



# A Lenten Fast for the Earth

a resource created by

The Bishop's Committee on Creation Care  
Diocese of Toronto



## A Lenten Fast for the Earth

At the start of the biblical story, we are called to “serve and observe” the creation (Genesis 2.15). But sometimes we don’t know what to observe or how to serve the land and creatures that surround us. This Lenten resource is provided to help us in our walk as servants of creation.

We have already sacrificed much during the Covid pandemic: time with family and friends, community gatherings, and the give and take of personal interactions at work or play. While some of these changes have been good for the earth, many of us would like further guidance on faithful living in the face of the climate crisis. The following Lenten fast provides such guidance.

Note also that many of these fasts reflect a position of privilege: unlimited electricity, excess food, and abundant water. For many, the call to fast with regard to these items is unnecessary, since economic and social circumstances inhibit access in the first place. For others, giving up disposable or unjustly created products is simply impossible. To this end, we hope that the fast from injustice during week six will encourage us all to work for a community where all have enough. In the meantime, we hope that this fast will make you aware of what is possible in your life.

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide can be used one of two ways:

- 1) Follow the fasts for each week as outlined below.
- 2) Read through each of the fasts below and choose the one that you would like to dig deeply into for the entire six weeks of lent.

### DON'T FAST ALONE!

Whether you choose 1) or 2), you may wish to find others who want to join you on this Lenten journey.

Discuss with each other how you will practice the fast; share ideas and encouragement.

At the end of each week, talk about what was hard, what was rewarding, and how this fast has impacted your commitment to living faithfully as servants of creation.

### PLAN AHEAD!

Whether you decide to do the fast on your own or with others, read through the entire Lent fast ahead of time so that you can prepare for each week.



## **Meat Fast** **(Ash Wednesday through first Saturday in Lent)**

*"God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.'"*

*Genesis 1:29*

It seems that God's original plan was to hang out in a food forest with some brand new vegetarians. Only after the flood does meat-eating enter the story. This short first week of Lent, we are giving up meat, since much of the meat we consume degrades creation, destroys ecosystems, and causes pain and distress to animals. Plan to continue your meat fast every Friday during Lent.

**Instead** of meat, test out an all vegetarian diet. Who knows? Your taste buds may thank you! For recommended recipes try out [Cookie & Kate](#) or [Budget Bytes](#)

## **Consumption Fast** **(Week of First Sunday in Lent)**

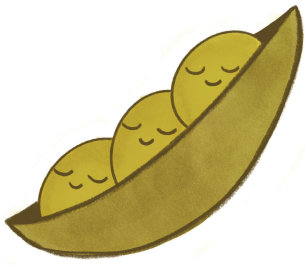
*Therefore the land mourns,  
and all who live in it languish;  
together with the wild animals  
and the birds of the air,  
even the fish of the sea are perishing.*

*Hosea 4.3*



Disposable items not only add to our carbon footprint, they destroy the habitat of animals, birds and fish. According to scripture, this causes creation to lament. This week we're fasting from unnecessary consumption. Wherever possible avoid disposable products and plastics. Before you buy something, ask yourself: is this going to end up in landfill after only one use?

**Instead** use reusable bags, try making your own cleaning products with vinegar, water and baking soda, and try using cotton cloths instead of paper towels. Avoid take-out food. Plan to purchase ecostrips for your laundry, and shampoo and soap in bars rather than liquid soaps and shampoo. Consider alternatives for coffee, tea and snacks that use a lot of packaging. Check out more ideas in the Resources below.



## Food Waste Fast (Week of Second Sunday in Lent)

*This is what the Lord commanded, "Gather as much manna as each of you needs." . . . When they measured it, those who had gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed.*

*Exodus 16.16-18*

Perhaps the most important commandment for caring for creation is this: take only what you need. Food waste demonstrates our inability to do this. Squandering food not only contributes to greenhouse gas emissions (as it rots), but also wastes the water used to produce such food. More fundamentally, however, food waste means we have taken more than we need. This week, try to avoid all food waste.

