



Carbon Fast for Lent 2018



Brought to you by Michigan Interfaith Power & Light

Why fast?

Most religious traditions have some form of fasting as part of their spiritual practice. The Muslim season of Ramadan is perhaps the most widely known and practiced form of fasting worldwide. For many Christians, the season of Lent is associated with fasting as part of the preparation for Easter.

As a spiritual practice, fasting purifies us and sharpens our intentions. Like pebbles in our shoe, the hunger pangs of traditional fasting are a steady reminder of an intention to leave behind an old way of life and to prepare for spiritual rebirth. The feeling of hunger prompts a continued awareness of the need to become more conscientious in our actions and to whole-heartedly commit to the inward transformation we seek. Fasting also reminds us to keep in our hearts the plight of the poor and the imperative to care for the least of these.

Many of us grew up “giving something up” for Lent—candy, meat, or other pleasures—only to gleefully indulge in the forbidden item when the season passed. While going without something we enjoy gives us a taste of sacrifice, it often does not bring about a substantial inner change.

Whatever your religious persuasion, our intent with this Carbon Fast is to suggest practices that will go beyond merely “giving up” some conveniences temporarily, but will support a deeper transformation in your relationship with Earth.

Why carbon?

Because carbon dioxide (CO₂) is a heat-trapping gas and key driver of global warming, reducing carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions is a matter of great urgency.

Those who are being affected most severely by climate change—including millions of people in the developing world who have already

lost their homes and livelihoods—are those whose own carbon footprints are the smallest, and who have the fewest resources to cope with the fallout. Reducing our carbon emissions is as much a matter of caring for Creation as it is of protecting the least of these.

*In an effort to keep the calendar fresh, we’ve broadened the types of suggested activities to include water protection and conservation. While some of these are not technically carbon-reducing, we feel they keep the spirit of the fast.

How to use this calendar

This calendar suggests one sustainability-related activity for each day between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Some of these might be things you’re already doing. Some require a little preparation. Some may be challenging or even uncomfortable.

If doing one activity each day seems overwhelming, you might instead choose one activity each week and repeat it each day. Or choose one action and do it for the whole season.

Since Christians are called to dwell in community—to share in one another’s burdens and joys, and to work together as members of one body—we encourage you to see if members of your congregation or family want to participate in the Carbon Fast with you.

As we take steps to do our part—changing the ways we drive our cars, heat and cool our buildings, consume food and other goods—we also recognize that personal lifestyle changes *alone* are not sufficient.

Therefore, we hope this fast helps you be a witness for the cry of the Earth and promote systemic change—as a member of your community and as a citizen.

In this time of repentance and rebirth, we hope above all that this calendar will be a tool for spurring action and reflection, helping us right our relationship with the Earth, in this season and beyond.



February - March 2018 (first half of Lent)



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
11	12	13	14 Ash Wednesday “Dust thou art...” Consider how linked you are to the earth and how you can be in loving relationship with all Creation. Preview the calendar and set your intentions.	15 Calculate your carbon footprint: www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/ . Take note of the activities that are the most carbon-intensive.	16 Consider and pray about your consumption habits. What would Jesus wear, drive, eat, etc.? Set at least 1 concrete goal for shrinking your footprint. Write it down.	17 Save energy and add some beneficial humidity to your house by air-drying your laundry.
18 If your household has more than one car, try to use the more fuel efficient one for errands and trips. Save gas by completing multiple errands on one trip.	19 Schedule a free home energy assessment and get free efficiency upgrades. DTE: 866-796-0512 Consumers: 888-316-8014	20 Learn how to use your programmable thermostat! Tailor it to the season and your schedule. In winter, set it lower when you are away and at night.	21 Water heating is very energy intensive, and chances are your water is hotter than you need. Try turning your water heater down to ~120°.	22 For Palm Sunday, order sustainably grown palms: EcoPalms.org . (Remember that you can use any leftover ashes in the garden.)	23 Learn how your diet impacts the climate at VegMichigan.org . Consider becoming a “reducitarian” by not eating meat for 1 day each week.	24 Netflix and chill tonight with a nature documentary. <i>Planet Earth</i> and <i>Earth’s Natural Wonders</i> are good options. Marvel at the miracle of Creation.
25 Many religions and denominations have statements on the humane treatment of Earth’s non-human creatures. Read yours at HumaneSociety.org .	26 Conventionally grown coffee causes deforestation. Choose shade-grown, organic coffee as a more sustainable option.	27 One roundtrip cross country flight makes up 15% of an average American’s annual CO ₂ footprint. Plan a vacation that doesn’t involve air travel this year.	28 Has your congregation taken steps to green its building? Check out this resource for ideas: MichiganPL.org/StewardsOfHope .	1 Refrigerators are usually the biggest electricity-users in a house. Unplug or recycle old or rarely used refrigerators for significant energy savings.	2 Don’t forget about our member resources and discounts on sustainable products and services: MichiganPL.org/MemberCenter .	3 13% of US GHG emissions are from producing and transporting food. Try to buy food that is grown organically and close to home.
4 30% of landfill mass is food/yard waste. Composting is good for the Earth and your garden: HowToCompost.org .	5 Learn about our oceans and commit to buying only sustainably fished seafood: Oceana.org/living-blue/sustainable-seafood-guide .	6 Does your utility offer a renewable energy option? Green power cuts your emissions and sends your utility the message that consumers want clean energy.	7 Stay cozy and conserve energy by checking your windows and doors for air leakage. Caulk and weatherstrip as needed (these do need maintenance over time!).	8 Save trees and reduce waste by stopping unwanted junk mail at DMAChoice.org .	9 Tame your lead foot on the highway. Higher speeds (55 mph+) reduce fuel economy.	10 Get a tune-up and set your car tire pressure to the recommended level for optimal gas mileage.



