

# Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus

Protecting God's Creation • Embracing Gospel Justice • Nurturing Spiritual Fulfillment



Lent **4.5**

*Christian Simplicity*

Imagine the Earth divided equally among all of us. Each person would receive 4.5 acres. Now imagine that everything you need – food, energy, home, clothing, appliances, gadgets – must come from those 4.5 acres. But it takes 22.3 acres to maintain the average American lifestyle. There is a new way of observing Lent that helps us care for God's creation by taking steps toward using only our fair share of its resources. Moving in the direction of 4.5 is essential for anyone walking in the footsteps of Jesus today.

Online at [www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org)

## Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus *Living in Harmony with Creation, God and the Entire Human Family*

### A New Way of Observing Lent

As we prepare for Easter and the renewal of our baptismal commitment to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we will be observing Lent in a slightly different way this year. **Lent begins in ten days with Ash Wednesday.**



Lent 4.5 is a seven-week faith formation program which educates and guides Christian communities on how to use the traditional Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving to protect God's creation, embrace Gospel justice, and nurture spiritual fulfillment. It offers a faith-based response to the injustice, inequity and devastation of creation caused

by rampant consumerism. It offers practical opportunities for people of faith to make a difference in the world by applying the values of Christian Simplicity to their everyday lives.

*Caring for creation and living more simply are an essential part of faith for those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus today.*

### Why 4.5

Through a measuring tool called Global Footprint, we are able to assess the impact of various lifestyles upon the Earth. It is a complex process, but a simple formula. At present, there are about 7 billion humans alive on the planet. If we divide the usable area of the planet evenly so that each of us receives a fair share, every person would be entitled to 4.5 acres.

From that 4.5 acres each of us would have to find the wherewithal to cultivate our food, the space and materials to construct our home, the energy to heat and cool it, the water for our lawn and toilets, a place to dispose of our garbage, the timber or plastic to put together our furniture, the fibers to produce our clothes, the metals to manufacture our appliances and cars, the petroleum for our transportation, and anything needed to make our gadgets and stuff. 4.5 acres would be each person's fair share.

The Global Footprint accounting tool enables us to measure how much the productive land and sea of the planet is used by any given segment of a population. It can be used to calculate how many acres it takes to support the lifestyle of an individual, an industry or a country.

According to 2009 data ([www.footprintnetwork.org](http://www.footprintnetwork.org)), Africans living in Tanzania need 2.6 acres to support their average lifestyle, while the portion of the planet used by someone living in Egypt is 3.5 acres. Iraq needs 3.3 acres; Saudi Arabia requires 8.6 acres. The average person in India only takes 1.9 acres, while those living in Colombia ask for 7.4 acres to sustain their lifestyle. The Japanese come in at 10.2 acres; France 11.4 acres; Italy 12.2 acres; Mexico calls for 8.0 acres; and Canada requires 14.2 acres. In the United States of America it takes a staggering 22.3 acres to support our average lifestyle.

Regardless of our personal habits of consumption, anyone who lives in the United States benefits from the infrastructures, food choices, travel options, medical advantages and conveniences of a standard of living that demands 22.3 acres of the Earth. If our fair share is 4.5 acres of the planet's resources, that means others must do with less so we can maintain our level of affluence. This disparity gives new meaning to the Biblical admonition: "Thou shalt not steal."

How do we achieve a more just and equitable world? Some thought it could be reached by raising everyone to our standard of living. But now we know that is impossible, given the limited space and resources of the planet. If everyone consumed at the current U.S. level, we would require four or five more Earth-like planets. But there is only one. We must learn to share it.



## Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus

Protecting God's Creation • Embracing Gospel Justice • Nurturing Spiritual Fulfillment  
A New Way of Observing Lent

*The Earth is our home. It is holy ground. From the beginning, God declared it good. Now there is growing awareness that God's planet is being damaged and its resources are not fairly shared. Caring for creation and living more simply are an essential part of faith for those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus today.*

### Christian Simplicity

#### *Nurturing Spiritual Fulfillment*

We have a huge global problem. In affluent America we have a faith problem. Anyone following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ today cannot remain distant or indifferent to the consumption habits of our country. How can we share our planet with 7 billion human beings in a way that enables all of us to live with dignity?

Many of the habitual daily choices we make are damaging God's creation and producing an unjust world. The Earth is generally treated as a resource for consumption and a place to toss our waste. This consumer mentality drives our economy and influences our purchasing decisions. We are seemingly willing to exhaust the Earth's resources and deprive future generations in order to satisfy our ravenous desires. In this materialistic culture everything is designed to make us consumers.

The Gospel challenges Christians to transform the way we understand, use and consume this planet. Jesus spoke frequently about the dangers of excessive consumption. He warned of the spiritual peril brought on by too much stuff. Lent 4.5 tries to be honest with what the Gospel says about simplicity. It offers Christians practical ways to be different from our purchase-driven society.

Simplicity does not mean moving into a cave or only eating berries. Living simply means setting limits that reflect our faith values by taking only what we need – not hoarding, not taking in excess. It fashions a life that is outwardly simple and inwardly rich.

From the beginning, simplicity has been an essential Christian virtue. The Gospel suggests that excessive attachment or hoarding material possessions can undermine the reign of God (Luke 6:20-25). It cautions against becoming a slave to our belongings (Luke 16:13-15). It suggests that accumulating too many things can result in devastating anxiety (Matthew 6:26-34). The many warnings against over-consumption are not legalistic threats, but guidelines to freedom and spiritual fulfillment (Matthew 19:21-23).


When viewed through the lens of the Gospel, simplicity becomes liberating for the prosperous and life-affirming for those who are poor. By voluntarily choosing simplicity, Christians reorient their hearts toward finding a treasure which will never perish. At the same time, when the value of simplicity influences our personal consumption habits, we can bring about a just society and protect God's creation for generations to come. Lent is a great time to start.

***How can each step we take on Earth be a blessing, walking in the footsteps of Jesus?***

*Thus says the Lord:*

*"In a time of favor I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages."*

– Isaiah 49:8



*"As the earth brings forth its plants, and a garden makes its growth spring up, so will the Lord God make justice and praise spring up before all the nations."*

– Isaiah 61:11

# Christian Simplicity

*Our goal this Lent is to fast from over-consumption and live more simply.*

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## A Compassionate Life

Simplicity of life is a growing concern among Christians in wealthy countries. As we awaken to the realization that our habitual and daily choices are damaging creation and impoverishing other members of the human family, people of faith are asking: how can we live in a way that is environmentally sustainable, socially just, and spiritually fulfilling?

Many people in our country now believe that our cultural priorities are out of whack. The greed, selfishness and consumer mentality which drive our country are disturbing realities. They crowd out more meaningful values such as family time, community involvement and spiritual fulfillment. Many people would like to get their lives back in balance.

Some people are moving toward a more simple life because it offers greater satisfaction than our high-stressed consumer society. But simplicity is no longer an alternative lifestyle only for a few ascetics. The average U.S. lifestyle requires 22.3 acres of the Earth's resources and the average Canadian requires 14.2 acres. The footprint we leave on the Earth is too big. If we are going to unite ourselves as a human family, it is crucial that people living in affluent nations begin cultivating lifestyles of simplicity and sustainability. 4.5 acres would be our fair share. We have to move from 22.3 toward 4.5. It won't happen overnight, but we must take steps in that direction. Lent is a great opportunity to make a start.

