

Saints James and Andrew Episcopal Church

Greenfield, MA

Thoughts for Environmental Pledging

We face a moral issue. We can choose to continue harming nature, polluting ourselves and jeopardizing the future for our children, or we can take simple steps to head toward a healthier, more just, more compassionate society. In taking a pledge we are committing to changing our habits and choosing to live more simply, humbly and gently on the Earth.

We are so fortunate to have the blessings of our Earth. In gratitude we pray: O God, you have blessed us and given us stewardship over all the earth: Increase our reverence before the mystery of life and give us new insight into your purposes for the human race, and new wisdom and determination in making provision for its future in accordance with your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1. Eat less meat. Try Meatless Mondays or several meatless days in the week. Our modern Western diet is actually an anomaly in the history of humanity. With its emphasis on processed, sugary foods and lots of meat, it's not very healthy for us, and it's definitely not very healthy for the planet. Try branching out into vegetarian and vegan recipes, which have come a long way in the past couple of decades. There are lots of delicious options, and you can enjoy knowing that your food isn't coming at a high cost to the planet or your health, and you will save money.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) narrative suggests that people consume about 30% less animal products. Eating less meat is one of a number of mitigation strategies suggested by the IPCC to overhaul agricultural and land-use practices, including the protection of forests. The livestock sector is estimated to account for 14.5% of greenhouse gas emissions globally, more than direct emissions from the transport sector.

2. Choose locally-sourced, organic food. What's even better than a vegetarian meal? A vegetarian meal that's made with local organic produce. Eliminating the toxins in food grown with pesticides, along with a shorter travel distance, means less impact on the environment and the food is better for you. Eating local has become kind of a trend in the past couple of years, and for good reason: it's not only a good way to get some truly delicious food, it also lets you help out the people in your community who work hard to grow it. If you're not sure where to start, try a local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) or a farmer's market.
3. Unplug all appliances, electronics and other devices when not in use. Even when a device is turned off, it is still continuing to use energy. Unplugging will prevent this from

happening. If you put several devices on a power strip, you protect them from power surges and can turn them off with one click of the switch. A tip from Tupper and Sandy.

4. Lower vehicle emissions. Don't idle your car. Look for ways to carpool or work from home, use public transportation, or bike or walk to local destinations. The more people who do this, the greater the effects on air quality and carbon dioxide levels. Reduce recreational air travel. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a leading international body established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), air transport contributes to 4.9 per cent of human-caused climate change, including emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.
5. Take care of your vehicle. Conducting routine maintenance, checking for proper tire pressure, doing regular oil changes, not pushing your vehicle too hard, avoiding excessive acceleration or braking and minimizing idle time can do a lot to improve fuel efficiency and save gas money.
6. Plant more trees. They clean the air, provide oxygen and beautify your surroundings. Think twice before cutting down mature trees as they provide energy-free cooling and are most efficient at converting carbon dioxide to oxygen.
7. Stop drinking water from plastic bottles. Use a reusable water bottle, ideally one that's made of glass or a non-BPA plastic so you don't have to worry about unwanted substances leaching into your water. Drink tap water or buy a filter if you are worried about water quality.
8. Choose reusable products and materials. Despite the convenience, do what you can to shy away from single use items including: plastic bags and containers, paper plates and cups, disposable knives and forks, razors and coffee pods. Avoid styrofoam: refuse to accept styrofoam containers. Styrofoam is not recyclable.
9. Always bring a reusable bag or basket when you shop. If you use bulk items from Greenfield Market you can bring glass containers for supplies like peanut butter or oils and refill dish and laundry detergent containers. The cashier will weigh them before you fill and deduct the container weight from the cost.
10. Recycle whenever possible. Instead of automatically tossing items in the trash, sort your trash into items that can be recycled and those which can't. Did you know that if you don't rinse your plastics, they will be thrown out at the sorting facility?

We are running out of places to put our trash in Massachusetts and the Northeast. Within about eight years, every landfill in the state will be filled to capacity and will close. In June of this year, western Massachusetts' sole remaining active landfill in Chicopee is scheduled to close. The Commonwealth's seven licensed trash combustors, or Waste-to-Energy facilities, are operating at capacity; our local Waste-to-Energy plant, Agawam's Coventa Energy, is operating at its permitted capacity of 400 tons a day. Because we are reaching the limit of discards that can be handled locally, Pioneer Valley trash is increasingly being sent by truck or rail to landfills in New York State, Pennsylvania and Canada, and those longer transports increase costs and the waste's

climate-changing gas footprint. That two or three dollar per trash bag that covers disposal expenses at your local transfer station may not cut it for long. The importance of reducing the amount of trash we generate by pulling out reusable materials can't be overstated.

