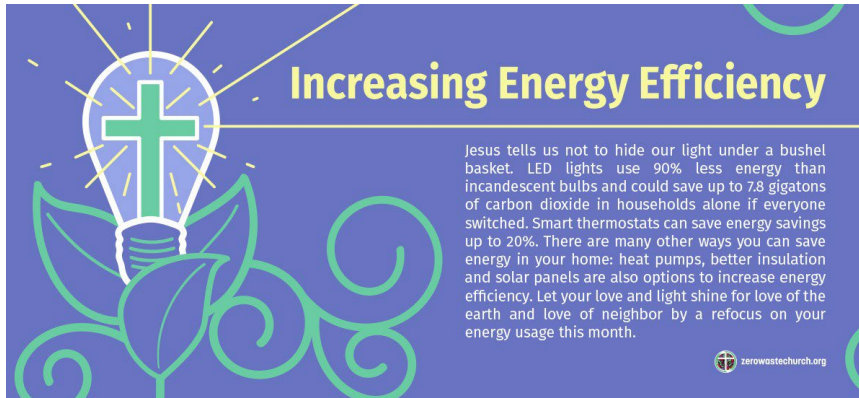


JANUARY

Increasing Energy Efficiency



"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

(John 9:5)

January's ACTION is INCREASING ENERGY EFFICIENCY. Commit to one Action each week this month.

Let's ACT together this year to restore the fullness of God's earth.

Jesus tells us not to hide our light under a bushel basket. LED lights use 90% less energy than incandescent bulbs and could save up to 7.8 gigatons of carbon dioxide in households alone if everyone switched. Smart thermostats can save energy savings up to 20%. There are many other ways you can save energy in your home: heat pumps, better insulation, and solar panels are also options to increase energy efficiency. Let your love and light shine for love of the earth and love of neighbor by a refocus on your energy usage this month.

North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light's (NCIPL) comprehensive energy program for congregations – emPOWERed – is designed to help faith communities establish energy use baselines and then provide worship facility workshops to suggest possible ways congregations can save money and energy. (see below for a link to their website). For Interfaith Power & Light affiliates in your state refer to www.interfaithpowerandlight.org.

Week 1:

Request a free Energy Savings Analysis from your electric utility.
Turn down your thermostat—aim for 68 daytime, 60 at night.

Week 2:

Buy and install a programmable thermostat and low-flow shower head.
Weatherize your home: insulate hot water heater, increase insulation in attic, etc.

Week 3:

Switch from incandescent to LED lights; turn off lights when not in use.
Wash clothes in cold water; run dishwasher with full load and use air dry.

Week 4:

Upgrade to Energy Star appliances. Contact your Representatives and Senators expressing your support for developing renewable energy.



FEBRUARY

Moving to a Plant-Rich Diet



Moving to a more plant-rich diet

How we eat is a reflection of our moral and religious sensibilities. Moving toward a plant rich diet would not only be good for the planet, it will be good as well for our (human) health. With all the benefits plants offer us, why not give it a try?



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"Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it. And it was so."

(Genesis 1:11)

February's ACTION is MOVING TO A PLANT-RICH DIET. Commit to one Action each week this month.

Let's ACT together this year to restore the fullness of God's earth.

How we eat is a reflection of our moral and religious sensibilities. Cows produce the harmful greenhouse gas methane, and the food we feed them could be feeding hungry humans. Using sustainable agriculture methods to grow our fruits and vegetables can actually help increase the carbon and nutrients in the soil, and pull excess carbon out of the atmosphere. Moving toward a plant rich diet would not only be good for the planet, it will be good as well for our (human) health. People who eat a plant-rich/low-meat diet reduce their risks of certain cancers, heart disease and stroke, and have lower morbidity and healthcare costs. With all the benefits plants offer us why not give it a try?

Week 1:

Try a vegetable you haven't tried before.
Try a new plant-based recipe.