Fasting is a long-established Lenten practice. This Lent, each week you will receive a handout like this that highlights an area of consumption. It will help focus your Lenten fast by making practical suggestions on ways to give up excessive or wasteful use of the Earth's resources. It will enable you to experiment with daily choices that are more environmentally sustainable and socially just – caring for God's creation and caring for God's people.

*How can we live in a way that protects God's creation and embraces Gospel justice?*

*The Lord God said: "Is this not the fast that I choose: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking off every yoke? Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry... Then your light shall break forth like the dawn."*

– Isaiah 58:6-8

## What Churches are Saying

### 1. Choose a Life of Voluntary Simplicity

"How can we as members of the Body of Christ act in all our caring for creation? Those who are able to do so, can choose lives of voluntary simplicity, rejecting habits of wasteful consumption and making thoughtful choices for decent living."

– Episcopal Church

### 2. Be Responsible Stewards

"Earth-keeping today means insisting on sustainability – the ongoing capacity of natural and social systems to thrive together – which requires human beings to practice wise, humble responsible stewardship, after the model of servanthood that we have in Jesus."

– Presbyterian Church USA

### 3. Be God's Hands in the World

"We are each called to be God's hands in the world, working to right the relationships that have gone wrong."

– Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### 4. Practice Environmental Holiness

"We practice social and environmental holiness by caring for God's people and God's planet and by challenging those whose policies and practices neglect the poor, exploit the weak, hasten global warming, and produce more weapons."

– United Methodist Church

### 5. Share the Earth's Resources Fairly

"God destined the earth and all it contains for all people and all nations so that all created things would be shared fairly by all humankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity."

– Roman Catholic Church

Imagine the Earth divided equally among all of us. Each person would receive 4.5 acres. Now imagine that everything you need – food, energy, home, clothing, appliances, gadgets – must come from those 4.5 acres. But it takes 22.3 acres to maintain the average American lifestyle. There is a new way of observing Lent that helps us care for God's creation by taking steps toward using only our fair share of its resources. Moving in the direction of 4.5 is essential for anyone walking in the footsteps of Jesus today. Information online at [www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org).

The challenge of simplicity is to live differently than the standards set by a greedy consumer culture. This Lent, try setting purchasing limits that fit within the values of your faith. With each dollar you choose products that are socially and environmentally responsible. Develop a sense of moderation and discover the joy that comes from contentment, sensing that you have enough.

Christian simplicity means taking only what you need – not wasting or taking in excess. It leads to a life that is outwardly simple, inwardly rich and socially just.

Submit Prayer Requests at [www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org)

## Action Steps

### Small Steps

- Replace incandescent light bulbs with energy-efficient CLF bulbs. They emit the same amount of light, but use 75% less electricity.
- Use real cups, cloth napkins, reusable shopping bags, and rags for cleaning. Avoid wasteful disposables that end up in landfills.
- Use a refillable mug. Your daily coffee in disposable cups generates about 22 pounds of waste per year.

### If There's Only One Thing You Can Do ...

**Give Up Plastic and Paper Bags – Opt for Reusable Bags** As a sign of penance, Old Testament prophets would wear sackcloth and ashes. On Ash Wednesday, get your ashes. But instead of wearing sackcloth all Lent, carry a reusable sackCLOTH bag whenever you go shopping. 12 million barrels of oil were used to make 88.5 billion plastic bags for the U.S. last year. No wasteful plastic or paper this Lent (and beyond).



### Inner Simplicity

- Abstain from over-scheduling your life. Do this by planning ahead to eliminate unnecessary actions.

Do more than give up chocolate. Simplify your life this Lent.



- Reduce exposure to advertising. Notice how advertisements bombard you, stirring up the desire to buy.
- Read Psalm 104. Celebrate God's majesty revealed in creation.
- Get away. Consciously connect with God's natural world at least once during the week.
- Give time to your community by working in a soup kitchen, caring for the homeless, or volunteering at an organization to help those in need.

### Outer Simplicity

- Cut back on personal consumption. Adopt a less-is-more attitude during Lent.
- Forgo some "must-have" items. It's a matter of training the mind to get along with less.
- Ask: do I need it? When a desire for something arises, wait a couple days to make sure it is not an impulse buy.
- When you need to purchase, consider shopping for used items. So much can be found at local thrift stores, Craigslist, Freecycle, or used products on Amazon or eBay.
- Notice when stuff is tossed "away." Where is "away"? It goes somewhere on the planet. This Lent REDUCE consumption, REUSE whatever you can, and learn to RECYCLE. Otherwise it goes into landfills.

## Prayer

*Creator God,  
you have breathed your Spirit  
upon this land  
and entrusted to us  
a responsibility to care for it.  
Teach us to always use the  
things of this Earth  
with care, not negligence,  
with gratitude, not arrogance,  
with simplicity, not excess.  
Guide us in the ways  
of Christian Simplicity.  
Amen.*

## Steps Continued

1. Watch "Home," an extraordinary movie about the only planet on which you'll live - available free online. Why is caring for creation important?
2. Read a portion of Richard Foster's spiritual classic, *Freedom of Simplicity*.
3. Read Duane Elgin's essay, *Choosing a New Lifeway, Voluntary Simplicity*.
4. Studies consistently conclude there is no connection between happiness and material possessions. Watch online video.

All this and more available by joining our online community at [www.Lent45.org](http://www.Lent45.org).

# Food

*Our Lenten practice this week is buying and eating our food responsibly.*

## Eating is a moral act.

### "Give us today our daily bread."

The daily bread provided by God comes directly from the Earth. The act of eating unites us to the soil, water and animals of this planet like nothing else. All these gifts of God's creation are included in our food.

Every purchase of food and every act of eating becomes a moral decision. When making food choices, we need to consider the manner in which crops were planted and fertilized, the method used to raise animals for eating, and the distance food has to be shipped.

While our agricultural system produces a lot of food, it also has a downside. Chemical fertilizers and pesticides from large agricultural farms contaminate the soil. Animal waste from factory farmed meat defiles the water. Transporting food over long distances pollutes the air. Our food choices are having a huge impact on the whole of creation.

Food is not only central to survival. It is a sacramental gift of God's grace and providence. Our Lenten fast this week will aim to develop greater sensitivity to how our food choices can honor, rather than exploit, God's creation.

### Think about the implications of your food choices before you eat.



*"From the moment you put a piece of bread in your mouth you are part of the world. Who grew the wheat? Who made the bread? Where did it come from? You are in relationship with all who brought it to the table. We are least separate and most in common when we eat and drink." – Thomas Merton*

*"Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward was hungry." – Matthew 4:1-2*

## What Churches are Saying

### 1. The Planet Deserves Respect

"Our faith and our ancestors have always taught us that the earth is our mother and deserves respect; we know that this respect has not been given.... Science confirms what we already know, our human footprint is changing the face of the earth and because we come from the earth, it is changing us too. We are engaged in the process of destroying our very being."

– Anglican Communion Environmental Network

### 2. Advocate for Just and Fair Food Choices

"Urge all members and governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to influence the agricultural revolution (by) advocating for just and fair wages and working conditions for everyone involved in the food production industries, supporting the practice of good stewardship in the daily food choices we make, (and to) help the oppressed have a voice."

– Presbyterian Church USA

### 3. Earth is Not a Boundless Warehouse

"The idea of the earth as a boundless warehouse has proven both false and dangerous. Damage to the environment eventually will affect most people through increased conflict over scarce resources, decline in food security, and greater vulnerability to disease."

– Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### 4. Church Must Address Agricultural Issues

"The Church has a clear record of helping the world address such issues as clean water and air, civil rights, nuclear warfare, arms expenditures, and world hunger. The Church must likewise take responsibility for addressing the problem of agriculture." – United Methodist Church

### 5. Local Food Cultures at Risk

"Environmental degradation and crop damage due to climate change, the rise of biofuels, and agricultural distortions due to export farming add to the instability of local food cultures."

– United Church of Christ

You can receive the Weekly Lenten Reflections Sign-up online. [www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org)

On average, food travels from between 1,500 to 2,500 miles to reach our tables.

“Lord, to those who are hungry, give bread. And to those who have bread, give the hunger for justice.”

– Latin American Prayer

## Action Steps

Eating is a moral act. Anyone who eats participates in our agriculture system and the ethical dimensions of food production. We vote three times a day. With every meal we can choose to bless or spoil God’s creation. This week of Lent offers suggestions on how grocery shopping and eating habits can make a difference.

What we eat is one of our most ingrained habits – and that makes it difficult to change. There are numerous ways to show respect for creation when eating. The most obvious is to begin with a prayer of gratitude and take practical steps to reduce your negative impact. It boils down to eating less meat and more food that is grown organically and nearby (doesn’t have to be shipped very far). Realize that chemical fertilizers, transportation and packaging of food have a huge impact on the planet. Consider which steps you can take.

### ✓ If There’s Only One Thing You Can Do...

**Abstain from meat this week...** or make meat only a side-dish.

Pound for pound, livestock requires more water, land and energy than grains and vegetables. Waste disposal from factory-farming of animals pollutes water supplies. 800 million people suffer from hunger or malnutrition while the majority of corn and soy grown in the world feeds cattle, pigs and chickens for wealthy eaters. Consuming less meat is one of the most significant ways to lower your impact on God’s creation.



### What and Where to Buy

- Try purchasing sustainable and organic food. It’s grown without pesticides, synthetic fertilizers or harmful additives.
- If buying meat or dairy, choose animal products that have not been treated cruelly or grown in Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations.

## Prayer

Pray  
With Us at  
[www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org)

*Good and gracious God,  
you provided manna in the desert  
for your chosen people.  
May we recognize that our food  
comes from your bounty,  
the generosity of our planet,  
and the strenuous work  
of many human hands.  
Teach us to reverence your creation  
which supplies our food.  
Show us how to make room  
at the table for everyone. Amen.*

- Whenever possible, buy food grown and processed close to home. Transportation of food guzzles energy. Shop at a farmers market.
- Eat real food. Hint: shop the perimeter of the store. Most foods in the middle aisles of supermarkets are preprocessed and packaged.
- Buy in bulk. To minimize landfill waste, support manufacturers who use minimal packaging.
- Like coffee? Drink only fair trade coffee/tea. Commit to giving farmers a fair price for their product and work.

### Cooking and Eating

- Do without fast food and highly processed food for the week. If that’s not possible, before biting into the burger, choose food that is produced sustainably and ethically.
- Lent = Fish. Select seafood that’s good for you and the oceans. Download a consumer’s guide to sustainable seafood at [www.edf.org](http://www.edf.org).
- Purchase and set up a composting bin at home. Send food waste back to the soil instead of to landfills.
- Pause in prayer before eating to be grateful for the bounty of creation and the many hands that helped bring food to your table.
- Check out the Slow Food movement. Bring balance to fast food and fast life.

### Food Security

- Participate in food production to the extent you can. Connect with the Earth and grow some of your own food. You will appreciate your food, having known it all its life.
- Support a just food system that provides adequate food for everyone. Learn more at “Bread for the World,” [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org).

## Steps Continued

1. Learn where your food comes from. Calculate your food footprint at [www.eatlowcarbon.org](http://www.eatlowcarbon.org).
2. Watch “The Meatrix,” a 4 minute video on factory farming of animals.
3. Read about the dark side of food issues in our country – two articles from Eric Schlosser’s *Fast Food Nation* are available online.
4. Learn more about the global food crisis.

All this and more available by joining our online community at [www.Lent45.org](http://www.Lent45.org).

# Consumption

*Our Lenten practice this week is to reconsider our relationship to stuff.*

Buying Less, Wasting Less

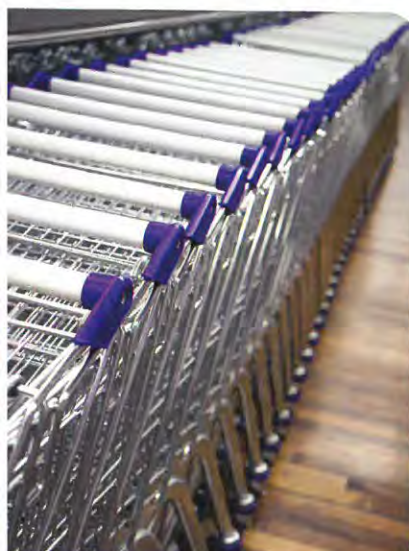
**To live, we must consume. But currently we are consuming at an unsustainable pace – with damaging consequences for our society and our planet.**

“Over a few short generations, we in the affluent fifth of humanity have become car drivers, television watchers, mall shoppers, and throwaway buyers.” – Alan Durning

Now many are becoming concerned about the greed, selfishness and conspicuous consumption which can crowd out meaningful time for family, community and spiritual fulfillment. Too often we fail to consider the damaging consequences of our lifestyle on the planet and the impact this will have on our children.

The Bible has plenty to say about consumption. The 10th commandment is blunt: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s goods.” Jesus was unwavering: “Do not store up treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal.” (Matthew 6:19)

Christian simplicity is not frugality or penny-pinching. Rather, it is a faith-inspired way of living that wants to be more responsible. The Gospel motivates us to make consumer choices that respect the limitations of our planet’s resources and make a good life possible for everyone. The hallmark of this lifestyle is outer compassion and inner contentment.



*“Jesus said to them: ‘Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.’”*

– Luke 12:15

**FREE**  
Weekly Reflection  
for Lent.  
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*“If you seek perfection, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor. You will then have treasure in heaven.”*

– Matthew 19: 21

## What Churches Are Saying

### 1. Lifestyles Changes are Necessary

“God’s creation is in crisis... Our neglect, selfishness, and pride have fostered: pandemic poverty and disease; environmental degradation, and the proliferation of weapons and violence ... We must begin the work of renewing creation by being renewed in our own hearts and minds.”

– United Methodist Church

### 2. Responsible Stewardship

“All of us can exercise stewardship by prudently and sensibly using those elements of the creation we need to sustain our own lives and the generations to follow.”

– Episcopal Church

### 3. Wasteful Consumption Must be Addressed

“We believe that our planetary future is radically jeopardized by economic competition and growth unrestrained by a sense of limits about our place in the whole. Our love for our children and our children’s children requires us to raise serious questions about the level and methods of production and the wasteful style of consumption in the United States and other affluent nations and people.”

– United Church of Christ

### 4. Living in a World of Finite Resources

“In a world of finite resources, for all to have enough means that those with more than enough will have to change their patterns of acquisition and consumption. Sufficiency charges us to work with each other and the environment to meet needs without causing undue burdens elsewhere.”

– Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### 5. Call to a Less Materialistic Life

“It is unrealistic and self-serving to think that efficient and renewable energy technologies (will) provide sufficient insurance against ... global warming – unless there is also a move away from unnecessary and wasteful production and consumption.”