**Instead** plan your meals for the coming week and purchase only the food that you need for those meals. Use a shopping list so that you don't buy food you already have. Store food properly. Use wilted vegetables and fruit for soups or smoothies, or freeze them before they go bad. Use leftover bread for breadcrumbs. Check out [20 Ways to Reduce Food Waste](#) for more ideas.

## Electricity Fast (Week of Third Sunday in Lent)

*You make darkness and it is night,  
when all the animals of the forest come creeping out. . . .  
When the sun rises, they withdraw and lie down in their dens.*

*People go out to their work,  
and to their labour until evening.*

*Psalms 104. 19-23*



It can be hard to imagine how to do without electricity in our lives. It can be helpful to ask yourself, "Can this be done without using electricity? During this week, try to eliminate as much electricity from your life as possible. Light only the area in a room that you need for your activities, and only the room that you are in. Try a week with no movies, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, television, or Youtube cat videos.

**Instead** try candlelit dinners, use your phone only at a set time each day, use a drying rack instead of your dryer, unplug appliances when not in use, and turn off lights when not in the room. Instead of TV or social media, take a walk, play a board game with a housemate or family member, have a virtual "coffee time" with a friend on the phone, read a book, plant something, or start a new hobby.



## Water Fast (Week of Fourth Sunday in Lent)

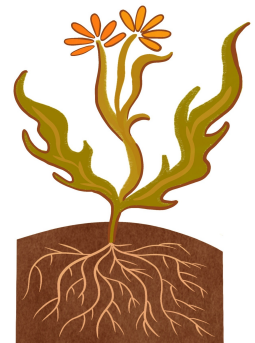
*When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet? . . .  
And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and  
drink what you have fouled with your feet?  
Ezekiel 34.18*

In the biblical story, God repeatedly offers us the water of life. Many people in Canada don't realize how radical this gift is, assuming that there will always be access to clean water. As a result it is easy for some to use far more than is necessary, while some Indigenous and Black communities live with boil water advisories. If you have unlimited clean water, try to reduce your water use and save energy by using cold water instead of hot.

**Instead** spot-clean clothing so that it doesn't have to be washed as often, and wash only full loads of laundry. Set the timer for 5 minutes showers, and turn off the water while brushing your teeth. Instead of turning on the hot water, wash your hands (and laundry) in cold water.

## Injustice Fast (Week of Fifth Sunday in Lent)

*Is this not the fast that I choose;  
to loose the bonds of injustice?  
Isaiah 58:6*



This week, think about justice for people and the land in relation to the products you buy: chocolate, coffee, out-of-season food, factory-farmed meat. Try to give them up. Think about how you care for the land around your house and give up practices that destroy the habitat of other creatures. Learn about and reflect on what justice would look like for the Indigenous Peoples who first cared for this land and those who are Black and People of Colour who have been denied access to land both historically and today.

**Instead** buy fair-trade chocolate and coffee, and purchase sustainably-raised meat. Plant a garden that will provide habitat for birds and insects around your home: pollinator flowers or shrubs for shelter. If you are able, make a donation to an organization that works for justice for God's creation such as [A Rocha](#), or for creation and Black or Indigenous rights, such as [KAIROS](#) or [Toronto Black Farmers](#). Explore their resources to discover what you can do about injustice.



## Ignorance Fast (Holy Week)

*But ask the animals, and they will teach you;  
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;  
ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;  
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.*

*Job 12.7-8*

God repeatedly calls us to learn from creation: to learn who we are, learn who God is, learn what the kingdom looks like, and learn how to repent from our unfaithful ways. Only creation can teach us how to live in the face of creational lament and decline. This week we are fasting from ignorance: ignorance about the injustice that our lives are built on, and ignorance about the creation that surrounds us. Lack of knowledge about our watershed and the climate crisis is one of the primary barriers preventing us from knowing how to respond to the crisis we are in. Learning to observe creation will help us to serve creation and our neighbour better.

**Instead** make this week a special focus on learning more about the world around you. Find out what watershed you live in. Go for a walk and see how many different birds and trees you can identify. Watch an environmental documentary, read a book about creation care, or find an Earth Day (April 22) celebration happening near you and make plans to attend. Download [\*\*Ecological Grief and Creational Hope: A Lent Curriculum\*\*](#) for a wealth of resources.

