

Simple Strategies to Save the Earth

Caring for God's creation is a privilege and a responsibility. In that spirit, the SJN Care for Our Common Home Ministry offers the following earth-friendly ideas. We meet on the second Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m.—please join us! **And visit our web site, cfoch.weebly.com \NEWPAGE\, for additional tips.**

1. Adjust the temperature.

Moving your thermostat down two degrees in winter and up two degrees in the summer can save 2,000 lbs. of carbon dioxide per year. Investing in a programmable thermostat can further cut energy consumption 20 to 30 percent by adjusting the temperature throughout the day. Also, check the temperature setting on your water heater. Energy.gov recommends 120° F. If it's set too high, it's working harder than necessary—and costing you more money.

2. Bring your own shopping bags.

Shopping with reusable bags everywhere you shop is a simple way to reduce pollution and prevent unnecessary harm to wildlife. It also helps you reduce consumption, prevent deforestation, and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

3. Be a careful car owner.

Keep tires properly inflated (add air in the cold winter months), keep your car tuned up, and install a new air filter to boost miles per gallon anywhere from 4 percent to 40 percent (saving time and money). Good maintenance also reduces the oil, coolant, and antifreeze leaks that are carried by rainwater down driveways or through parking lots and that then seep into groundwater supplies.

4. Eat the food you buy—and make less of it meat. Cook from scratch.

Approximately 10 percent of U.S. energy use goes into growing, processing, packaging, and shipping food—about 40 percent of which winds up in the landfill. If you waste less food, then you're cutting down on energy consumption. Since livestock products are among the most resource-intensive to produce, eating less meat can make a difference, too. Also, rethink your takeout habit. Cooking from scratch and freezing meals is a healthy way to reduce food waste and food packaging waste.

5. Close up leaks.

Caulk and weather-strip to seal off air leaks from around windows and doors, and use window putty to seal gaps around loose window panes. Stop heated or cooled air from escaping under doors by attaching "sweeps" to their bottoms. You may also benefit from better insulation in your attic, under your floors, around your hot water heater and pipes, and in crawlspaces.

6. Buy better bulbs.

LED light bulbs use up to 80 percent less energy than conventional incandescent bulbs. They're also cheaper in the long run: a 10-watt LED that replaces your traditional 60-watt bulb will save \$125 in energy use over the light bulb's life.

7. Invest in energy-efficient appliances.

Since first implemented nationally in 1987, efficiency standards for appliances and products have kept 2.3 billion tons of carbon dioxide out of the air. That's about the same amount as the annual carbon pollution of nearly 440 million cars. When shopping for refrigerators, washing machines, and other appliances, look for the Energy Star label which may also offer income tax reductions. Keep units properly serviced to optimize efficiency. Install and use ceiling fans rather than running the air conditioner.

8. Hang your laundry to dry.

According to [Project Laundry List](#), commercial, industrial, and residential clothes dryers use a whopping **15-20%** of domestic energy in the U.S. In 2007 alone, clothes dryers in U.S. homes emitted **54.72 million metric tons** of carbon dioxide. Hanging your clothes out to dry will reduce your carbon footprint and lower your utility bill. Washing your clothes with cold water further improves your energy efficiency.

9. Turn devices off.

Make sure your televisions, computers, video game consoles, cable boxes, and digital video recorders are switched off when you're not using them—or unplugged completely if they light up or use energy when powered down. Chargers for cordless devices also use small amounts of energy even when they're not charging. Plug items into a power strip so you can easily switch them all off at once. Set computers to sleep or hibernate mode.

10. Plan car trips ahead of time. Walk, bike, or take public transportation.

Anything you can do to reduce your transportation footprint by walking, biking, taking public transportation, or telecommuting will be a boon to both the environment and your wallet. Be mindful of the number of trips you make in a given week. Plan your errands, meetings, pickups, and routes ahead of time in order to cut back on emissions, gas use, and your own time.

11. Skip the sink.

Don't let paint, used oil, chemical cleaners, or other questionable household products go down the drain. These items contain toxic ingredients (sodium hypochlorite, ammonia, formaldehyde, etc.) that we don't want in our water supply. The I-66 Transfer Station on West Ox Road accepts household and hazardous waste every day of the week.

