

With Earth Day and Stewardship Week coming up at the end of April, the newly re-organized NE IA Synod Care for Creation Network has compiled a list of Green Tips for congregations to use in weekly bulletins, monthly newsletters, websites, Facebook or any other venue for sharing information. Use as many or as often as you please. Feel free to edit to fit your needs. More information is on the Care for Creation page on the Synod website. If you would like to be more involved with the Care for Creation Network, contact the Synod office.

GREEN TIPS

- 1. Walk to Church Day.** Walk to Church Day offers a triple benefit: it's green, it's healthy, and it builds community. The benefit to the earth of leaving the car behind is obvious, and the benefits to physical health are well known. But walking is also good for the soul. Solitary walking has been linked with contemplation, creativity, and clarity as somewhere inside, whatever weighs on you is sifted and sorted, lightening the burden. Walking with others brings new closeness, stimulating conversation and shared observations of the world around. In a small town, walking means running into neighbors. Designate a Walk to Church Day this summer. Or better yet, take the important step from symbolic action to new habit: encourage each other to walk at least a couple Sundays a month from April through October, and to figure out where commuting, errands and getting to school can also be done on foot. Remember the clear skies in cities when the pandemic shut down driving? Walking makes a real difference. *(Kate Narveson, Good Shepherd, Decorah)*
- 2. Reduce food waste.** Worldwide, about a third of the food we produce goes uneaten, which generates up to 10 percent of all global greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, if food waste were its own country, it would rank third in greenhouse gas emissions, behind only China and the US. Households come in first, at 37 percent of the Food Wasted. Do a food waste audit. Figure out what goes uneaten. (annemariebonneau.substack.com)
A useful guide to doing a family-learning-project to see how much of your food is wasted: <https://endsandstems.com/conduct-a-food-waste-audit/>.
(Lyle Otte, Good Shepherd, Decorah)
- 3. Plant milkweeds.** Monarch butterfly numbers have decreased greatly throughout their range, primarily because of the loss of milkweeds, the required food of Monarch larvae. We can all help reverse this trend by planting milkweeds. Unfortunately, many milkweed plantings fail. One technique that has worked is to gather milkweed seeds in the fall and place them in plastic bags in your refrigerator during the winter. In early spring plant the seeds in small containers. Make sure the soil is loosely packed, and cover the seeds with no more than 1/4 inch of soil. Once the seeds have sprouted and grown a few inches, transplant them in clumps in areas of bare soil. Young milkweeds do not do well in competition with other plants. *(David Voigts, Zion (Jubilee), LaPorte City)*
- 4. Eco-friendly cleaning tips.** Eco-friendly cleaners and green cleaning tricks allow you to spruce up your house in a safe and non-toxic way. Commercial cleaning products are effective in treating tough stains, built-up grease and grime, but due to the presence of toxic

ingredients, these can be dangerous to the environment and humans.

- Use baking soda as a gentle abrasive cleaner or deodorant.
- Mix equal parts white vinegar and water to remove stains; vinegar is also anti-bacterial.
- Lemon juice has great anti-bacterial and antiseptic properties, and it's a natural deodorizer for trash cans and sinks. Rub copper pans with a slice of lemon dipped in salt or baking soda.
- Mix vinegar, olive oil and water as a stain remover for wooden surfaces.
- Make window cleaner by mixing ½ cup vinegar to 2-3 cups water along with a few drops of liquid detergent and lemon juice in a spray bottle. Wipe off with newspaper or a clean cotton cloth.
- To clean your dishwasher once a week, fill a dishwasher-safe bowl with 1-2 cups white vinegar and set on the top rack. Run a cleaning cycle to remove odors, food residues, germs and stains.
- Clean the toilet bowl by pouring in a cup of baking soda and let sit for an hour. Then add a cup of white vinegar and let sit for 10 minutes, then flush.
- Mix baking soda and borax to remove hard water stains, rust and mold from your bathtub. Source: [10 Eco-Friendly Tips and Tricks for Cleaning | Bond Cleaning in Sydney](#)

5. **Iowa Interfaith Power and Light Cool Congregations Program.** Several years ago a few of us from Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Cedar Falls participated in Cool Congregations training through Interfaith Power and Light, <https://iowaip.org/>, which is an excellent resource for congregations. After that, our congregation became engaged in a self-survey and actions to do a better job of caring for God's creation:

- placed recycle bins in the kitchen for plastic, glass, and cardboard and in the office for paper, with collected materials regularly taken to the recycling center
- replaced all light bulbs with LED and upgraded to efficient lighting and toilets as well
- use only real dishes for social events
- installed bike racks and a prairie
- have environmental programs/activities on Earth Day and occasionally throughout the year
- installed a geothermal heating/cooling system
(*Kathy & Reg Green, Bethlehem, Cedar Falls*)

6. **Earth-friendly practices for transportation.**

- Bike or walk to work and to run errands.
- Use a hybrid car (40-50 mpg).
- Own small cars.
- Get by with fewer cars.
- Use cars as little as possible and combine stops into more efficient trips.
- Use mass transportation where available.