## Easter: Resurrection Feast

*If anyone is in Christ, behold: new creation!*  
*2 Corinthians 5.17*



At the end of our fast, we feast as we celebrate the renewal of creation that Jesus inaugurated in his resurrection. As you rejoice in new life for all of creation, look back on your weeks of fasting. What was hard about these fasts? What was unexpectedly wonderful? Is there anything that you would like to continue doing?

To celebrate the end of your fast, cook a meal with all local ingredients, or volunteer for an Easter meal outreach with your church or a local outreach organization.

## Resources for Digging Deeper

### ***Meat Fast***

**Meat Free Monday NZ** . This New Zealand site describes the impact of eating less meat on health, our wallets, animals, the earth and world hunger. Includes recipes

### ***Consumption Fast***

**Going Zero Waste** provides alternatives for many common disposable or plastic products.

**The Zero Waste Institute**. provides in depth information on going waste free.

**Friends of the Earth**, Canada, provides information on the effects of plastic pollution.

**10 Principles on How to Live Lighter**. This resource from A Rocha Canada contains excellent advice on reducing consumption in all areas of our lives.

### ***Food Waste Fast***

**10 Principles for Eating Lighter**. This resource from A Rocha Canada is a handy guide for sustainable eating.

**Love Food, Hate Waste Canada** has comprehensive advice on how to avoid food waste. The David Suzuki Foundation has a useful **help end food waste** resource.

### ***Electricity Fast***

**10 Principles on How to Save Energy**. This resource from A Rocha Canada provides simple and practical tips for our homes.

Earth Hour 2022 information can be found **here**.

### ***Water Fast***

**Friends of the Earth**, UK, have 13 tips for saving water that range from the practical to the political.

### ***Injustice Fast***

**FairTrade Canada** lists fair trade companies and products.

**Good On You Clothing Brand Directory** uses a recognized and trusted ethical rating system to encourage a more sustainable and ethical fashion industry.

**Ecological Grief and Creational Hope: A Lent Curriculum for All Ages** contains a myriad of resources on justice for creation and those who have been displaced from the land.



## **Ignorance Fast**

### **Learning Your Place**

The following field guides will help you learn about your place:

John Acorn, *Bugs of Ontario* (Lone Pine, 2003).

Andy Bezener et. al., *Birds of Ontario* (Lone Pine, 2017).

Linda Kershaw, *Trees of Ontario* (Lone Pine, 2001).

Ian Sheldon, *Animal Tracks of Ontario* (Lone Pine, 1997).

### **Learning Your Watershed**

How to find your watershed:

In the GTA: [Toronto Watershed Map](#).

In Ajax and Whitby: [Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority](#).

Port Perry and the Kawartha Lakes: [Kawartha Conservation](#) (scroll down to reach subwatersheds).

Stouffville to Barrie, Orillia, and Uxbridge and Environs: [Lake Simcoe Conservation](#).

Peterborough and Environs: [Otonabee Conservation](#).

### **Climate Change and Creation Care**

[Climate Caretakers Resources](#) page contains links to books, videos and websites on this topic.

["Earthkeeping: A Climate for Change"](#) This video features Katharine Hayhoe talking about the relationship between faith and climate change.

[Ecological Grief and Creational Hope: A Lent Curriculum for All Ages](#) contains a myriad of resources on justice for creation and those who have been displaced from the land.

## **General**

[The David Suzuki Foundation](#) has a myriad of resources for how to take action at home, from making your own cleaning products, to providing nesting materials for the birds, to planting a canoe in your neighbourhood (how Canadian is that, eh?).

## **Organizations**

The following organizations are worthy of your donations:

[A Rocha Ontario](#) is part of an international Christian organization working on conservation, environmental education and sustainable agriculture. The Cedar Haven site in Hamilton provides programming for children and people with disabilities.

[KAIROS Ecumenical Justice Initiatives](#) is engaged in a wide variety of initiatives in support of climate and Indigenous justice.

[Toronto Black Farmers](#) is working for food justice for those in the Black community and beyond.

**This resource was prepared for use in the Diocese of Toronto**

**by the Bishop's Committee on Creation Care.**

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