– Presbyterian Church USA



## Action Steps

Everyday life is sustained by materials from the Earth – food, clothes, cell phones, appliances and even toilet paper. In the United States each of us daily consumes 120 pounds on average. But we live on a finite planet. There is only so much timber for paper, steel for cars, silica for computers and other materials to go around. The more we consume, the less is available for others. On average, one American consumes as much as 2 Japanese, 11 Indians, or 18 Haitians.

Christian simplicity doesn't mean giving up everything good. It does mean cutting back, reducing harm, choosing wisely, and acting on Gospel values whenever purchasing or disposing of anything.

From the suggestions, *Check the box of the steps you can take this week.*



### If There's Only One Thing You Can Do ... Stop Junk Mail

Stop unwanted junk mail. The average adult receives 41 pounds annually. 19 billion catalogs are distributed, requiring 53 million trees and 56 billion gallons of water to produce. Visit [www.41pounds.org](http://www.41pounds.org) to stop unwanted junk mail. Less mailbox clutter means less pollution and less waste going into landfills.



### Avoid Unnecessary Consumption

- Shop less. Resist the urge to shop as entertainment. Replace recreational shopping with Sabbath time.
- Ask when shopping, "Do I really need you?" Then wait 48 hours to eliminate impulse buying. Craving drives much of our consumption, depleting God's creation.
- Reuse stuff. Our disposable culture encourages tossing out what easily could be fixed or reused.
- Use paper responsibly. Conserve, print on both sides, set default margins wider, and use recycled paper.

## Prayer

*O Giver of Life,  
you are the source of all creation.  
Through the healing power of Jesus  
you brought sight to the blind.  
Open our eyes to the pervasive  
consumerism in this country.  
Free us from its grip  
so we might enjoy spiritual freedom.  
Teach us to use your creation  
with moderation and compassion  
for those who do not have enough.  
You are our hope. Amen.*

The U.S. comprises 5% of the world's population, but consumes 30% of the world's goods. The average person:

- daily, consumes their body weight in natural resources;
- weekly, uses the equivalent of 300 shopping bags of natural resources for food, shelter, energy and transportation;
- yearly, generates 1640 pounds of trash – 4.5 pounds per day – that must be dumped somewhere.

- Clean closets. Discover what's forgotten. Donate anything not used for two years.

### What to Buy? Where to Buy?

- Buy conscientiously. Understand the environmental and social impacts of products you purchase with the *Better World Shopping Guide* book.
- Buy in bulk. Reduce packaging waste that fills the planet with trash.
- Buy products from environmentally and socially responsible companies. Is the company a polluter or good steward of God's creation?
- Buy Fair Trade products to ensure a just wage for workers and artisans around the world.

Visit the  
Online Prayer  
Chapel  
[www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org)

### Trash

- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. 1st: reduce your consumption. 2nd: use reusables, forgo disposable paper napkins, towels, and cups. 3rd: recycle by returning waste naturally to the Earth. 75% of trash can be recycled.
- Pay bills online. This minimizes paper consumption, saves trees and reduces fuel consumed by vehicles that transport paper checks.
- Join the Zero Waste movement, an anti-garbage strategy.

## Steps Continued

1. Visit the New American Dream website. Learn to consume responsibly to protect the Earth and promote justice.
2. Watch a 20-minute online video, "The Story of Stuff."
3. Go to the Campaign for Commercial-Free Childhood and learn to prevent the manipulation of our children's values by advertising.
4. Study garbology. On average, each person in the U.S. generates 1640 pounds of trash each year. Find out what happens to your trash.

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# Water

*Our Lenten practice this week is to conserve and protect the gift of water.*

## Caring for Our Sacred Waters

**Water is essential for life. If life is sacred, then whatever supports life is sacred.**

The oceans, rivers, lakes and streams are part of God's wondrous creation. Looking at our blue planet from space, it might appear that we have a lot of water. But only 1% is available for human consumption. Since there are about 7 billion humans – not to mention all plants and other animals that depend on water to stay alive – we must learn to share and use water wisely. As God's stewards, we are called to care for this sacred gift. We must learn to protect water (don't pollute) and use it carefully (conserve, don't waste). That's going to be our focus this week.

The world water crisis is one of the largest public health issues of our time. Millions of women and children spend hours every day walking miles to collect water. Nearly 18% of the world's population lacks access to safe drinking water. Approximately 1.6 million people die annually from unavoidably consuming polluted water. Just because we have access to water doesn't mean we can be wasteful. Our Lenten fast this week calls us to use water responsibly and gratefully, keeping in mind the many who suffer for lack of this essential resource.

At home, we have many opportunities to reduce our water footprint by up to 25%. Wasting water – with leaks, long showers, letting it run unnecessarily when washing teeth or dishes and careless landscape watering – is not only expensive, but an issue of justice as well.



*Close to one billion people live without access to clean, safe drinking water. Millions of women and children spend hours every day walking miles to collect water.*

*"You have visited the land and watered it; greatly have you enriched it." – Psalm 65:10*

## What Churches are Saying

### 1. Reckless Damage to our Water

"Humans are making excessive demands upon, and doing reckless damage to, the lakes and streams, the ground water, and even to the oceans. Meanwhile, most Third World nations cannot afford the systems that would provide safe drinking water."

– Presbyterian Church USA

### 2. The World Water Crisis is an Ethical Issue for People of Faith

"Water is an integral part of God's radical expression of God's love for all humanity. Water cannot be monopolized or privatized. It is to be shared like air, light and earth."

– United Methodist Church

### 3. A Right to Clean Water

"The world is on the verge of a serious water crisis – one that is leading to conflicts among people, communities, regions, and nations. All individuals have the fundamental right to clean water and no one should be denied access to clean water because they cannot afford it."

– National Council of Churches of Christ

### 4. Contaminating the Earth is a Sin

"To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin ... for humans to contaminate the Earth's water, its land, its air, and its life, with poisonous substances, these things are sins."

– Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Eastern Orthodox Church

### 5. Water Scarcity Affects the Vulnerable

"The United Nations estimates that about 1.7 billion people currently suffer from water scarcity, with the problem most acute in developing countries; if temperatures continue to rise, that number could increase by an additional 1.8 billion people by 2080. Women and girls are often responsible for ... spending hours fetching and carrying water from remote sources."

– Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

*"Praise to you, my Lord, through Sister Water, so useful, humble, precious, and pure." – St. Francis of Assisi*

**4.5** Imagine the Earth divided equally among all of us. Each person would receive 4.5 acres. Now imagine that everything you need – food, energy, home, clothing, appliances, gadgets – must come from those 4.5 acres. But it takes 22.3 acres to maintain the average American lifestyle. There is a new way of observing Lent that helps us care for God's creation by taking steps toward using only our fair share of its resources. Moving in the direction of 4.5 is essential for anyone walking in the footsteps of Jesus today. Information online at [www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org).

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Our water consumption is measured in three categories: home, agricultural and industrial. At home, the typical American uses up to 150 gallons of water daily in the kitchen, bathroom, laundry and yard. However, most of the water we consume is hidden in what it takes to produce our food and consumer products. For example, it takes approximately 48 gallons for a bag of potato chips and a whopping 1500 gallons of water to produce 1 pound of beef. Water is required to manufacture our clothing (400 gallons for a cotton T-shirt), paper (2 gallons for 1 sheet), a pair of leather shoes (2114 gallons), and to produce steel for one car (32,000 gallons). It's important to learn more about the water footprint of our food and manufactured goods.