- Encourage children to walk or bike.
 - Keep bikes and vehicles well maintained.
 - Choose activities and shopping choices that are close to home.
- (Kathy & Reg Green, Bethlehem, Cedar Falls)*

7. **Earth-friendly personal habits.**

- Turn off the TV when you leave the room.
 - Buy second hand items, such as furniture and clothing.
 - Reuse plastic “baggies” by washing and drying them after use.
 - Avoid excess packaging whenever possible.
 - Avoid patronizing fast-food restaurants that use styrofoam/plastic dishes, utensils and packaging.
 - Use cloth napkins rather than paper.
 - Don't open the door for the cat every time it “asks” (somewhat kidding!).
 - During the summer, prepare meals that don't require the oven or stove.
- (Kathy and Reg Green, Bethlehem, Cedar Falls)*

8. **Regenerative farming: A way to combat climate change.** Regenerative farming--what is it? It is a conservation and rehabilitation approach to farming that focuses on topsoil regeneration, biodiversity and increasing resilience to climate change. According to the United Nations, agriculture covers nearly 40% of the world's land and is responsible for 17% of global emissions. Regenerative agricultural practices actually sequester carbon. As a consumer, we can make a difference by buying local and buying at our farmer's markets. Not only will you be helping take care of our environment but your food will be delicious! *(Carol Tack, First, Decorah)*

9. **Prayer from the EcoFaith Network, NE MN - edited prayer of the day from 5th Sunday of Lent.** "Creator God, you prepare a new way in the wilderness, and your grace waters our desert. Open our hearts to be transformed by the new thing you are doing, that our lives may proclaim the extravagance of your love given to all created beings through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forwarder. AMEN" *(Carol Tack, First, Decorah)*

10. **Know what's in the water you are drinking.** If you get your drinking water from a private well, the responsibility for testing that water lies with the well owner. Every county in Iowa gets funds from the state to offer free water testing to private well owners to check for the most common contaminants that pose health concerns: bacteria, nitrate and arsenic. It is recommended that private wells be tested annually. If your water is from a public water supply, (most are operated by a city), you can request to see the annual water quality monitoring report they are required to file each year. Our bodies are 50-60% water, so it's important that the water we are drinking is clean and safe, especially for the very young, the elderly and those with underlying health issues. *(Donna Rasmussen, Hesper, Decorah)*

11. **Recognize farmers using soil health practices.** If you see green growth on crop fields late in the fall or early in the spring, it is likely those are cover crops planted after harvest to maintain a living root in the soil over the winter. Not only do cover crops prevent soil and wind erosion, they improve soil health by enhancing soil's physical and biological properties to help plants take up nutrients and increase water infiltration making more soil water available for plant growth. Cover crops also suppress weeds, break pest cycles and increase soil carbon by sequestering carbon from the atmosphere. (*Donna Rasmussen, Hesper, Decorah*)

12. **Water conservation.** The United States is ranked third globally of countries with the most renewable fresh water resources. Yet we have 4.25% of the world's population. Research has shown that 30% of our water needs are used for lawn and gardens. During a dry spell watering is often required. The most efficient time to water is in the morning or evening when the sun's strength has diminished allowing water to soak into the soil rather than evaporate into the air. Better yet, use a drip system. Drip systems use about ten times less water than other systems. Place a perforated garden hose at the base of the plant and walk away. Take it a step further and use a rain barrel. A rain barrel will save about 1,300 gallons of water during peak summer months, according to the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. It can decrease water and sewer bills. Water collected is chlorine free and naturally slightly acidic. Worried about roof contaminants? Studies have shown that the overall water quality is very good. Collecting rain in barrels lessens the need to use drinking water and it's free water for your garden and plants. (*Jeanette Spilde, Washington Prairie, Decorah*)