11. Start a compost pile for kitchen waste or take compost to a local compost producer. Greenfield residents may drop off compostable matter at their transfer station.
12. Before you decide to throw away clothes, goods or materials, take the time to figure out if they can be recycled or reused. Support your local thrift shop or Salvation Army. Reliable sources on the Green Team say that shopping thrifts is really fun. You never know what you'll find at phenomenal prices.

Recycle clean plastic bags and plastic film used for food preservation at a local grocery. Plastic wrap and film packaging are generally 2 and 4 plastics both of which are recyclable. Most plastic bags are recycled into composite lumber, but can actually become a wide variety of products.

13. Commit to reducing your consumption. Most of us don't really need many of the items we have in our homes. So, instead of just buying stuff to have stuff, figure out if it is a want or a true necessity.
14. Say a big "NO" to pesticides (herbicides and insecticides) for your yard. They may have long half lives and leave chemical residuals in the soil or plants. The chemicals get into groundwater and affect the food chain from insects and worms living in the soil to birds, other animals and humans. Remember DDT and how long it took to prohibit its use? It was the first modern insecticide developed in the 1940s. Its use began to be limited in the late 1950s and the EPA finally issued a cancellation order in 1972 based on mounting evidence of its harmful effects.

There are pesticides used in organic gardening. It turns out that a key factor in chemicals being cleared for use on organic crops is whether they occur naturally like Spinosad, which comes from the soil bacterium *Saccharopolyspora spinosa* that scrambles insects nervous systems. A side note, it is very effective on red lily bugs.

15. Pick up litter particularly plastics before they get into flowing water. We live near rivers that carry that plastic directly to the Atlantic. Plastics break down into residues that are being found in sea life and larger plastic pieces are killing sea creatures from turtles to whales.
16. Make your own eco-friendly cleaning solutions to use around your house. Vinegar, baking soda, lemons, and a variety of other natural products can do a fantastic job at getting rid of grease and grime. Even a little vinegar and baking soda in your laundry can freshen up towels and sheets.
17. Review instructions on your dishwasher and washing machine especially for energy saving settings that substantially reduce cycle times. Operate them when they have recommended loads. Doing otherwise is a waste of money, energy and water.

18. Clean the lint out of your dryer prior to each use. It will cost more to dry your clothes if lint is allowed to accumulate. If you can dry your clothes naturally outdoors, they will smell wonderful.
19. Turn off the faucet in between washing dishes, brushing teeth and taking a shower. If you aren't using the water at that moment, turn it off and then back on when you need it. This one action alone can save more than 200 gallons of water a month. Shorter showers also save heating water. Challenge your family to take 2 minute showers.
20. Program your thermostat to no higher than 68 degrees Fahrenheit during the winter when you are home, lower when you are asleep or away. Set your thermostat no lower than 78 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer months.
21. Avoid GMOs (genetically modified organisms) in your food. The safety of GMOs is not proven although they have been approved by the FDA. They are being used to make plants resistant to herbicides so that farmers can spray their crops and avoid costly manual weeding. So you get the GMO and any pesticide residue.
22. Stop smoking or don't throw your butts on the ground. Cigarette butts are not biodegradable and contain extremely toxic soluble chemicals. One butt thrown on the ground can remain for up to 25 years, leaking chemicals like arsenic, ammonia, acetone, benzene, cadmium, formaldehyde, lead, and toluene into the environment.
23. Support businesses that make environmental efforts such as reduced packaging, not using styrofoam, composting or serving organic foods.
24. Finally, go eco-friendly even when you're soaking up the sun by using a natural sunscreen instead of the more common chemical-filled ones, since the chemicals found in many conventional sunscreens have been shown to have a devastating effect on ocean life, especially coral reefs. If you're wondering how something that's so harmful to coral reefs (which are, after all, made of hard materials) could be safe to put on your children, the answer is...it's not. The skin is a porous barrier, meaning that whatever you put on it can potentially pass through into your body. This is particularly concerning in the case of children, since their bodies in general, are more delicate.

The diocese of Western Massachusetts is participating in testing the national church's Carbon Tracker. Go to www.sustainislandhome.org to "Join the Challenge" in measured tracking of actions. When you create an account, you choose your parish and you can see how many people have participated and how we're doing.