## How much is needed?

Each person needs about 21 gallons of water a day for a reasonable standard of living. In the world's poorest countries, people use just 2½ gallons a day to wash, clean and cook. In the U.S., the typical lifestyle requires 100-150 gallons per day. On average, it takes: 2-6 gallons per minute for a shower; 10-35 gallons for full load in the washing machine; 2-5 gallons per flush of the toilet; 5-15 gallons to run the dishwasher.

## Action Steps

This Lent we are trying to live a more just and sustainable lifestyle. Listed below are suggestions for using water in more thoughtful and conserving ways. Consider the steps you can take this week.

### If There's Only One Thing You Can Do ...



#### Give up bottled water this Lent...and beyond.

This is an easy yet effective water-choice to live more simply and do less harm. It's a waste of energy and resources to produce the 29 billion plastic water bottles we use annually; only 23% of them are recycled; it takes over 700 years for plastic to decompose. Instead, invest in a reusable aluminum water bottle.

### In the Kitchen

- Wait until the dishwasher is fully loaded before starting; skip the pre-rinse cycle.
- Avoid wasting water by letting it run thoughtlessly during food preparation and cleanup.
- Put aerators on faucets to reduce household water flow by 2 gallons a minute.

### In the Bathroom

- Fix leaky faucets and toilets. 1 drip per second = 3000 gallons of wasted water per year.
- Use a timer to reduce shower time by 2-5 minutes. Extra credit: install low-flow showerheads to decrease water use by 20-60%.
- Turning off water while brushing teeth can save 2 gallons per minute.
- Replace old toilets with modern low-volume flush models.
- Keep water clean and safe. Household hazardous waste and pharmaceuticals thrown into the toilet make our streams unhealthy.

### Other

- Only run the washing machine with full loads – and use the coolest water possible.
- Purchase products with minimal packaging. 1 pound of plastic = 24 gallons of water!
- Practice sustainable irrigation and responsible lawn care. Don't water in the heat of the day.
- Plant for low water usage – landscape with native plants.

Submit Prayer Requests at [www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org)

## Prayer

*Creator God,  
your waters refresh our bodies  
and give life to the Earth.  
From the hardness of our hearts,  
bring forth the waters  
of compassion and care.  
Open our hearts  
to the water crisis of our world.  
Guide us in ways to reduce waste  
and over-consumption of your resources.  
Teach us to use our sacred waters wisely.  
Amen.*

## Steps Continued

1. Calculate your water footprint. Learn how much water it takes to produce an apple, a pound of chicken or a microchip. [www.waterfootprint.org](http://www.waterfootprint.org)
2. Watch "Flow." Learn how the world's water supply is being privatized and taken over by corporations.
3. Join the campaign to End Water Poverty, a global injustice causing millions to live without access to clean water and sanitation.
4. Watch "The Story of Bottled Water." Available online.
5. Participate in World Water Day on March 22. Learn more about your water consumption.

All this and more available by joining our online community at [www.Lent45.org](http://www.Lent45.org).

# Energy

*Our Lenten practice this week is to use more clean energy and to consume energy more efficiently.*

**We need energy to live and our appliances need energy in order to function. But where does energy come from?**

Most of the energy used to keep our homes cozy, our appliances humming, and our cars running comes from fossil fuels – coal, oil and natural gas. These enable us to live with comfort and conveniences. However, because energy seems to just come out of the socket, many people are unaware of how our energy choices affect God's creation. Electric power plants that convert coal into electricity are the country's largest industrial source of pollutants.

Flip on lights, turn on the TV, power up the computer, brew coffee – the average American consumes about 20 pounds of coal every day in the form of electricity. Each of us has a responsibility to use energy more efficiently. Conserving energy translates into cleaner air, cleaner water, and preservation of our land from damage caused by drilling or mountaintop removal mining of coal. A bonus is that it also saves money.

Our home is a terrific place to begin making a difference in energy consumption. This week of Lent you can learn simple ways to make your home more energy efficient. Small steps add up to important ways of caring for creation and saving precious non-renewable resources for future generations.

We live in an energy-hungry country. God has entrusted one Earth to us – we must learn to care for it and share it.



*Small steps add up to important ways of caring for creation and saving precious non-renewable resources for future generations.*

*"I am the light of the world," says the Lord, "whoever follows me will have the light of life." – John 8:12*

You can receive the Weekly Lenten Reflections Sign-up online. [www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org)

## What Churches are Saying

### 1. Embrace the Biblical Vision of Justice

"Energy policies that Christians can support, then, will seek to actualize the multifaceted biblical vision of justice. They will be policies that close rather than widen the gap dividing wealth and poverty, rich nations and poor. They will be measures that liberate rather than oppress. They will be programs that distribute fairly the benefits, burdens, and hazards of energy production and consumption, taking into consideration those not yet born as well as the living."

– United Methodist Church

### 2. We Are Not Living Sustainably

"The potential supply of renewable and alternative energy sources far exceeds the current and projected demand from all energy sources. God has truly furnished creation with energy in abundance. We are not living sustainably in relationship with God's creation. This leads to our reliance on these traditional energy sources (which) poses grave dangers to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation."

– Presbyterian Church USA

### 3. Face the Necessary Changes

"Some changes will be more challenging – like investing in wind or solar energy devices, insulating our buildings and improving their thermal inertia, calculating the optimal time lag for automatic light switches, adding green roofs and passive solar or earth-sheltered design elements."

– U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

### 4. Make Congregational Change

"(We) encourage congregations ... (to work) for environmental responsibility in energy conservation and efficiency, purchase of renewable energy, recycling, procurement policies, reducing resource consumption."

– Lutheran Earthkeeping Network of the Synods

### 5. Our Choices Threaten the Web of Life

"Poor communities and communities of color will disproportionately suffer the unjust consequences of our choices. And now, we realize more every day that our choices threaten the voiceless natural systems that sustain all of life itself."

– United Church of Christ

*"I am only one, but I am still one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something." – Helen Keller*

*Small changes at the personal level can lay the foundation for change at the national and international levels.*

## Action Steps

Burning fossil fuels – coal, oil, and natural gas – releases the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into the atmosphere. At present, it is extremely difficult to avoid using any one of these forms of energy. But taking steps to reduce our carbon emissions is important. CO<sub>2</sub> affects the air we breathe and the quality of life on our planet.

This week, try fasting from carbon by using less energy. Lent is a time to repent, reflect and sacrifice. Rethink how your lifestyle impacts God's creation and people's lives. Then take two important steps – use energy more efficiently and try finding alternatives to consuming fossil fuels.



### If There's Only One Thing You Can Do ...

**Use compact fluorescent (CFL) bulbs.** About 90% of the power consumed by incandescent light bulbs creates heat instead of light and they use 4 times more energy than CFLs for the same amount of light. Turning off unnecessary lights also helps.

### Heating and Cooling Air

- Give up two degrees. For every degree the thermostat is below 68 (in winter) or above 78 (in summer) there's a 3-5% savings in energy use and cost.
- Reduce drafts by caulking, weather-stripping and adding insulation. Keep heated and cooled air in the house.
- Install a programmable thermostat for efficiency... and savings.

### Heated Water

- Use the shortest wash that will get the job done for dishwashing, laundry, and showers. Heating water is an energy guzzler.
- For laundry, most loads don't need hot water. Wash in cold. 90% of the energy used by washing machines goes into heating the water.

