



Caring for Our Common Home

Your Environmental Concerns Committee welcomes you to Common Home. This is the inaugural issue of what is planned as a quarterly newsletter with a regular schedule starting in January of 2023. With Pope Francis and so many organizations and individuals in our church being active in the challenge of climate change we intend to provide this newsletter as a way of helping you stay aware of the critical issues impacting our environment and actions you can take in meeting our obligations in preserving the home God has created for us. We look forward to learning and progressing together, so let our committee know your thoughts, concerns, and ideas. Each of us matter to our planet, and together we can keep it a nurturing place for generations to come.

Being Aware, Taking Care

Here I am in mid-September, with summer heat lingering on, days getting shorter, and change in the air. Time to think about fall, and—with climate change as a backdrop—what energy-saving chores might I consider. Duct tape and foam rubber were Dad’s favorite go-to fix-it materials, both found in abundance at his store: Dizzy Dave’s Trading Post. Nowadays I go to a local hardware store or big box store for my home fix-it supplies.

My first thought was to snug up that drafty door between the garage and family room to reduce heat loss. Keeping the environment in mind, I checked out some useful tips from Louisville Climate Action Network (LCAN) under “Take Action” on their home page, where simple steps to reducing your carbon footprint are provided. The weatherizing category on windows

continued on page 3

Get Involved

With midterm elections on the horizon, Interfaith Power & Light (IPL), a national network of state-based environmental faith groups, is pushing its members to register and vote with creation care front and center.

"Since the spring, IPL has mobilized its state chapters to engage their local congregations through its Faith Climate Justice Voter campaign. The effort seeks... to educate communities of all religious traditions about the importance of voting and what's at stake in the coming elections for the environment, climate change and democracy." Read more at [EarthBeat, https://www.nronline.org/news/earthbeat/interafaith-campaign-pushes-climate-concerned-voters-midterm-polls](https://www.nronline.org/news/earthbeat/interafaith-campaign-pushes-climate-concerned-voters-midterm-polls).

Greenhouse Gases: What's The Big Deal?

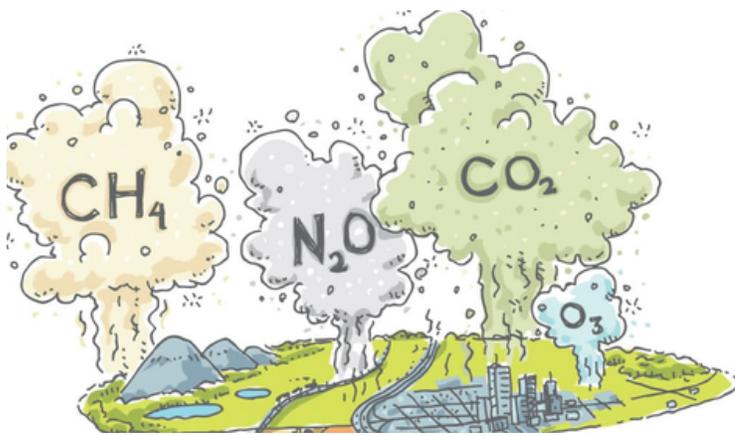


Welcome to Greenhouse Gases 101, and learn how earth's climate is being impacted by these overabundant gases. Much like the glass of a greenhouse, gases in Earth's atmosphere sustain life by trapping the sun's heat. These "greenhouse gases" allow the sun's rays to pass through and warm the planet but prevent this warmth from escaping the atmosphere into space. Without them, the Earth would be too cold to sustain life as we know it.

For thousands of years, the global greenhouse-gas supply was essentially stable, with natural processes removing as much carbon from the atmosphere as they released into it. But since the Industrial Revolution of the mid 1700s, human activities have added huge quantities of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide to our atmosphere, causing a "greenhouse effect" trapping energy from the sun and causing Earth's temperature to rise. Of the several greenhouse gasses, these three are of primary concern because they are associated with human activities.

The first, carbon dioxide, is the main contributor to climate change, primarily through the burning of fossil fuels. The lifetime of carbon dioxide cannot be measured in years because instead of being destroyed over time it moves through the Earth's carbon cycle. Some carbon dioxide will, however, remain in the atmosphere for thousands of years. In 2020, carbon dioxide was 79% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions from human activities, mainly through the combustion of fossil fuels for electricity (26% of the U.S. total) and from transportation (24% of the U.S. total).

The second primary greenhouse gas, methane, is emitted through oil and gas production, cattle farming, and rice farming, along with decomposition of waste in landfills and food waste. Its average lifetime in the atmosphere is only 11.8 years, but its atmospheric impact is 25 times greater than carbon dioxide. In 2020, methane made up about 11% of all U.S. greenhouse emissions from human activities, with landfills being the third largest source of methane emissions in the U.S.



The third: Nitrous oxide's primary sources are agricultural activities, such as chemical fertilizer use. The average lifetime of nitrous oxide in the atmosphere is 109 years. Nitrous oxide is 300 times more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. In 2020, nitrous oxide was about 7% of all U.S. greenhouse gases from human activities.

