you see what season it is? How can you tell?
- Did you see any animals outside? Do they have names?
- Did you see any flowers? How did you feel when you saw them? Do you know what they are for?
- Can you tell what time it is by looking at the sun?
- What color was the sky? Was the sky the same color all over?

(If time permits, ask them to write a poem on what they heard or draw a picture of what Earth was telling them.)

4) Deepening/Summary: *Making connections.*

(This part depends upon the age of the student)

For very young children, it may be enough to say that because our world is so wonderful, that we need to take care of Earth and make sure that we use resources in a just and careful way so that others in the world and future generations will also love and share in Earth's bounty. That God loves us through Earth and that we love God by loving and caring for Earth. If the children have not brought up the "pains and sufferings" of Earth, the teacher can tell the children that the energy we use for electricity and for fuel, is causing the whole Earth to change... The Earth cannot take care of us if we do not take care of Earth.

For older children, you can bring up energy use and Global Warming in a more detailed way. They have probably learned of this in school and will be able to share. The important thing is to challenge them to do something about it.

What we know about Global Warming.

We are coming to recognize many of the ways our industrial/consumer society is harming the earth and its people. One of the most challenging is global warming: a rise in the earth's temperature because gases that trap heat are being added to the atmosphere by human activity. Global Warming has been hard to detect with certainty. Its effects are delayed. It is irreversible on a human time scale. Everything on earth will be affected in ways that cannot be known until they happen. The only way to slow global warming is to stop adding more heat-trapping gases to the atmosphere. This won't happen unless we all resolve to act together, in our personal lives, in our local communities and in the global community.

5) Action: *How do we show our love?*

What can you do to show your love for Earth especially during this time of Lent? Name/write down one thing that you will do during the time of Lent for Earth.

Get ideas from Students: Suggestions can be simple as:

- ❖ Take special care to turn off the lights when you are not in a room.

- ❖ One day a week (maybe Friday in Lent) turn off all TV's and computers for the evening and invite your parents out for a walk.
- ❖ Get a plant at the beginning of Lent and care for it.
- ❖ Look into planting a tree.
- ❖ Consider walking to a near-by place instead of being driven or driving.

Print out copies of the Powering Down brochure and give to students to take home to their parents.

6) Closing Prayer:

O God, you have created a world so beautiful—a world with plants and flowers of all colors; a world of rocks and mountains; a world of wonderful animals and bugs; a world of stars, sun and moon. You also created the human family to care for your Creation. Help us to love you and to love you through caring for your Creation, our home.

7) Follow the activity with a song if time permits.

Touch the Earth

Sr. Kathy Sherman, CSJ www.ministryofthearts.org
 The music can be obtained from the above website.

Touch the Earth

Touch the Earth with gentleness,
 Touch the Earth with love,
 Touch her with a future
 By the way we live today.
 God has the power
 To create the world anew;
 If we can touch the Earth,
 Together you and me.
 The time is here, the time is now,
 We can change things
 Give the Earth your dreams for harmony,
 She is waiting...waiting for love...
 Waiting for you...waiting for me. CHORUS
 Show the Earth you care about her future
 Melt the walls of hate and fear
 That keep us apart,
 Believe we can live
 Together as friends of the Earth. CHORUS
 Be the reason, be the hope
 For others to believe
 That the Earth is meant
 For beauty, goodness and peace
 And that our God of love,
 Is God of the Earth's one family. CHORUS.

The Blue Green Hills of Earth

By Paul Winter

For the Earth forever turning;
 For the skies, for every sea;
 To the Lord we sing returning.
 Home to our blue green hills of Earth.

For the mountains, hills and pastures
 In their silent majesty;
 For all life, for all of Nature
 Sing we our joyful praise to Thee.
 For the sun, for rain and thunder;

For the land that makes us free;
 For the stars, for all the heavens,
 Sing we our joyful praise to Thee.

For the Earth forever turning;
 For the skies, for every sea;
 To the Lord we sing returning
 Home to our blue-green hills of Earth.

Other more common songs:

Morning Has Broken
 All Creatures of the Earth and Sky
 How Great Thou Art

Sample Sermons and Sermon Seeds

These could be used in connection to promoting the Powering Down Lent Program if the congregation is involved with it.