Week 2:

Visit a vegan restaurant for inspiration.
Replace meat with seasoned beans, legumes or lentils in a recipe 1 day a week.

Week 3:

Eat meat only once a week, then once a month.
Switch from cow's milk to a plant-based alternative like coconut, soy, or almond milk.

Week 4:

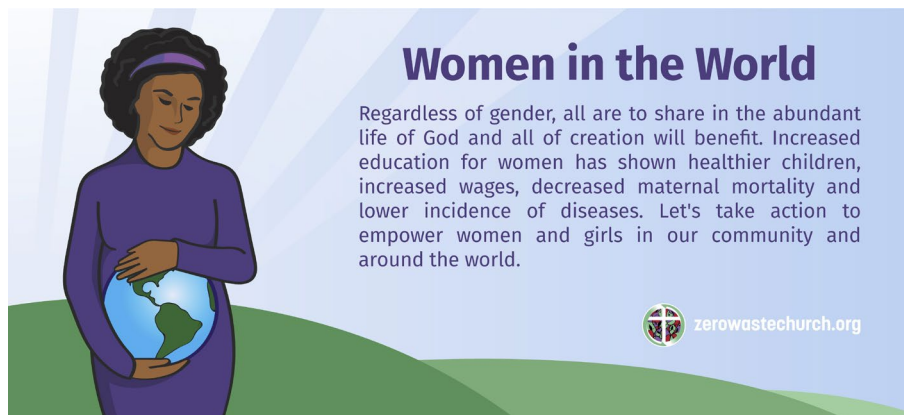
Join a local CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) to receive fresh, seasonal vegetables.
Transition from eating meat smoothly from 4 legs, to 2 legs to 0 legs!

Bonus action: talk to your doctor or nutritionist about a plant-rich diet.



MARCH

Women in the World



"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

(Galatians 3:28)

March's ACTION is WOMEN IN THE WORLD. Commit to one Action each week this month.

Let's ACT together this year to restore the fullness of God's earth.

In the Christian community all human beings are equal and precious to God. Regardless of gender, all are to share in the abundant life and all of Creation will benefit. Increased education for women has shown fewer and healthier children, increased wages, decreased maternal mortality and lower incidence of diseases. This is especially important in the poorest countries where more education for women leads to better family planning, agricultural practices, increased nourishment and better environment. So what can we do to empower women and girls in our community and around the world? Take a look at each weeks actions and find out!

Week 1:

Donate to a local school program.

Visit adoptaclassroom.org to help a local teacher with needed supplies and materials.

Week 2:

Volunteer at your local school or donate needed supplies and textbooks.

Donate personal care and household items to a local women's shelter.

Week 3:

Sponsor a young woman for a school year through the US-Uganda Orphans Education Fund (<http://www.usugandaorphans.org>), or a similar organization.

Week 4:

Become a mentor in the Boys and Girls Club.

Set up an after school program or study hall in your church community.

Bonus Action: Read *A Field of One's Own* by Bina Agarwal to learn more about the impact of women as an equal number of smallholder farmers as the number of men.



APRIL

Healthy Soil - Healthy Garden, Healthy Soul



"Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold. As he said this, he called out, Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

(Luke 8:8)

April's ACTION is HEALTHY SOIL – HEALTHY GARDEN, HEALTHY SOUL. Commit to one Action each week this month.

Let's ACT together this year to restore the fullness of God's earth.

Lester Brown, Earth Policy Institute, says, "the thin layer of topsoil that covers much of the Earth's surface is the foundation of civilization." Around the world, however, much of our soil is seriously degraded. If soil fertility is not restored, world hunger is likely to increase significantly. Regenerative agriculture, which increases organic matter, fertility, texture, water retention, and vital organisms in the soil on farms around the world, is showing promise for improving plant health, nutrition, and productivity. These approaches can be duplicated in backyard and community gardens enabling individuals and churches to help restore God's Earth. Healthy soil practices replenish our earth, and healthy soul practices involving soil can replenish our souls.