## Prayer

*Good and gracious God,  
you are the light of the world.  
Forgive us for acting as if creation  
belongs to us, rather than you.  
Help us to conserve and use wisely  
the treasures of our Earth.  
Teach us lifestyles which  
are a blessing for creation.  
May your Spirit light the way.  
Amen.*

## Know Where Your Energy Comes From

Mountaintop Removal is a commonly used method to extract coal in the cheapest way possible. Forest and topsoil are scraped away, up to 800 feet of a mountain is blasted off, coal is scooped out, and giant machines push tons of rock and debris into valleys and streams below. The result is extensive damage to nearby communities and poisoning of their water supply.

- Wash laundry and run dishwashers only when full. Also, air dry – it's free!
- Lower the temperature of your water heater to 120 degrees. Don't overheat.

### Appliances

- Abstain from the clothes dryer (or over-drying) whenever possible. Line drying saves energy and money.
- Use energy-saving settings on the big four: refrigerator, dishwasher, clothes washer and dryer.
- Power down. 5-10% of home energy can be consumed by electronics when they're not in use. Use power strips for TVs, computers, or anything with a light.
- Get an energy audit from your local utility company.
- When replacing appliances, go with Energy Star models.
- Get rid of any old second-refrigerators. About 5% of a household electric bill goes for the refrigerator.

### Alternative Energy

- Many utility companies offer the option of purchasing green power. Find out how you can buy it by visiting the Department of Energy's state-by-state list of providers.

## Steps Continued

Visit the  
Online Prayer  
Chapel  
[www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org)

1. Take the virtual energy savings tour of your home.
2. Identify the best ways to save energy by using an online Home Energy Saving Calculator.
3. Become acquainted with the Interfaith Power and Light organization in your state.
4. Learn how Mountaintop Removal mining is devastating God's creation and harming the poorest in Appalachia.

All this and more available by joining our online community at [www.Lent45.org](http://www.Lent45.org).

Protecting God's Creation • Embracing Gospel Justice • Nurturing Spiritual Fulfillment

# Transportation

*Our Lenten practice this week is to explore alternative ways of getting around in order to reduce our carbon emissions.*

## We need to reconsider how we get around.

Earth's climate has always been changing – sometimes slowly, sometimes suddenly. But today's situation is unique. The change is being caused by one of God's creatures. Humans have become a massive force. Our population has dramatically increased (approximately 7 billion today, compared to 1.6 billion in 1900) and our technological inventiveness has improved.

The production of industrial chemicals has expanded and the use of petroleum has become widespread. We can hardly imagine our life without the multiplicity of products which involve petroleum use. The benefits are remarkable. But petroleum also has harmful effects upon the planet's atmosphere. Plus, it is a non-renewable energy resource. The supply is limited. When it's gone, it's gone. We are now challenged to find renewable energy sources such as solar, wind or geothermal.

Though comprising less than 5% of the world's population, the U.S. is responsible for about 20% of the carbon dioxide being emitted. Minimizing the use of our cars and selecting alternative means of transportation whenever possible can help curb the trend toward global climate change and save precious petroleum resources for future generations.

During Lent we have been exploring how to live out God's call to be good stewards of Earth's resources and to care for the planet. This week's challenge may be the toughest of all: to examine our transportation choices. Since 1/3 of U.S. air pollution comes from petroleum-powered transportation, we need to think carefully about how we get around.

*"God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."*

– John 3:17

## What Churches are Saying

### 1. Examine Our Personal Habits

"The American people, beginning with members of our churches, must be challenged to form personal habits consistent with the need to cut back on the emissions of the gases that are causing the greenhouse effect and the depletion of the ozone layer." – **Presbyterian Church USA, Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice**

### 2. Encounter Christ in All Places

"What difference would it make for congregations to reconsider when Sunday worship begins and ends ... if we imagined that the gathering rite begins on our way to church, and the sending concludes after we arrive home? If we walk, bicycle, take public transportation, or carpool, how do these forms of transportation offer opportunities to 'encounter Christ in all the places life leads?' Can we, in fact, encounter Christ in strangers on the bus or the sidewalk, birds in the air, or trees by the road?"

– **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

### 3. Dominion is not Domination

"Genesis 1:26-28 states that human beings are created in God's 'image and likeness' and given dominion over all other creatures. 'Dominion' does not mean 'domination,' but refers to the need for humans to exercise responsibility for the earth as God's representatives."

– **Episcopal Church**

### 4. Ensure an Affordable Energy Future

"A transition to energy efficiency and renewable energy sources will combat global warming, protect human health, create new jobs, and ensure a secure, affordable energy future."

– **United Methodist Church**

### 5. Protect the Ecological Balance

"The degradation of the environment is a worrying concern. The Church takes it upon herself to give voice to the true aspirations of humanity in favor of an ecological balance which does not put at risk our earth and the whole creation made by the Creator's hands and given to humanity as the abode of beauty and balance, a gift and basic resource of all human existence."

– **World Synod of Roman Catholic Bishops**

You Can  
Participate  
in the Lent 4.5  
Online Community  
[www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org)



*Driving is the most polluting thing that most of us do.  
Burning gasoline adversely affects God's creation.*

*This Lent we are trying to live more simply and with greater sensitivity to the others with whom we share this planet.*

## Did You Know

- The U.S. is 4.5% of the world's population and consumes 25% of the world's petroleum.
- The U.S. has 30% of the world's automobiles.
- U.S. drivers average spending 780 hours in a car every year.
- U.S. drivers average consuming 500 gallons of gasoline every year.
- Using one gallon of gasoline emits 20 pounds of carbon dioxide.
- Riding public transit can save individuals up to \$9,190 annually.

## Action Steps

For most of us who depend upon our car to get around, finding alternative means of transportation isn't going to be easy. Can you imagine taking one step in the direction of less driving? The typical U.S. household makes 496 shopping trips a year, averaging 7.02 miles per trip. That's 3482 miles per year, the distance from Florida to Alaska. Set a target to decrease non-essential driving – 10%, 20% or 30%. This week of Lent, offer the Earth a kind of Sabbath – rest your car.



### If There's Only One Thing You Can Do ...

**Try abstaining from your car for one whole day.** Plan ahead so driving won't be necessary that day. Select a day when you can use public transportation or bicycle if you need to go somewhere. Freeing yourself from your vehicle can be life changing... for you and the planet.



### Consider Alternatives

- Sacrifice. Before getting into the car, ask: Is this trip absolutely necessary? Can I combine errands into one trip? Can I walk or bike?
- Become familiar with public transportation! If possible, ride public transportation at least once this week – to work or any destination.
- Make at least one trip this week by bike. If shopping, carry a backpack.
- Skip the elevator, take the stairs – burn calories, not electricity.
- Reduce air travel. One cross country roundtrip = 2000 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) per passenger
- Share a ride. Carpooling saves on carbon emissions.

### Short Trips

40% of all urban travel happens within 2 miles of home, and 90% of those trips are by car. This week, give up driving to nearby destinations.

- Walk to all locations within six blocks of your home.
- When eating out, choose a nearby restaurant and walk instead of driving across town.
- Plan ahead – combine numerous small trips into one.

### School Trips

Nearly 30% of driving is getting kids to school. Consider options.

- Select an alternative way to get to school. Walk, bike or bus this week.
- Join or start a neighborhood carpool.
- Stop needless idling. Turn off the engine while waiting to pick up kids.

### If You Must Drive

Here are some ways to lower energy consumption:

- Drive courteously. Don't tailgate or bully anyone with your vehicle.
- Don't drive faster than 60 mph. It saves gas and reduces stress.
- Drive in the extreme right lane. Slow down – fast from speed.
- Don't warm the engine more than 10 seconds – that's enough!
- Use a hybrid car. Make your next purchase a fuel efficient model.