Sermon 1

Lent's Call to us

Lent calls us, as individuals, to interior conversion and acts of repentance in preparation for Easter. During the weeks of Lent, we are more open to recognition of our wrong-doing, and to repentance and confession. We are more open to fasting and sacrifice in order to make ourselves ready to celebrate Easter.

Lent also summons the Church community to a corporate examination of conscience and a renewal of fundamental Christian commitment to justice, reconciliation and compassion.

Call to Justice as Right Relationships

One fundamental Christian commitment is to justice, to Biblical Justice, which is defined as "...right relationships with God, our neighbor, and the whole of Creation. These right relationships are embodied in Christ and in God's covenants with Israel, and securing these right relationships is an essential element of the mission of those who seek the kingdom of God. Sin is the sundering of those relationships, the separation of us from one another, our God, and Creation. Whatever destroys these relationships is to be avoided. We seek only to deepen those relationships individually and collectively." Quoting Rev. Raymond B. Kemp *Homily Help: Preaching God's Environment*. Therefore, as the people of God, Lent is a special time to look at our relationships, and make sure that we are in "right relationship" with God, our neighbor, and the whole of Creation. If we are not in "right" relationships, then we need to "right" those relationships.

Are we in Right Relationship to Earth?

Today, let us look at our relationship to Creation and see if we as individuals and as the human community are in right relationship. To be more specific let us look at one aspect of this relationship, Global Warming.

Global warming is contributing to Global Climate Change and is due in large part to human activity. If we have been listening to any news lately, Global Warming will not be unfamiliar to us. It is not just a scientific concern, but it must also be a concern of us as people of faith. First of all, climate change, global warming will affect all living things; it will affect all of Creation. As Psalm 24 tells us, "the Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it." The primary revelation of God to his people is through God's Creation. We human beings are called to care for Earth, to love and nurture Earth as a sacred trust to be passed on to future generations of both humans and future generations of all living species.

Global Warming will cause at the same time more droughts and more floods, along with soil erosion and a rise in sea levels. The entire planet as we know it will undergo drastic changes. We do not have to look too far, or think too hard, to know that we are not taking good care of God's Creation; that we are not in right relationship.

.....
: **Our “Wrong” Relationship with Earth affects how we love our neighbor.**

: We as people of faith have long believed that we are “our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers.” We
: are responsible for each other’s well being. Global warming will affect the health and safety of
: everyone. With climate change, heat waves will happen more often. As temperatures rise,
: diseases that thrive in warmer climates – malaria, encephalitis, cholera, dengue and yellow
: fevers – are apt to spread with expanding range of mosquitoes and other disease-carrying
: organisms.

: The changes in the weather will threaten our supplies of food and water. Those living on islands
: and low-lying coasts could lose their homes. They will lose more than their houses. The very
: places they are from will be submerged and disappear. They will have to say that they are from
: a place that no longer exists.

: As people of faith, we are called to justice and fairness. The rich of the world—the industrialized
: nations—are primarily responsible for the increase of greenhouse gases. But it will be the poor
: in the developing world, and in the US and other industrialized nations, who will be the first
: affected by heat waves, storms, floods, and disease. Those who benefit the least from profits
: and products of industrialized society will be harmed the most.

: **How can we right our relationship with Earth?**

: Since human activity is a major cause of Global Warming, we are the ones who have to change,
: to be converted. If we continue along this current path, then we are definitely not in “right
: relation” with Earth. So what are we going to do about “righting that relationship?” One way to
: begin to try and slow down or lessen Global Warming is to look at our life styles. Trying to
: power down and use less.

: It is so easy to blame others, government, big business for all the carbon emissions that cause
: climate change. Yes, big business does its share of contributing to Global Warming. But our
: materialism, our addiction to fossil fuels, and our energy consumption is also damaging. We
: need to find a new way to live, a life style that is enhancing rather than damaging to Earth...that
: is in right relationship to Creation. And although change is difficult, a change to a simpler life
: style is good news both for us and for the rest of Creation. And there are no universal rules for
: a more simple style of life. Each community and individual will need to be creative, use their
: own imaginations according to their particular situation. Choosing a simpler life-style can be
: meaningful and significant. It can indeed be good news

: A life-style that would reduce our energy use is an act of love for all Creation, now and into the
: future. As a personal act of faith a simple life-style would be an expression of a personal
: commitment to a more equitable distribution of the world’s resources and our option for the poor.
: A life-style that was less dependent on material things, could celebrate the riches found in
: creativity, spirituality and community with others.