Gardens are frequently named as important places for people's spiritual practice of connecting with God as they dig around in the soil. The act of intentionality and presence needed to successfully grow plants, vegetables, flowers, all living things, can help bring our attention to God's grace and God's movement in this world. As we get our hands dirty to grow things, we can pay attention to the ways we can honor God by adopting practices that bring health back to our soil.

Week 1:

Learn to grow patio veggies in a pot or build a raised bed.
Compost your organic waste and use it in your garden.

Week 2:

Shop at a farmers' market and buy locally grown food in season.
Remove weeds by hand, not chemicals.

Week 3:

Join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture).
Use organic fertilizers.

Week 4:

Volunteer at a community garden or farmers' market.
Mulch your garden with shredded leaves and avoid tilling your garden.

Bonus Action: Start a community garden at your church or school.

MAY

Creation Friendly Yards



"But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being."

(Job 12:7-10)

May's ACTION is CREATION FRIENDLY YARDS. Commit to one Action each week this month.

Let's ACT together this year to restore the fullness of God's earth.

In Genesis we learn first that God created all the living creatures, and later God created humankind giving us dominion over all the creatures and instructing us to keep all of their kind alive. Today, scientists tell us we are doing a poor job. In fact, the earth is losing species at a rate 1000 times the normal extinction rate, and humankind is responsible. We can all be part of reversing that trend in our own backyards, and this month we will provide suggestions on how to do that.

Week 1:

Plant dill or butterfly weed, both excellent host plant for butterflies.
Replace grass with mulch and avoid using harmful chemicals in your yard.

Week 2:

Replace non-native plants with native plants. Clump them for a better habitat.
Plant an oak tree, a great habitat for birds, or a spicebush that produces berries migratory birds love.

Week 3:

Build a nest block for native Mason Bees, excellent early season pollinators.
Host a beekeeper at your home or church.

Week 4:

Build a brush pile in your yard to provide shelter for wildlife.
Build a bird house or install a bird bath in your yard.

Bonus Action: Plant a creation friendly garden at your church.



JUNE

Healthy Air



Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

(Matthew 25:40)

June's ACTION is HEALTHY AIR. Commit to one Action each week this month.

Let's ACT together this year to restore the fullness of God's earth.

Protecting our air is a moral issue. Risks from climate change caused by pollution of the air with carbon dioxide, are generally greater for disadvantaged people. On June 1, 2017, The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, said, "We know that caring for God's creation by engaging climate change is not only good for the environment, but also good for the health and welfare of our people." This month Zero Waste Church focuses on actions that will make the air we breathe healthier for us and the planet.

Week 1:

Drive less, carpool or use public transportation.
Use EPA Safer Choice Cleaning Products.
Plant a tree.

Week 2:

Wash clothes in cold water.
Set the air conditioner no lower than 78 degrees.
Avoid using gas-powered lawn and garden equipment.

Week 3:

Dry laundry outside.
Use rechargeable batteries.
Keep car, boat, and other engines properly tuned.

Week 4:

Support the Clean Air Act.
Inform your elected officials about your concerns about climate change.

Bonus actions: Promote a Fee on Carbon. When purchasing look for an Energy Star label.



JULY

Zero Waste in the Home



They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit, says the Lord.

(Isaiah 65:21)

July's ACTION is ZERO WASTE IN THE HOME. Commit to one Action each week this month.

Let's ACT together this year to restore the fullness of God's earth.

The word ecology is derived from the Greek word "oikos" meaning "house", or "environment", and is the study of the relationships between organisms and the environment. The science of ecology tells us that within the nonhuman natural world all discarded materials become resources for others to use. Thus, nothing is wasted. Everything is recycled or reused. There is Zero Waste in the nonhuman natural world.

In 2002, to emulate the sustainable cycles in the nonhuman natural world, the Zero Waste International Alliance (ZWIA) was established. The goal of Zero Waste is to design and manage products and processes "to systematically avoid and eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste and materials, conserve and recover all resources, and not burn or bury them." Implementing Zero Waste will eliminate all discharges to land, water, or air that are a threat to planetary, human, animal or plant health."