Submit Prayer Requests at [www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org)

## Prayer

*O Giver of Life,  
you called your chosen people  
to journey with you  
and blessed their movement.  
Guide us as we search  
for alternative means  
to fuel our journeys.  
Give us the creativity and courage  
to protect your creation  
and share its resources fairly.  
Amen.*

## Steps Continued

1. Experiment with public transportation in your area.
2. Know your local air quality rates. Go to [www.scorecard.org](http://www.scorecard.org).
3. Calculate your carbon trail and discover the true cost of owning a car.
4. Learn how to make your car more fuel efficient.

All this and more available by joining our online community at [www.Lent45.org](http://www.Lent45.org).

# Gratitude & Generosity

Our Lenten practice this week is almsgiving – exploring new ways of opening our hearts.

## Gratitude and generosity are gifts of the Spirit.


This Lent, we have been trying to embrace Christian simplicity by bringing contemporary meaning and value to the Lenten discipline of fasting. Abstaining from over-consuming or recklessly wasting God's creation is essential for anyone striving to walk in the footsteps of Jesus today. Taking up the cross means making decisions to forgo self-centeredness and indifference to the needs of our world.

This week we recall how Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, asking us to follow his example. We believe in Christ, but we also follow Christ by living and acting as Jesus did. Washing feet is a model of generosity and service for us to imitate.

We live in the wealthiest nation in human history. Jesus had a lot to say about not being attached to our possessions and taking responsibility for the common good.

Gratitude and generosity go together like fire and heat. Gratitude is ignited when we realize how precious the fragile gift of being alive on this beautiful planet is and how blessed we are. Generosity naturally flows from a sense of being part of the web of God's creation. When it finally dawns on us that we participate in one vibrant community called life, we rediscover a responsibility to get involved and make a difference.

As Christians, we practice simplicity for the sake of generosity. Fasting and almsgiving are Lenten companions. In the end, our observance of Lent 4.5 is not only about doing less harm. It is about doing more good by sharing what we can. The goal is to bring forth a new springtime in our world – a human presence which is environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling and socially just.



*Use your voice to speak on behalf of the poor, the unborn of future generations, the immigrant, the Earth and those marginalized by our society.*

*"If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."*

– John 13:14-15

## What Churches are Saying

### 1. Generosity is a Fundamental Christian Virtue

"Suffering today is because people are hoarding, not giving, not sharing. Jesus made it very clear. Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to me. Give a glass of water, you give it to me. Receive a little child, you receive me. Clear."

– Mother Theresa of Calcutta

### 2. Participate in the Work of Renewal

"Despite these interconnected threats to life and hope, God's creative work continues. Despite the ways we all contribute to these problems, God still invites each one of us to participate in the work of renewal. We must begin the work of renewing creation by being renewed in our own hearts and minds. We cannot help the world until we change our way of being in it."

– United Methodist Church

### 3. Demonstrate Generosity

"We ask you... to demonstrate simplicity of lifestyle in our patterns of consumption to counteract greed and over-consumption. Such greed dictates so much of our economic past that it must be transformed into generosity and compassion."

– Episcopal Church

### 4. Reduce Your Burden on the Earth

"We challenge ourselves, particularly the economically secure, to tithe environmentally. Tithers would reduce their burden on the earth's bounty by producing ten percent less in waste, consuming ten percent less in non-renewable resources, and contributing the savings to earthcare efforts."

– Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### 5. Scripture Compels Our Care for Creation

"We understand scriptures compel us to act on our faith grounded in wonder, reverence, love, and respect for all of God's creation. But clearly, God's creation is groaning under the burden of injustice, greed, and arrogance."

– United Church of Christ

*"True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice that produces beggars needs restructuring."*

– Martin Luther King, Jr

Imagine the Earth divided equally among all of us. Each person would receive 4.5 acres. Now imagine that everything you need – food, energy, home, clothing, appliances, gadgets – must come from those 4.5 acres. But it takes 22.3 acres to maintain the average American lifestyle. There is a new way of observing Lent that helps us care for God's creation by taking steps toward using only our fair share of its resources. Moving in the direction of 4.5 is essential for anyone walking in the footsteps of Jesus today. Information online at [www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org).



Throughout Lent we have been discerning ways God might be calling us to embrace Gospel justice and protect creation by living more simply, reducing consumption and wasting less. Now at the end of Lent, we have an opportunity to spend – and spend lavishly! Spend time getting involved in projects for the common good. Spend energy advocating for causes you believe in. Spend money to support organizations working to care for creation and promote justice. The opportunities are many. Challenge yourself to be charitable and act on behalf of the common good.

## Making Choices

- \$8 buys 15 organic apples OR 25 fruit trees for farmers in Honduras.
- \$30 buys an ER DVD box set OR a First Aid kit for a village in Haiti.
- \$73 buys a new mobile phone OR a new mobile health clinic to care for AIDS orphans in Uganda.
- \$2400 buys a high definition TV OR schooling for an entire village in Tanzania.

## Action Steps



### If There's Only One Thing You Can Do ...

**Join the microfinance movement** – fund at least a \$25 loan. Online organizations like [Kiva.org](http://Kiva.org), [Oikocredit.org](http://Oikocredit.org) and [Opportunity.org](http://Opportunity.org) offer possibilities for microloans and job training for people in the developing world. You can help alleviate poverty through empowering people. Gift certificates from these organizations can make great birthday or Easter gifts.

### Connect

- Practice acts of social kindness – pick up litter, watch your neighbor's kids for free, visit a shut-in or someone in a nursing home, coordinate a meal for someone who has lost a loved one or is ill.
- Go out of your way to make contact with a person of another race, nationality, creed or life-style. Consider inviting them for a meal. Read Ephesians 2:11-22.
- Buy Fair Trade products. With each purchase you can vote for businesses that respect God's creation and ensure equitable pay for their laborers.
- Plant a tree. It's a personal investment in caring for creation.
- Volunteer with an organization working on behalf of social justice, environmental sustainability or spiritual fulfillment within your community.

### Advocate

- Use your voice to speak on behalf of the poor, the unborn of future generations, the immigrant, the Earth and those marginalized by our society.
- Learn how to uproot causes of inequity and change policies to help lift people out of poverty. Look into Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam, Tearfund, Micah Challenge, or Lazarus at the Gate.
- Speak to the powerful. Urge elected officials to support legislation making justice and creation-care a priority.

### Share

- Give to a project you care about. Wise Giving Alliance can help you make informed decisions about giving, including an in-depth report on national charities.
- Donate to a charity sponsored by your church. Check out faith-based charities through [www.give.org](http://www.give.org) or similar charity-review sites.
- Adopt a refugee family that has moved into your area. Contribute furniture, household items or clothing to help settle immigrant families.

Visit the  
Online Prayer  
Chapel  
[www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org)

## Prayer

*Loving God,  
your heart is open  
to the call of your creatures and all creation.  
Open our eyes to see the needs of others.  
Open our ears to hear their cry.  
Open our hearts that we might feel their anguish.  
Open our hands that we might respond.  
Give us compassion like your own.  
Amen.*

## Steps Continued

1. How rich are you? Input your earnings at [globalrichlist.com](http://globalrichlist.com) and find out what percentile you're in.
2. Learn about Socially Responsible Investing (SRI).
3. Look into programs offered by JustFaith Ministries.
4. Explore online resources at Education for Justice.
5. Learn about the International Institute for Compassionate Cities.