So, how do we reduce greenhouse gases? Reuse and recycle as much as possible. Use less air conditioning and heating. Buy energy efficient products such as light bulbs and unplug

electrical devices when not in use. Walk or cycle instead of driving. Eat less meat, and don't WASTE food! Drive electric vehicles. Consume less generally and fight for change!

Being Aware continued from page 1

instructs beginners like me to press “backer rod” into gaps of ¼ inch or more BEFORE opening my caulk tube. Dad would have sliced some foam rubber to fill that gap and then duct taped over it! But you get the idea.

LCAN has more simple steps, like inserting inexpensive foam gaskets (Yes, Dad: foam) in light switch covers and electric outlets on exterior walls of my house to keep cold air from blowing in. The site also suggests using spray foam (more foam, I'm loving it!) in gaps too big to caulk or for surface-mounted pipes where pipe wrapping won't fit.

LCAN's weatherizing category even has a page on my initial drafty door project. Their “How to Seal Doors for Winter” says to install a door sweep along the bottom of exterior doors to block out cold air. Seal gaps between the door and side jambs with long pieces of weather stripping (or Dad's preference, foam rubber strips). I learned that a 1/8-inch gap around the perimeter of a door will allow in as much air as a small window open halfway!

LCAN also instructed me on doing a whole-house energy assessment myself. Some things were obvious and simple, like checking for and sealing obvious drafts, changing to LED lights, and unplugging appliances not in use to prevent phantom loads. Did you know that flat-screen TVs draw energy even when they're off? The site also has information about indoor air pollution and insulation requirements.

If I have any existing problems such as condensation and uncomfortable, drafty rooms, I may want to have an energy audit done by a building performance auditor. The cost is typically around \$400. Such an audit should include a blower door test and a thermographic scan. You can read about both at, you guessed it, LCAN.



We can all take simple steps to help reduce the earth's carbon footprint. Many parish families are doing it with practical actions every day. In this ongoing feature of Common Home we'll highlight a family who find ways to manage their household while minimizing their carbon footprint.

To get this started, let me tell you some things the Reilly household does. We've taken some big steps and some small steps. We're in our second year with solar panels on our house. It was a big expense, but the tax break offset 26% of the cost (and now it's 30%) and seeing a monthly electric bill as low as \$15 sure feels good. The other big step we took was buying an electric plug-in hybrid car. Again, a \$7,500 tax break put the price in range (now used EV's can also earn you a \$4,000 tax break). It's nice going six months or more without hitting the gas station, especially with this inflation!

Some smaller steps we use is a 55-gallon water barrel connected to our back downspout. When it doesn't rain, our plants still get rainwater. That includes three trees we planted in our yard thanks to an MSD grant that paid for 80% of that project. We try to avoid bringing plastic and styrofoam into the house by using laundry sheets (no plastic jugs), shampoo bars (no plastic bottles) and liquid hand soap in recyclable cardboard containers (lets us refill and reuse our plastic soap dispensers forever).

So how does your family do it? Send us an email at commonhome914@gmail.com. Let's share what works for our families and for our planet.

Fun, Food & Family

Creation Care Fair Coming October 8

This year's fair will be a hands-on experience for kids wanting to learn more about the environment, for moms looking to improve the family's eating habits and to dads curious about solar power and electric vehicles. And there's lots of fun to be had. Using recycled materials, kids will make their own artistic creations. Adults can take a spin in an EV and everyone will have the chance to meet St. Francis!

A master gardener will be on hand with an interactive demonstration on native plants. So if gardening is your thing, we can give you tips on greening up your home environment and show you how to make your own compost. Grocery prices busting your budget? See how reducing food waste also helps the environment. Tired of dealing with all the plastic in your life? We've got solutions.

Do you care for babies? If so, you'll like the information we'll have explaining the advantages of using cloth diapers for the health of your young one and for the health of our planet. (Did you know that disposable diapers stay in the environment for over 200 years?) Confused about recycling? We'll help you sort out how to make sure your home recycling efforts are on the mark.

"We want to show that there are plenty of ways to help our planet," explains Environmental Concerns Committee Chair, Mark Reilly. "You'll see practical ways you can lower your carbon footprint by making lifestyle choices that are earth-friendly and easy to do. We'll be showing off ideas from transportation to food to how we power our homes, and to materials and goods we use every day."

"The tips you can pick up are not only good for the environment, but they're also good for wallets too. Learning to reduce food waste cuts your grocery bill, electric vehicles take the sting out of rising gas prices and using solar power can shrink your monthly electric bill to lower than the price of a movie ticket. You can save green by going green."

There will be plenty of door prizes to win also. Each display table will be handing out free tickets for drawings on solar-powered gadgets, reusable and compostable plastic ware sets, restaurant gift cards, plants, trees and shrubs. Drawings will be held each hour.

Pick up some health food recipes and sample a taste at the cooking demonstration tables. You can also grab a tasty treat from a food truck serving Peruvian food; it will even have some vegetarian choices.

This fair also has a flair for music. And you'll enjoy the soothing sounds of Ground-Note Music, that features a hammered dulcimer and guitar pieces.

The Creation Care Fair is being organized and staffed by the Environmental Concerns Committee. It will be held on **Saturday, October 8, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.** Come to the Worship Center exterior under the overhang.

