

10 Things You Can Do

To Care for God's Creation

Do one thing. Small actions multiplied by thousands of people can have real effects.

Slow down on adjusting the thermostat.

Summer air conditioning use is your greatest energy use, year round. In the summer, stay cool by drinking plenty of water, use ice in your drinks, wear fabrics that breathe (like cotton and rayon) use insulated window shades and fans before adjusting the thermostat.

Stay warmer in the winter by adding layers of clothing, drinking hot drinks, exercising and moving around.

Every degree cooler than 78 in the summer and 68 in the winter increases your energy use by 3 percent. (If your thermostat is set for 72 in the summer, that's using 12 percent more energy than at 78 degrees).

Turn off lights and things you're not using.

Television and computer equipment can be plugged into power strips that can be switched off when not in use. Use common sense. A refrigerator or freezer in the garage wastes energy. So do old, inefficient appliances.

Consider energy saving equipment when you buy. Water heaters, light bulbs and refrigerators and freezers are examples.

Take care of your vehicles.

Have maintenance regularly, and keep your tires properly inflated to increase your fuel efficiency. Consider fuel efficiency when buying a vehicle.

Plan your trips.

Combine your errands. Drive with someone else or share pick up/drop off duties with others.

Time your trip to avoid traffic. This keeps emissions down at stop lights. Avoid running the car during the hottest part of the day when emissions do the most damage.

Know where you will park.

Avoid idling your car. Go inside instead of going through a drive through. Leave animals and small children at home in the heat of the day.

Plan your deliveries. Can your deliveries be made by the post office? Can you stock up, or order multiple items?

Bring your own bottles, bags and cups.

Most bottled water is just filtered tap water. Last year, Americans threw away 50 billion plastic water bottles. Imagine drinking 1/3 of each water bottle filled with the oil it takes to produce it and bring it to you. Plastic waste ends up harming plants and wildlife. If you have bags and can't reuse them, bring them (clean) to the grocery store for recycling.

Wash your recyclables.

Dirty items with food on them are not recyclable and contaminate all of the good recyclable items in the bin. Find out where to take items that your recycling company does not, such as batteries, electronics, plastic bags and metal.

Get out the cookbooks.

A diet focused on plant-based food can be fun and creative. Consider planting a garden. Participate in meatless Mondays. Red meat and lamb production are 99 percent inefficient. Quinoa, chickpeas, turkey and chicken and fish are much more environmentally-friendly and can have health benefits as well.

Plan your meals.

So much food is wasted. Prepare and/or order what you need and freeze the rest. Share large entrees. Keep perishables in the refrigerator. Consider buying frozen veggies and fruit if you can't use produce before it spoils.

Contribute to rainforest protection.

Rainforests absorb carbon dioxide. To make a big impact globally, help protect them. The non-profit, **BioIntegrity**, finds and promotes the most economically-efficient rainforest solutions. Visit [BioIntegrity.net/solutions](https://biointegrity.net/solutions) to donate to them. To help BioIntegrity itself, to grow its mission, visit: [Tinyurl.com/help-biointegrity](https://tinyurl.com/help-biointegrity)

Plant and protect trees near you.

They're good for the soil, birds, and the air you breathe. Save paper by asking companies to remove you from their mailing lists if you don't buy from them.

Caring For God's Creation Team
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Austin, Texas