All this and more available by joining our online community at [www.Lent45.org](http://www.Lent45.org).

# Lent

## A Time of Purification A Time of Readjustment

Lent is an appropriate time to reflect on how our lives impact the world and other people with whom we share it. This year we look at how our daily and habitual choices affect creation, as well as consider what lifestyle changes are being required of us. With Lent 4.5, the foundational practices of Lent of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving can be engaged in new and meaningful ways.

**PRAYER** – Lent 4.5 leads you into prayerful gratitude for the gift of life in all its forms. It stirs a spirit of penance for the ways God’s planet has been misused. Through quiet listening you can awaken to the sacred voice of God speaking through creation.

**FASTING** – Lent 4.5 brings contemporary meaning and value to fasting. It suggests practical ways in which you can abstain from habits of consumption that harm God’s creation and spawn injustice. You will learn to fast in ways that can actually make a difference in the wellbeing of our world.

**ALMSGIVING** – Lent 4.5 offers suggestions for making small but significant lifestyle changes that express care for creation and concern for the common good. It offers you opportunities for getting involved and making a difference.

**CONVERSION** – The ultimate goal of Lent is “metanoia” – a conversion of heart – leading the Christian community into a deeper baptismal commitment to walk in the footsteps of Jesus by living in harmony with God, creation, and the entire human family.



**The Earth is our home planet. It is holy ground,** made sacred by the footsteps of Jesus. From the beginning, God declared it very good. Today there is a growing awareness that God’s planet is being damaged and its resources are not fairly shared.

**Go Online.**  
Sign-Up for **FREE**  
**Weekly Lenten**  
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[www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org)

**Lent 4.5** This year our church will be participating in Lent 4.5.

It is a seven-week faith program of prayer, fasting and almsgiving which can help **Protect God’s Creation, Embrace Gospel Justice, and Nurture Spiritual Fulfillment.**

Each week you will learn about the significant issues, what the church is saying about them, and how you can take practical steps to make a difference in our world.

### EPISCOPAL CHURCH

“We can choose lives of voluntary simplicity, rejecting habits of wasteful consumption and making thoughtful choices for decent living.”

### EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

“When we act interdependently and in solidarity with creation, we do justice.”

### PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA

“Earth-keeping today means insisting on sustainability – the ongoing capacity of natural and social systems to thrive together.”

### ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

“The issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle and the prevailing models of consumption.”

### UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

“We seek to cultivate attitudes of sacred covenanting among peoples and between humanity and the non-human creation.”

### UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

“Our covenant with God requires us to be stewards, protectors, and defenders of all creation.”



*Caring for creation and living more simply are an essential part of faith for those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus today.*

## One of the major causes of damage to God’s creation and injustice in our world is the pattern of human consumption.

**4.5** If the Earth were divided equally among us, each person now living on the planet would be entitled to approximately 4.5 acres. From that 4.5 acres we would have to get everything we need for our life. Our food, housing, energy, clothing, appliances, cars, water and everything we consume come from somewhere on this planet.

A fair-share is 4.5 acres. But according to Global Footprint data, the average Canadian uses 14.2 acres – and it takes a staggering 22.3 acres to make the average lifestyle in the United States possible.

Naively, some think we can have a just world by lifting others to our standard of living. We now realize that is impossible. The Earth is limited, and its resources are limited.

### The Current Situation is Unsustainable

Today, humans are consuming God’s creation faster and more extensively than ever before. According to a United Nations report (Global Biodiversity Outlook 2, 2010), the natural systems of the Earth are under severe stress caused by over-consumption, and they are being degraded by careless abuse.

We have soil erosion with 30% of the world’s arable land being lost in the last 40 years. The forests are being cut at an increasing rate. The waters of our rivers, streams and oceans are turning toxic because of harmful industrial chemicals. The number of large fish in the oceans has declined by two-thirds in the last 50 years due to intensive fishing. The purity of our air is becoming polluted with dangerous emissions. As the toxic burden accumulates in people’s bodies, we are beginning to realize that humans will not be healthy if they live on a sick planet.

This is a huge global problem. As Christians in affluent countries, we have a faith problem. Those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ today cannot ignore or remain indifferent to the consumption habits of our country. If everyone lived by North American standards of consumption, we would need four or five planets. However, we have only one.

The way we consume must change if we are going to bring forth a world that is both sustainable and just. How can we share our planet with

nearly 7 billion other human beings in a way that enables all of us to live with dignity?

Specifically, how can our observance of Lent this year make a direct response to care for God’s creation and address global poverty?

A world where we care for God’s creation and embrace Gospel justice is a world where everyone can live well, within the means of one planet. It is going to take all of us pulling together toward this common goal. It is going to take conversion. Lent is the time to begin.



### How Much Are We Using?

Humans are using more resources than the Earth can provide. We are in global ecological overshoot. According to Global Footprint 2009 data ([www.footprintnetwork.org](http://www.footprintnetwork.org)), the amount of acreage it takes to support the average lifestyle varies greatly from country to country.

Congo – 2.4	Israel – 13.3	South Africa – 6.8
Spain – 13.9	Egypt – 3.5	Germany – 10.0
Thailand – 4.3	Haiti – 1.2	New Zealand – 18.7
England – 15.1	Chile – 5.7	Vietnam – 2.5
Colombia – 4.6	Canada – 14.2	United States – 22.3

## Weekly Lenten Themes

Creation isn't just parks and backyards. We eat it, drink it, breathe it, wear it, use it to heat our homes, fuel our cars, and make our stuff.

This Lent, be part of the Christian simplicity movement. Abstain from those daily choices and habits that can harm God's creation or from taking more than your fair share.

Each week, through handouts such as this, Lent 4.5 offers sensible positive things you can do to make a difference.

### Ash Wednesday – Christian Simplicity

Fasting from over-consumption and living more simply

### First Week of Lent – Food

Buying and eating food responsibly

### Second Week of Lent – Consumption

Reconsidering our relationship to stuff

### Third Week of Lent – Water

Conserving and protecting the sacred gift of water

### Fourth Week of Lent – Energy

Using energy resources more efficiently

### Fifth Week of Lent – Transportation

Exploring alternative ways of getting around

### Holy Week – Gratitude and Generosity

Discovering new ways of opening our hearts

This Lent you can protect God's creation, embrace Gospel justice and nurture a spiritually fulfilling life through Christian simplicity.

*Moving from the average American lifestyle that needs 22.3 acres to 4.5 acres won't be easy. No one can change everything at once. Don't take on more than you can handle, but each week do something to abstain from negligently using creation or taking too much. Sure, they're small steps. But small steps can build momentum for national change.*



*Caring for creation and living more simply are an essential part of faith for those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus today.*

## Four Ways to Participate

### Become Informed and Take Action

Weekly handouts offer practical and effective steps you can take to fast and abstain from habits that harm creation or misuse its resources.

### Explore the Online Resources

A lot more information is available at the Lent 4.5 website. Interactive resources are available online to help you learn more about the issues and offer guidance for any actions you choose to take. Go to [www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org).

### Receive Weekly Email Reflections

Subscribe to receive a weekly Lenten reflection. Go online to [www.lent45.org](http://www.lent45.org) and sign-up. Become awakened, explore the issues, and get inspired. It's free!

### Participate in a Discussion Course

*Christian Simplicity: A Gospel Value* is a seven-session discussion course for those who want to go deeper. Groups of 8-12 people meet weekly during Lent to prayerfully reflect and discuss readings from a course book.

*"And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*

– Micah 6:8