Week 1:

Get rid of unwanted junk mail. Register to receive less at <https://dmachoice.thedma.org/>, <https://www.optoutprescreen.com/> and <https://www.catalogchoice.org/>.

Refuse: things you don't really need like freebies at conferences, parties, or the dentist office. Refuse plastic and buy items in glass, metal, or cardboard.

Week 2:

Bring your own: coffee cup, water bottle, take out container, grocery and produce bags, reusable cutlery, and stainless steel straws to cut down on waste.

Go reusable: ditch paper towels for cloth rags, switch out paper plates and napkins for reusable ones, and handkerchiefs instead of tissues.

Week 3:

Buy in bulk: bring your own containers, tare them at the service desk and fill them up in the bulk section at the grocery store to avoid unnecessary packaging.

Buy used or secondhand items at thrift stores or consignment stores. Find local buy/sell/trade groups like the Facebook group Buy Nothing, Give and Take or <https://www.freecycle.org/>.

Week 4:

Compost: find a compost system that works in your home or sign up for a compost service.

Plan your meals to avoid unnecessary purchases at the store and food waste.

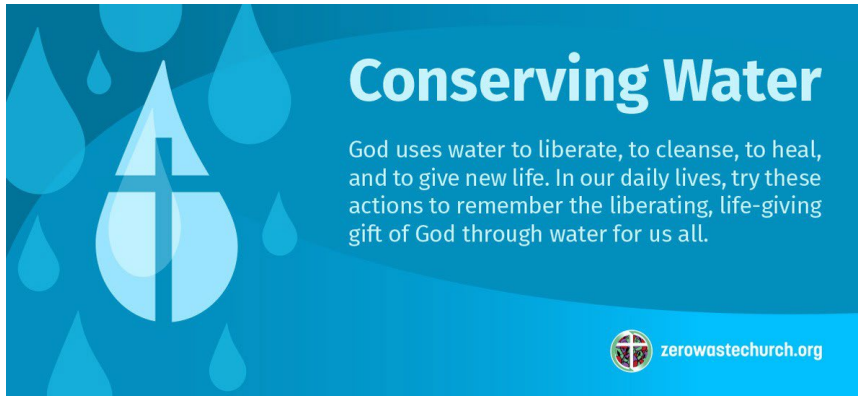
Move toward a plant-based diet. You can find most produce without packaging at grocery stores.

Bonus Action: Introduce your work or church to the zero waste lifestyle



AUGUST

Conserving Water



"You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst. By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches. From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work."

(Psalm 104: 10-13)

August's ACTION is WATER. Commit to one Action each week this month.

Let's ACT together this year to restore the fullness of God's earth.

Throughout the stories in scripture, God uses water to liberate, to cleanse, to heal, and to give new life. God's abundance of grace flows like that life-giving water to us all. In our daily lives, using water efficiently and carefully has a direct correlation to our energy use. For example, Paul Hawken estimates that a 95% adoption of low-flow taps and showerheads in homes by 2050 could reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 4.6 gigatons. Try these action items to remember the liberating, life-giving gift of God through water for us all.

Week 1:

Turn off the faucet while you're brushing teeth - a running tap can waste more than 1-1/2 gallons per minute. Use the leftover water to feed houseplants.
Use a full load in the dishwasher and washing machine.
Wash fruits and vegetables in a bowl rather than under a running tap.

Week 2:

Take short showers instead of baths. A four-minute shower uses 20 to 40 gallons of water.
Fix dripping toilets, pipes, and faucets. A dripping faucet can waste thousands of gallons of water in a year.
When washing dishes by hand, don't leave the water running for rinsing.
Use a watering can or a hose with a trigger nozzle instead of a sprinkler to water the yard.