: In our efforts to simplify life, we would become aware of how our wants and needs are artificially
: created and be free from that manipulation. We could direct our attention to see how
: everyone’s genuine needs could be met. A simple life-style could bring us closer to the source
: of where our food, our energy, our material needs come from, and thus help us to know the
: Source of all life. A simple life-style can be an act of solidarity with the majority of humankind,
: which has no choice about life-style. A simple life-style is a way to follow more closely in the
: footsteps of Jesus and live in right relationship to Creation, to each other and to God. (refer to
: 10 Reasons for Choosing a Simpler Life-Style by Jorgen Lissner, U.N. Development
: Programme)

Faithfulness has always involved demands, and opportunities to do the right thing. The reality of global warming now provides both demands and opportunities. Will we be faithful? Can we return to a right relationship with Earth? Will we be able to celebrate Easter this year in a more resurrected way? We pray...

Some ideas were taken from "Global Climate Change: A Religious Issue" by Rev. Dr. Robert Edgar, former General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA.

Sermon 2

A Time for Reflection

Lent is a very precious time ... It is the sole time in the church calendar that specifically sets aside time for remembering – and even questioning -- what we believe.

This is not something most of us would do during the rest of the year. In fact, many people frequently over-commit their time, sometimes in order to avoid taking on something that is spiritually troubling.

There are of course lots of times for reflection: whenever any of us walks alone in the woods, sits quietly with a loved one, or even meditates over the passage of a stirring piece of prose or poetry. But nothing can compare with the faith questions we are confronted by in the story of Jesus' painful struggle to come to grips with what it is that he has been led to do by his commitment to God: establish God's realm of love, compassion and joy on this so often pain-filled planet.

How does God love the world?

We know from the repeated declaration in the Christian scriptures that God loves the earth; finds it good; full of good things; worth sacrificing for. And today, one of the things threatening the earth is the use of fossil fuels to provide energy.

US Citizens are becoming aware that we have a terrible problem with energy. The President talked about an "addiction to oil" but it is not just oil it is energy and its extravagant use by virtually everyone of us.

How can we more fully love the Creation?

Do we really believe that God so loved the earth? We don't act like it sometimes. If we really loved the earth we would do as God asked us -- till it and keep it. In this country we're pretty good at tillin', keepin' is another issue.

I am not suggesting that we go back to log cabins. We don't need to. But we do need to be conscious and prayerful about how we use energy, where it comes from and how it will affect God's good earth and all of the creatures the Creator pronounced "good."

I suggest that we need to remember what Alice Walker wrote in her novel *The Color Purple*. One of the characters was sitting with a friend in a field of purple flowers --- and she said " when I looked up at that old tree, I knew if I cut it, my arm would bleed." This character realized how interconnected the world was, and knew that if she injured the tree, she would hurt herself also.

Not everyone will reach that deep a level of connection with our Creator's planet. But I do think that at least during this reflective time of the year we can ask ourselves if we really believe that God loves the world If you answer yes, then think about our connection to each other and to the rest of God's very good Creation. Think about where that power is coming from when you turn on the computer or flip the light switch.

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: Mining and burning coal has negative side effects on human health, and Creation. Many of the :
: things we do, like turning on the car or the lights in our home, have serious impacts far beyond :
: the end of our fingers. And many of those impacts are the exact opposite of “tilling and keeping” :
: the world that “God so loved.” :
:

: With God’s help we can do better. We can show our love of God’s creation by taking simple :
: measures to protect it, such as using less electricity and purchasing green power and --- now :
: why don’t you sit down with the family after church and finish this list? :
:

: Just think on it Lent points us to this way, for God did, and continues, to love the world.... :
:

Sermon 3

Ash Wednesday, To Fast or Not to Fast

: Jesus taught us, there is a time to fast and a time not to fast. Our Scriptures tell the story of :
: Jesus’ confrontation with some religious leaders who took offense that his disciples were not :
: fasting like the disciples of John and those of the Pharisees (Luke 5:29). :
:

