

*“Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.” – Pope Francis, Page 20 of Laudato Si'*

The St. Dennis Care of Creation Team has put together a basic carbon footprint calculator worksheet for parishioners to use to estimate their household's carbon footprint in several areas, such as electricity and vehicle usage. As the EPA notes, *“Many of our daily activities - such as using electricity, driving a car, or disposing of waste - cause greenhouse gas emissions. Together these emissions make up a household's carbon footprint.”* – <https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/>

The Care of Creation Team's goal is to provide information and resources for the parish community to help all of us become better aware of our impact on the environment and how we can become better “stewards of all creation”. The information provided here is intended to help you educate yourself on conserving natural resources and reducing your carbon footprint.

### **Energy Savings in Your Home**

- **Replace incandescent light bulbs with LED light bulbs.** The EPA's ENERGY STAR website notes that ENERGY STAR certified LED light bulbs use 70-90% less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs while generating the same brightness. LED light bulbs last at least 15 times longer and produce 70-90% less heat. More information is available here: [https://www.energystar.gov/products/lighting\\_fans/light\\_bulbs](https://www.energystar.gov/products/lighting_fans/light_bulbs)
- **Turn the lights off every time you leave a room.** By turning lights off, you could save 10 to 20 percent of your total household electricity usage. You don't necessarily need to turn lights completely off to save energy--use a dimmer switch.
  - **Unplug phone chargers, computers, and other electronics when they are not in use.** Did you know that a cell phone charger or a toaster can still consume electricity even when a phone isn't connected to it? In the average home, 25% of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off (Source: [U.S.DOE](https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/energy_efficiency/energy_efficiency.php)). To stop these "phantom loads" when devices are not in use, unplug them or connect them to power strips, which can then be turned off.
- **Consider purchasing wind power through MG&E's Green Power Tomorrow.** St. Dennis uses the savings from our solar panels to purchase wind power from MG&E through Green Power Tomorrow. Wind energy costs 2.44 cents more per kilowatt-hour. You can choose to buy all carbon free electricity, purchase a percent of your electricity that is carbon free or choose a capped amount designed to fit your budget. More information is available here: <https://www.mge.com/environment/green-power/gpt/>
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  - **Regulate the thermostat and use insulation.** Heating and cooling is a large portion of a household's utility budget and energy use. You can reduce your energy needs by as much as 20 to 30 percent by investing in insulation. Additionally, for every degree you lower the thermostat in the winter, you will save up to 5 percent on heating costs. And, if you switch to a programmable thermostat you can save even more. (Source: *Energy Star*)

### **Water Savings in Your Home**

- **Fix Leaks.** A faucet that leaks one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water each year. A leaky toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water every day. To determine whether your toilet has a leak, place a

drop of food coloring in the tank; if the color appears in the bowl without flushing, you have a leak. To find and fix air leaks, ENERGY STAR offers a free [guide](#). (Source: [U.S. EPA](#))

- **Turn water off when you aren't using it.** Turning the water off while brushing your teeth, shaving, or washing your face can save 4.5 gallons each time.

## Recycling

- **Decrease the use of single-use plastics.** Across the world more than 13 billion bags are issued every year to shoppers -- that's about 220 per person. On average, they are used for 12 minutes before being discarded, but then they remain in the environment for thousands of years. Besides carrying your re-usable bags, consider carrying a re-usable water bottle wherever you go.
- **Recycle.** By recycling materials such as aluminum cans, newspapers, and glass jars, you can save energy and landfill space, conserve natural resources, and also prevent pollution. Recycling one ton of paper saves 17 mature trees, 7,000 gallons of water, three cubic yards of landfill space, two barrels of oil, and 4,100 kilowatt-hours of electricity – enough energy to power the average US home for five months. (Source: [U.S. EPA](#))

## Reduce Energy Used for Transportation

- **Plan and Combine Trips:** Combining errands into one trip saves you time and money. Your fuel economy is worse when your engine is cold than when it is warmed up. So, several short trips taken from a cold start can use twice as much fuel as a longer, multipurpose trip covering the same distance. (Source: [FuelEconomy.gov](#))
- **Consider other ways of getting where you need to go.** If possible, try carpooling to work, business presentations, events, or even to run errands. Think of ways you can reduce the number of trips you make using your car. Reduce emissions from cars by walking or cycling. These are not just great alternatives to driving, they are also great exercise.

## Other Ideas

- **Fresh, Local, Organic.** Food travels an average of 1,200 miles before it reaches your plate, so buy locally produced items to save energy and prevent emissions from going into the air. Also, choose fresh foods instead of frozen, since frozen foods require 10 times more energy to produce. Consider buying organic foods, as they are both good for the environment and good for your health since synthetic hormones, most conventional pesticides, as well as other potentially hazardous practices are not used. (Source: [U.S. EPA](#)). You may also consider going meatless one day per week - the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization estimates the meat industry generates nearly one-fifth of the man-made greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, the water needs of livestock are greater than those of vegetables or grains. An estimated 1,800 to 2,500 gallons of water go into a single pound of beef. (Source: [sustainabletable.org](#))
- **Register for Catholic Climate Covenant.** Take the St. Francis Pledge to care for creation and the poor. <http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org>
- **Consider viewing and discussing a film.** The recent documentary [An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power](#), or the 12-minute video on youtube "Know the Creator through Creation" are great ways to educate yourself on climate change and conservation of natural resources.
- **Plant a Tree.** "They (trees) clean air and water, slow climate change, ease poverty and hunger, prevent species loss, and feed the human soul." (Source: [Arbor Day Foundation](#))