Week 3:

Keep a reusable container of drinking water in the refrigerator.
Install water efficient low-flow shower heads.
Recycle grey water for garden use.
Position sprinklers so water lands on lawn or garden and not on paved areas.
Use a bucket and sponge when washing the car rather than a running hose.

Week 4

Landscape your yard with drought resistant native plants.
Mulch plants and trees in your yard.
Purchase water-efficient appliances, such as low-flush toilets and front-loading washers.
Insulate your water pipes with pre-slit pipe insulation.
Don't overwater your lawn; most lawns only need about 1 inch of water each week.



SEPTEMBER

Reconciliation



Reconciliation

God did not create man to “subdue” the planet, but instead to protect it, so that all creation will flourish. Now, ecological balances are disrupted by our actions and we are called by God to reconcile our trespasses.



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“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.”

(2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

September's ACTION is RECONCILIATION. Commit to one Action each week this month.

Let's ACT together this year to restore the fullness of God's earth.

All living things are members of God's creation, and all are “good.” Living things on Earth are interrelated and interdependent. Humans were not created to “subdue” the planet, but to protect and grow ecosystems. Just like other life, humans provide a “service.” When human actions lead to disruption of ecological balances, we are instructed by God to reconcile our trespasses. Upholding the ancient values that protect God's people and the whole of creation must become a corefunction of the church.

During the last 11 months on this website*, we have proposed personal actions that individuals and communities can take to address the ecological imbalances we have caused. In this 12th and final month of the 2018 edition of **Restoring God's Earth: A Year of Personal Action**, we focus primarily on actions that individuals and faith communities can undertake in their worship and institutional lives.

Much of our inspiration for this ministry comes from 1) our belief that Jesus did not come only for personal salvation but also to save all of creation, and 2) we are reconciled by God to serve as partners in protecting and restoring our planet home.

Week 1:

Acknowledge the urgency of the planetary crisis.
Commit to the use of clean, renewable sources of energy.
Start a community garden.

Week 2:

Lift up prayers in personal and public worship for environmental justice.
Commit to energy conservation.
Uproot the political, social, and economic causes of environmental destruction.
Plant native trees in your yard and at church.

Week 3:

Repent of any acts of greed, overconsumption, and waste.
Increase efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle.
Incorporate caring for the whole earth community into the mission of your church.

Week 4:

Start an environmental stewardship committee at your church.
Connect church life with the world outside.
From your utility request an energy audit for your home and church.

Bonus Action: Update worship resources to include creation care. Read and study the Green Bible.

*A Year of Personal Action was started in the month of October 2017 with the theme Compost. Thus, we ended the year in September 2018 with the theme, Reconciliation.



OCTOBER

Compost



"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it;"

(Psalm 24:1)

October's ACTION is COMPOST. Commit to one Action each week this month.

Let's ACT together this year to restore the fullness of God's earth.

Decaying food (process minus oxygen) in landfills produces methane – a powerful greenhouse gas, 84 times more damaging than carbon dioxide. Solution? Compost that food! Composting adds oxygen to the process and produces nutrient-rich soil. Compost added to the gardens retain water, produces healthier plants, and can even pull carbon dioxide out of the air (a process called carbon sequestration)! It's Earth's finest form of recycling.

Week 1:

Freeze your food scraps for composting.
Find/rent a kitchen compost container.

Week 2:

Build/buy a compost bin.
Feed the compost bin at Nativity.
Find a compost pickup service.

Week 3:

Add something new to your compost.
Start yard waste.
VermiCompost (the worms love it and so does the earth).

Week 4

Encourage a friend/neighbor to compost.
Write a testimonial about composting for Nativity's website and FB page.

Bonus Action: Spread the word about composting by introducing a neighbor, friend, or business to the idea!

NOVEMBER

Reducing Food Waste

FOOD WASTE FACTS



1/3 of all food produced ends up in the **TRASH** →



Nearly **95%** of discarded food ends up in landfills where it produces **methane**, a significant contributor to climate change.