: The real reason behind this confrontation had little to do with fasting, though. The confrontation :
: occurred because some people objected to Jesus’ eating with the despised tax collectors and :
: other outcasts. By eating with the outcasts, Jesus acknowledged them as people worthy of :
: fellowship. This implied that these people were worthy of more than the shabby treatment they :
: received at the hands of society’s “respectable” people. In this case, Jesus’ eating and drinking :
: with the socially undesirable was a public criticism leveled against the moral numbness of his :
: society. Fasting, in that case, would have denied Jesus’ expression of solidarity with the :
: outcasts. The time for fasting, said Jesus, is after the bridegroom is taken away, and then, as :
: Jesus reminded his listeners in the gospel reading for Ash Wednesday, such reflecting is best :
: done in secret (Matthew 6:6). :
:

: In the past year, the US has begun to focus attention on an issue that many around the world :
: have been working to resolve for some time – global warming. The increasing amount of heat :
: trapped in our atmosphere threatens to make the world much less hospitable for our children :
: and grand children. This is a problem that we – all of us – whatever car we drive or how much :
: money we have --- have been complicit in creating. :
:

: And during this Lenten we may want to focus at least a part of our reflections on how we might :
: change the things we are doing that make the problem of global warming worse. Decreasing our :
: electricity, gasoline, and other fossil fuel use by at least 20% can be a very enlightening :
: experience. It may reveal wasteful habits that are costing both money and clean, healthy air. At :
: home we can look at our habits. When we make a change we can do this privately. In the :
: Lenten tradition, we need not share the wasteful habits we’ve identified with anyone. :
:

: Done in the right spirit and at the right time, fasting is to spiritual growth what pruning is to the :
: nurture of a fruit tree. This year we can prune habits and unconscious practices that waste :
: energy to make way for intended growth in our connections with each other and our glorious :
: earthly home. In a society that encourages us to consume without restraint, fasting can be a :
: way to get a new perspective on our lives and care for God’s creation and our families’ futures :
: at the same time. :
:

: PRAYER: O God of all Creation, give us wisdom to know when and what to feast on and when :
: and what to make the focus of our fast, and let both be for the sake of others and your glorious :
: creation, so that our spirits may truly grow and bear fruit. :
:

Sermon Seeds

1) God has given humankind a special responsibility to care for Creation. Genesis 2:15 says God took the human and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and to keep it. A form of the Hebrew verb "shamar," meaning "to keep," is also used in the Aaronic blessing with which we sometimes conclude our worship services: "May the Lord bless you and keep you" (Numbers 6:24). Let us nurture, sustain and care for Creation the way God nurtures, sustains and cares for us

2) Lent was originally a season of fasting and penance for new converts preparing for baptism on Easter Eve. The 40 weekdays between Ash Wednesday and Easter correspond to Jesus' 40-day fast in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry. Actually, Lent is a period of 46 days because Sundays, days when fasts could be broken, were not included in the 40 days. Today lots of people think it is an imposition to stop for a few minutes every day to think about our world, our place in it, and our relationship to Jesus and God.

For example, if we know (and we do) that burning fossil fuels pollutes the air and contributes to global warming, ---- then why don't people who claim to believe in the resurrection, who proclaim proudly that God so loved the world -- not just the humans, and not even just the animals or plants, but the whole creation -- why don't these people take a minute during Lent to reflect on what the "realm of God" would look like here on earth.

Hmmmmmm One thing Jesus was clear about was not wasting, destroying, or misusing the gifts that the Creator has given us.

4) Christians are called to witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In our words and actions we are called to reflect the love of the one whose victory over sin and death was a victory for the whole of creation. "The church is not an elite body, separated from a doomed world," writes New Testament scholar, J. Christian Beker, "but a community placed in the midst of the cosmic community of creation. The church's task is not merely to win souls but to bear the burdens of creation, to which it not only belongs but also to which it must also bear witness. . . . The vocation of the church is not self-preservation for eternal life, but service to the created world in the sure hope of the world's transformation at the time of God's final triumph." (Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought, Augsburg Fortress, 1980.)

Suggestions for Reducing Fossil Fuel Use

Not all these suggestions need to be employed for you to reduce your impact on Creation. You may pick and choose any combination of these suggestions or think of your own ideas and write them in the space provided below. Try to choose some out of each category.

One Time or Periodic Actions

- Purchasing green power from your utility company. This will allow you to rest easy knowing your electrical needs are not harming the Creation.
- Turn the thermostat down and put on a sweater. Layers of clothing can be put on or taken off to keep comfy. This way we use the body's natural heating and cooling system.
- Replace your incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs. Go www.shoppi.org
- Ensure your furnace filter is clean.