March - April 2018 (second half of Lent)



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
11 Take note of how your church's coffee hour is run. Look for greening opportunities like using china instead of paper cups, choosing shade-grown coffee, etc.	12 Is solar energy right for your church? Check out our Solar Guide for Houses of Worship: MichiganIPL.org/Resources/Congregations .	13 Utilities offer free energy saving products and services to their customers, including churches. Take advantage of it! Call us for info: 248-463-8811.	14 Is your voter registration current? Check it out at Michigan.gov/Vote .	15 Identify your MI legislators and learn about their environmental voting track records: michiganlciv.org .	16 Individual carbon-reducing actions alone are not enough! Join our advocacy work: MichiganIPL.org/Advocacy .	17 If you are still using incandescent bulbs, <i>throw them out and replace them with LEDs now!</i> It seems wasteful, but the energy savings make this a no-brainer.
18 Donate to your congregation's Green Ministry or an organization that promotes Creation Care... maybe Michigan IPL!	19 Protect our waterways by safely disposing prescription drugs. Drug take-back programs are best, but earth911.com suggests additional methods that are less bad than flushing them.	20 Learn about how environmental degradation affects the global poor. Fast today to remain mindful of their hardship.	21 As you dream of spring, consider low maintenance perennials and grasses to reduce the need for watering. What can you do to cut down the size of your thirsty lawn?	22 If your windows are well-caulked but still emanating cold air, consider using plastic window sealing. Tyz-All interior storm window kits are very effective: energyfederation.org .	23 Roof icicles are a sign that your building is losing heat. Attic hatches, fireplaces and recessed lights can be culprits. It's also critical to ensure that your attic is well-insulated.	24 Minimize your purchasing of new items, especially those with a lot of packaging and those made with petroleum/plastic. What items can you borrow or buy second hand?
25 Observe the Sabbath by unplugging your electronics and yourself! Relish simple pleasures.	26 Large roofs and parking lots = lots of stormwater run-off (and often high drainage fees). Could your church add rain barrels or a rain garden to mitigate this?	27 Install a WaterSense-labeled shower head to save water and energy (often while improving water pressure).	28 Religious groups the world over are divesting from fossil fuels. Learn about how socially and environmentally-responsible investing could work for you.	29 Holy Thursday Start some organic seeds indoors. Witness God's love in action! Tomatoes, peppers and eggplant should be started now for an early harvest this summer.	30 Good Friday Learn about how to leave a green legacy: GreenBurialCouncil.org .	31 Holy Saturday Plant a tree. Trees reduce storm water run-off, absorb CO ₂ , and if planted on the south or west sides of your house provide cooling shade in the summer.
1 Easter How did your carbon fast go? What new behaviors did you begin?	2 Bonus: Recalculate your carbon footprint: www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/ . Did it shrink? Let us know!	3	4	5	6	7