13. **Reduce junk mail.** Catalog Choice's mission is to stop junk mail for good. This organization is passionate about helping protect natural resources. Since their founding 8 years ago, Catalog Choice calculates they have saved 564,000 mature trees, 5,470,000,000 gallons of water, and prevented 221,000,000 lbs of solid waste and 3,650,000,000 lbs of greenhouse gas emissions: all by helping people get off mailing lists! This is a free service (donations welcome). Go to catalogchoice.org and get started by entering the names of catalogs you no longer wish to receive. (*Karen Martin-Schramm, First, Decorah*)

14. **Native plants turn your church grounds into healthy habitat where people and wildlife flourish together.** You can actively link your faith practices and caring for the environment by planting native plants to support wildlife, promote health and wellness, support food cultivation, beautify and reduce maintenance, improve water quality, manage stormwater and enhance resilience in the environment. For examples in our own synod, check out the native prairie at Bethlehem Lutheran, Cedar Falls, or the orchard at Washington Prairie, Decorah. Learn more at www.nwf.org/sacredgrounds, <https://homegrownnationalpark.org>, www.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder, www.tallgrassprairiecenter.org, and Iowa State University Extension. (*Carla Janssen, Redeemer, Waverly*)

15. **Join an organization to add your voice, or support it with your dollars.** Examples are Lutherans Restoring Creation lutheransrestoringcreation.org, Citizens' Climate Lobby citizensclimate.org and from there, join the Lutheran Action Team, Iowa Interfaith Power & Light iowaip.org, EcoFaith Network of the NE MN Synod of the ELCA www.nemnsynod.org/ecofaith. Environment Iowa <https://environmentiowa.org>, Sierra Club and Earthjustice, local county energy districts energydistrict.org, are other secular organizations that are working diligently to protect the planet. *(Leslie Sand, First, Decorah)*

16. **Check out green financing.** greenpenny.com is an Iowa-owned, virtual bank that puts your money to work funding renewable energy installations in the Midwest, and provides loans for renewable energy projects. It is accessible by anyone, anywhere. Also look into fossil fuel-free investing here <https://fossilfreefunds.org>, know what your investments and retirement funds are supporting. Learn about ESG investing (environmental, social, governance) <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/investing/esg-investing/>. Consider moving your credit card from a big bank to a locally owned credit union; they often have their own rewards programs also. *(Leslie Sand, First, Decorah)*

17. **Learn about climate change issues/solutions.** Consider bringing in a speaker for your church's Adult Forum or Sunday School, or any other community organization. Some speakers are available either in person or virtually. Many are members of our synod. Joel Zook (Winneshiek Energy District), Jim Martin-Schramm (former Luther College religion professor), and Leslie Sand (NE Iowa Citizens' Climate Lobby Lutheran Action Team) are some suggestions. Topics can be tailored to your audience. *(Leslie Sand, First, Decorah)*

18. **Maintain tire pressure for fuel efficiency.** Tire pressure affects fuel economy and other issues with an automobile. Because of safety concerns, all vehicles are required to have a Tire Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS) since September 1, 2007. A 1 % decrease in tire pressure results in a 0.3 % decrease in fuel economy. As tire pressure is affected by temperature change, the drop from summer to winter can cause a significant change in tire pressure. For example, a fifty degree Fahrenheit (50 *F) temperature drop would reduce tire pressure by five pounds per square inch (5 psi). Assuming a recommended tire pressure of 32 psi, this would result in a 4.7 % reduction in fuel economy. Reference: www.DriversEd.com *(Jack Gregersen, Bethlehem, Cedar Falls)*

19. **Books for Green Tips (suggestions welcome! Not meant to be an exhaustive list)** [Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World](#) by Katharine Hayhoe, [All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis](#) by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, [Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future](#) by Mary Robinson, [Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Must Work for Change](#) by Jim Antal, [The New Climate War: The Fight to Take Back Our Planet](#) by Michael Mann. *(Leslie Sand, First, Decorah)*

20. **Aim to become carbon neutral.** Carbon neutrality is a state of net-zero carbon dioxide emissions. This can be achieved by balancing emissions of carbon dioxide with its removal or by eliminating emissions from society.

Becoming carbon neutral or drastically reducing carbon emissions is a lifestyle that comes naturally to us. We learned from our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents when we were young to become sustainable. Make it on your own. Save for your future house, children's education, and retirement. Don't waste money and energy. Our grandparents saved money and energy naturally. It was a part of their DNA to be sustainable.

We have it as a part of our DNA too. Our grandparents believed in using new technologies to become more sustainable and we can too.

Can we choose to take charge of our lives with less fossil fuel? Sure. Let's get started.

Knowledge is power. Knowing your carbon footprint gives you power. A home energy audit gives you power. Those two things give you the power to be more sustainable. Use your power and do the easiest things first. When you get them done you will feel the power to move on to the longer-term things.