In the United States alone, discarded food, when expressed in terms of energy, is the equivalent to almost **350 million barrels of oil** per year.*



* Source: "Wasted Food, Wasted Energy: The Disastrous Energy In Food Waste In the United States," published 2010 in the Environmental Science and Technology Journal

When they were satisfied, he told his disciples "gather up the fragments left over so that nothing may be lost."

(John 6:12)

November's ACTION is REDUCING FOOD WASTE. Commit to one Action each week this month.

Let's ACT together this year to restore the fullness of God's earth.

One third of the food raised and prepared on the planet does not get consumed, yet over 800 million people worldwide are hungry. The food we waste in landfills produces methane, a powerful greenhouse gas 84 times more potent than CO₂. Food waste plus growing and distributing it contributes to 4.4 gigatons of CO₂ per year. That's the equivalent of taking 942,184,154 cars off the road a year. People who need food aren't getting it, and what we waste is heating up the planet! Solution: stop wasting food. It's easy and something you can do every day to help heal God's Earth.

The Episcopal House of Bishops Pastoral Teaching urges every Episcopalian "to acknowledge the urgency of the planetary crisis in which we find ourselves, and to repent of any and all acts of greed, over consumption, and waste that have contributed to it."

Week 1:

Plan your meals; buy exactly what you need.
Eat leftovers; establish a "week-in-review" meal.

Week 2:

Leave skins on (potatoes, carrots & cukes—more nutrients for you).
Buy "ugly" food (food with personality—slightly blemished, crooked, etc.).

Week 3:

Celebrate Thanksgiving by being grateful for the food you need to nourish your body and not burdening God's good earth by over-consuming.
Use leftovers: can it/freeze it/pickle it/enjoy pie for breakfast!

Week 4:

Cut recipes in half if needed.
Split a dish in a restaurant.

Bonus Action: Support/volunteer for a food rescue operation in your area that keeps would-be discarded food out of landfills.



DECEMBER

Shrinking Consumerism for Christmas and Beyond



This Christmas, give a gift to God's creation!

December's Action:
Shrinking Consumerism for Christmas and Beyond...

Restoring God's Earth
A Year of Personal Action  zerowastechurch.org

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal."

(Matthew 6:19-20)

December's ACTION is SHRINKING CONSUMERISM FOR CHRISTMAS AND BEYOND. Commit to one Action each week this month.

Let's ACT together this year to restore the fullness of God's earth.

Americans throw away 25% more trash from Thanksgiving to Christmas than the rest of the year. Advent, the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas, is the time we prepare for the joy of God entering the world as a baby. It is a beautiful reminder to us that God loved the world enough to be part of the created world with us! It can also be a reminder of how we treat the earth that God loves. If every family reused just two feet of holiday ribbon, the 38,000 miles of ribbon saved could tie a bow around the entire planet. What if we tied a bow around our relationships and experiences to show thanks to God rather than to ribbon? If we each sent one card less, we'd save 50,000 cubic yards of paper. Nearly half the world's toys are in America, despite making up just over 3% of the global population of children. Let's show our love of God and our neighbor with less stuff and more love.

Week 1:

Give experiences instead of material things: tickets to the movies, theater, zoo or membership to a museum; reusable items like water bottles, homemade gifts; electronic reading like e-books and magazines. Call companies and ask to be removed from holiday mail.

Week 2:

Email your holiday cards instead of using paper; explain why in your email. Buy a living Christmas tree and plant it, or an organic Christmas tree that has a lower environmental impact.

Week 3:

Have Santa bring only one special gift. Wrap gifts in magazine paper or newspaper or use reusable bags.

Week 4:

Buy locally grown and produced food. Focus holiday gatherings on relationships rather than the food, and be thoughtful about food waste.

Bonus Action: Commit yourself to a moment of daily prayer seeking contentment through doing the work of God and not accumulating goods; of moving from a culture of consumerism to a culture of conversation and sharing.



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