- Seal up air leaks in your home including caulking around windows and doors and installing weather stripping.
- Plant native, deciduous trees on the west and south side of your home to provide shade in the summer, but allow the sun to pass through in the winter. In addition, native plants require less maintenance and provide homes and food for local wildlife.
- If you have plans to replace any appliances, consider purchasing Energy Star appliances.
- Install insulating foam pads under your outlets and light switches.
- Check the insulation in your attic.
- Turn down the temperature on your water heater to 120 degrees.

Weekly Actions

Some of these actions would prove too burdensome to be performed daily in our society. Therefore, we suggest you choose one day during each week to perform these actions. For example, you might choose to keep your computer off only one Monday during Lent, but to use alternative lighting every Wednesday.

- Decide to keep your computer turned off for one day. At work, catch up on filing, organizing, or cleaning your office.
- Use alternative lighting for an evening, such as candles or an oil lamp.
- Pick a day to hang your clothes outside to dry, or hang them up in the shower.
- Turn off your TV for a day or evening. Instead read a book or magazine, take a walk, or play a board game with friends or family.
- Eat a cold meal or share a single pot meal with neighbors.
- Use a rake instead of a leaf blower.
- Instead of watching the news on television, walk to the library and read the paper. If you have children, bring them along and let them look at books in the children's section.
- Read the Story of Noah in Genesis:6-9:17. Reflect on 6:19-22 and 9:8-17. God does not want the Earth harmed.
- Plan recreation that gives physical exercise and/or builds relationships but uses little fuel or other nonrenewable resources.

Daily Actions

- Turn off and unplug appliances when they are not in use, or attach your appliances to a power strip that can be turned off.
- Turn off your computer when not in use.
- Turn off lights when not in use.
- Consider using a lower wattage light bulb where possible.
- If you are able, walk or ride a bike instead of driving. Or take public transportation. If this is especially difficult from your location, you might make this a weekly choice.
- When you turn on a light switch or use an appliance, think about where that electricity is coming from.

Shop IPL

Energy efficient appliances accomplish the same tasks and produce the same quality results as their more wasteful counterparts, but use only a fraction of the energy. Sometimes there is a higher upfront cost for energy efficient appliances, but over the lifetime of the product, this extra cost will be recouped in energy savings. For example, a compact fluorescent light bulb may cost \$3 to \$4. But will save you about \$35 on your utility bills over its lifetime. In addition, these products help protect our environment and fulfill your commitment to Lent by cutting down on your demand for electricity.

Energy and Money Saving Products are available

<http://ShopIPL.org>

Suggested Resources

The following resources are available from Oregon Interfaith Power and Light. Please contact OIPL at 503-221-1054 if you are interested in using any of them.

DVDs

Kilowatt Ours, Follow filmmaker Jeff Barrie from the coal mines of West Virginia to the solar panel fields of Florida as he discovers solutions to America's energy related problems.

Renewal, A documentary about people of faith building a sustainable future.

Fighting Goliath, Follows the story of Texans fighting a high-stakes battle for clean air.

Preaching for the Planet, Interfaith Messages on Global Warming.

An Inconvenient Truth, Former Vice President Al Gore presents an eye-opening and compelling view of the future of our planet.

Media that Matters: Good Food, A collection of short films on food and sustainability.

Climate Change: Our Faith Response, Produced by the Catholic Committee of Appalachia.

God's Creation and Global Warming, from National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program. This video will help you and your community understand the connections between our actions and the impact on God's Creation

Study Guide

The Cry of Creation, A 3 session interfaith study guide on global warming. Prepared by Earth Ministry for the Interfaith Climate and Energy Campaign.

Lent Program Feedback Form

This program was designed with you in mind. So please tell us how we can make it better for you by filling out the form below and mailing it to Alison Warren, 0245 Bancroft St. Suite B Portland, OR, 97239 or send us an email, awarren@emoregon.org.

Did you take any actions on the suggestion list that was provided? If so, which ones?

Did you take any other actions? Please list below.

How useful was this program to you? Did you find it educational, practical, or inspirational?

What did you like about the program?

How could we improve the program?

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Congregation Name _____