Examples of easy things:

1. Buy a Kill-A-Watt meter from the hardware store and learn how much electricity your appliances use.
2. Use my natural resources - bike, walk, rake, and hang clothes
3. Save money on LED lighting
4. Set aside extra time to travel by something other than air travel
5. Unplug when not in use

Examples of longer-term things:

1. Upgrade your appliances to the most energy efficient
2. Update your house winterization to the most energy efficient
3. Upgrade your vehicles to the most energy efficient
4. Invest in solar energy for your house or a non-profit

Still short of being carbon neutral? Buy carbon offsets. Buy Oneota Tags from Winneshiek Energy District. Your money will be used to stop carbon emissions

Don't forget to use your power to change others. Buy products and services from businesses that are reducing their carbon emissions and direct your investment funds to entities that are reducing carbon emissions.

(Larry Grimstad, First, Decorah)

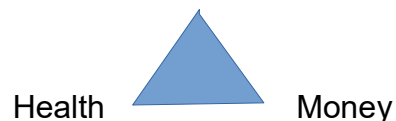
20. **The Green Triangle by Ernest Callenbach.** *Does living a more ecologically sound life have to pinch? Not at all, says Ernest (Chick) Callenbach, author of Ecotopia and Ecotopia Emerging. In fact, doing the right thing for the Earth can have multiple unexpected benefits. Callenbach lives in Berkeley, California.*

Living a sane and ecologically responsible life doesn't mean self-sacrifice and austerity; on the contrary, it should mean a richer, more interesting, fuller, longer, and healthier life. But so far nobody has been able to dramatize this on a national level in the folksy, convincing way that Ronald Reagan and Ivan Boesky made greed respectable. Jimmy Carter may have been our only recent president to understand that an equation has two sides, but his wan demeanor on TV in a sweater, urging us to save energy, did not exactly inspire the American people. (I know, he looks better and better now, doesn't he?)

Is it possible to talk *attractive* sense about a new life style for Americans? It had better be, or we can start preparing a suitable tombstone for our nation. And what we say needs to have both human verve and internal logical coherence to be memorable – more than a cafeteria menu of 50 or 750 ecological things we ought to choose among. Luckily, although we may sometimes lose faith, on the whole it works to assume that the universe displays many reassuring regularities that we can rely on. This goes for science almost without saying, since without prediction of regularities it is impossible to devise experiments. But it is also reassuringly true of our daily lives. However chaotic they sometimes seem, they have patterns; we can actually make sense of the ways things work, and react accordingly.

One way I've devised of talking about some critical everyday regularities is what I call the Green Triangle. It's a handy means of generating for ourselves ideas for personal and community and national change.

The three points of the triangle are: Environment



The principle that relates these three points is: *Anytime you do something beneficial for one of them, you will almost inevitably also do something beneficial for the other two – whether you're hoping to or not. And you can start at any one point of the triangle.*

For example, let's suppose you decide to take a step to improve your health, like eating less fatty meat and dairy products. This will decrease your chance of circulatory disease; it may even make you stronger and give you greater endurance. But, since meat and dairy products are relatively expensive, you will save quite a bit of money; moreover, you will also help the environment – since meat production is a very land-intensive and damaging use of our farm resources. *(Submitted by Reg Green, Bethlehem, Cedar Falls)*

Online Resources

Lutherans Restoring Creation lutheransrestoringcreation.org has a self-organizing kit to become a Creation Care Congregation, go to [2020VersionCongregationalCreationCareSelf_Organizing.pdf](#) (lutheransrestoringcreation.org)

ELCA Coaching elcacoaching.org provides coaching for all kinds of ELCA leaders including care for creation teams. Pr. Janice Hawley is the Care for Creation coaching coordinator janiceahawley@gmail.com.

The EcoFaith Network <http://www.nemnsynod.org/ecofaith.html> of the NE MN Synod held a Care for Creation training series in March. Recordings and materials will be posted on the NE IA Synod website.

The ELCA Advocacy Carbon Pricing Basics primer is found at https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Carbon_Pricing_Basics.pdf. The 1993 Caring for Creation social statement is found at <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Caring-for-Creation>.

Citizen Climate Lobby Lutheran Action Team [Group Home - CCL Community \(citizensclimate.org\)](#)

The National Association of Conservation Districts has free downloadable liturgical and educational materials for Stewardship Week starting the last Sunday in April. [Stewardship Week - NACD \(nacdnet.org\)](#).