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40 day carbon fast for Lent

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The Church of England several years ago organized a 40 Day Carbon Fast for Lent. The Fast lists an action that can be taken each day during Lent that will reduce one?s carbon footprint and impact on the local landfill. I?ve adapted the Fast for churches in the United States. It?s a good way to observe Lent with an eye toward making permanent changes in our lifestyles and living in order to benefit the planet and to pave the way for the celebration of Easter.

Day 1: (Ash Wednesday): Remove one light bulb from your residence or office and live without it for the next 40 days.

Day 2: Check your house for drafts with a ribbon or a feather held near doors and windows. If it flutters, buy a draft excluder and install it.

Day 3: Tread lightly, whether that?s by foot, by bike, on the gas as you drive. Find some way to reduce your carbon dioxide emissions when you travel today.

Day 4: Are you recycling everything that it?s possible to recycle? Look into it today; see if you can find additional materials that can be recycled.

Day 5: Can you talk about your Carbon Fast at church today? Can you blog about it or announce and describe it on your Facebook? Encourage others to join in.

Day 6: Turn your central heating thermostat down one degree.

Day 7: Say goodbye to standby. Check that all electrical equipment is switched off when not in use. The television alone will save a hefty 20 kilograms of carbon dioxide per year.

Day 8: Unplug your mobile phone charger. It uses electricity even when it?s not charging.

Day 9: Climate change isn?t a distant threat. It?s affecting poor communities now. Pray for those who help vulnerable communities adapt to the changing weather. Pray for the communities themselves.

Day 10: Give your dishwasher a day off or promote it to an energy efficient appliance. Look for the EPA?s Energy Star rating when buying a new appliance.

Day 11: Use local shops or farmers? markets instead of driving to distant supermarkets. They will thank you. Supermarkets won?t notice your absence.

Day 12: Find a way to tell a politician to take action on climate change today.

Day 13: Put the heat on your electricity or gas supplier. Ask them if they have a green plan.

Day 14: Take a shower instead of a bath. You?ll heat and use less water.

Day 15: Snub plastic bags. Get into the habit of taking your backpack or a reusable cloth bag to the supermarket. Ask your supermarket to stock items with reduced packaging.

Day 16: Switch off lights as you leave a room or office.

Day 17: Only fill your kettle with as much water as you need to make tea or coffee.

Day 18: Cut the air miles. Don?t consume any food that you know has been imported by plane.

Day 19: Grace Maglasey and her husband Andrew struggle to grow enough food because their village in Malawi in Africa is caught in a cycle of floods and droughts. Join in with Grace?s prayer today: ?We pray that those of us who farm should harvest a lot of food so that this year we will not have hunger. In the name of Jesus. Amen.?

Day 20: Compost. Put the nutrients from food waste back into the soil, not into a methane-emitting landfill.

Day 21: Only run your washing machine when you have a full load.

Day 22: Fine one way to save paper today; reuse an old envelope or print double-sided.

Day 23: Turn the taps off. In one day, a dripping tap could fill a bathtub.

Day 24: Counsel your local city or town council. Thank them for their recycling facilities but ask they if they could provide more.

Day 25: Who works hardest in the house? Mom? Dad? No, the refrigerator. It?s churning away 24/7. Treat it to a good de-icing to make sure it?s running efficiently, or vacuum the heating coils in the rear.

Day 26: We are five percent of the world?s population, yet we use 40 percent of its resources. Reflect on ways to love our neighbors in today?s interconnected world.

Day 27: Check tire pressure. Low pressure means higher fuel consumption.

Day 28: Do a home energy check at http://hes.lbl.gov/consumer/ You could save a lot on bills.

Day 29: Turn down the temperature on your hot water heater.

Day 30: Find out a new fact about the impact of climate change today.

Day 31: For home and office use, buy recycled paper.

Day 32: If they?re on their last legs, replace old electrical appliances with energy-efficient models.

Day 33: Have an embrace-the-silence Sunday. Turn off everything ? TV, radio, no ringtones, no cars. It?ll be good for the soul.

Day 34: Reduce junk mail. For tips on how to go about it, go to http://www.obviously.com/junkmail/ or http://www.donotmail.org/

Day 35: Put an insulation jacket on your hot water heater.

Day 36: Re-use an item you would have thrown away ? such as a jam jar, an envelope, or a yogurt container.

Day 37: Put a lid on it. That?s pans when cooking; it saves energy.

Day 38: Draw the curtains to keep heat in.

Day 39: Could your church or office be greener? Talk to church leaders or bosses.

Day 40: Replace your missing light bulb with an energy-saving bulb. Over its lifetime, you will save 60 kg of carbon dioxide per year. Make a personal pledge to serve others by pursuing a more sustainable way of life.

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