12. If you have a dishwasher, put down the sponge.

You use up to 27 gallons of water per load by hand versus as little as 3 gallons with an Energy Star-rated dishwasher. Scrape off food instead of rinsing each dish before you load it.

13. Use the library.

Choose library books over buying new ones, and share your own books with friends.

14. Plant a native garden.

One-third of residential water use goes toward watering the lawn and garden. But flowers, grasses, and bushes native to the area have adapted to regional rainfall rates—so require no extra water—and have better defenses against predators. Another bonus: native plants foster healthy soil and insect life, which attract birds and enhance overall biodiversity.

15. Take a hard look at your outdoor surfaces.

Stormwater flows across hard materials, like concrete or asphalt, and into storm drains—bringing all the particulates it picked up along the way. Stop these pollution streams on your own property by using gravel, paver stones, wood, or other porous materials whenever possible. If a hard surface is unavoidable (such as a driveway), dig a shallow trench along the lower border and add plants or gravel to catch the runoff.

16. Support a local farmer. Or grow your own vegetables.

Most of the food we eat travels hundreds and sometimes even thousands of miles to reach our grocery stores and markets. Do your part to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels and buy locally from a farmer in your region. Shop at a farmer's market or local co-op. As the gardening season gets underway, add a plot of vegetables to grow your own, and give from your bounty to a local soup kitchen or homeless shelter.

17. Conserve water.

Water is quickly becoming one of the most precious resources of the earth and needs our care and conservation. Be mindful of unnecessary water use and don't leave the faucet running. Repair leaking faucets and running toilets. Take shorter showers and install a low-flow showerhead to use less water. More efficient use means less costs in initial water treatment and in heating costs. Drink filtered tap water from a reusable water bottle instead of buying bottled water.

18. Suds up at the car wash.

Use the local car wash to save up to 100 gallons of water per wash. The pros are required to drain their wastewater into sewer systems, where the water is treated before being discharged. Many even recycle that water.

19. Give responsibly.

Reflect on the kinds of gifts you give. Give alternative gifts, such as crafts made by U.S. community groups or fair trade gifts from developing countries. Give an intangible gift, based on a donation to a nonprofit. Give a percentage of your Christmas gift budget to an organization working for a just society. Consider gifts that support your local community and generate minimal waste, such as theater or performance tickets or gift certificates. Give

a gift that helps someone go green, such as energy-saving power strips, motion sensor lights, reusable stainless steel water bottles, and reusable shopping bags. Give the gift of your time. Volunteer for a charitable organization. Offer your friends and family an evening of babysitting or a home-cooked meal.

20. Wrap responsibly.

Commit to using less commercial wrapping. Wrap gifts in recycled materials such as old maps, newspaper, wallpaper samples, or old calendar photos; or wrap gifts in cloth napkins, kitchen towels, or handkerchiefs so the wrapping is part of the present. Recycle gift wrap and greeting cards after Christmas. Donated cards can be re-used by youth groups or art classes.

21. Avoid fast fashion.

To meet demand for the latest fashion trends in the US, many stores offer large quantities of cheap clothing that require a large amount of farmland and energy to produce. Only buy what you need. When clothes shopping, try to choose timeless styles that won't go out of fashion in six months, choose high quality materials and manufacturing so they will last, and buy domestically-made garments whenever possible. Consider organizing clothing swaps with friends. Shop at thrift stores and consignment shops. It's amazing what you can find at a good thrift store!

22. Sign up for renewable energy credits (RECs).

Sign up for renewable energy certificates with Arcadia Power at <https://www.arcadiapower.com/>. You can offset half of your Dominion power usage from renewable wind power at no extra charge when you sign up with Arcadia. Or you can pay a nominal additional charge, and offset 100% of your usage with the purchase of credits from a renewable energy source.

23. Vote! Speak up!

Talk to your friends and family. Make sure your representatives are making good decisions. Encourage Congress to enact laws that limit carbon emissions and promote conservation and renewable energy. Support candidates who commit to climate-change legislation that considers the needs of the poor who suffer the most; shares renewable energy technologies with developing countries; assists workers in industries impacted by climate change and climate change legislation; reduces CO2 emissions from cars and coal-burning power plants; and promotes public transportation.