

# Green Living

Living green means practicing our faith through caring for the creation. Scripture and our Reformed faith tradition call humans to be stewards of the earth and to participate in God's call to justice. Living into God's call is a responsibility that requires effort on our part as global disciples. Navigating through the world and living with a keen environmental awareness heeds Christ's call to live with integrity as we dwell within God's good creation. Each of us has the power to make choices that reflect our faith commitments, preserve life, and respond to the movement of the Spirit in our modern world. This guide is designed to prompt individual lifestyle changes and offer resources and ideas to assist in greening our lives and sharing God's love with the world.



[pcusa.org/justliving](http://pcusa.org/justliving)

## Green Consumption

A major contributor to the global environmental crisis is human consumption. We need water, food, clothing, and other items to fulfill basic needs. While consumption is necessary, overconsumption and wasteful consumption are not and can be minimized or avoided altogether. Each change we make carries global implications and honors God. Together we can live with intentionality by:

**Questioning our consumption:** So much of what we buy on a regular basis is suggested to us through advertising, which creates the illusion of need. Rather than supporting corporations that spend money on influencing your decisions, turn to God before making a purchase. Ask: Is this something I need? If so, do I need it now or can I wait until I find a more sustainable option? Is this something that can be used multiple times? Is the packaging biodegradable, recyclable, or will it pollute creation by remaining in a landfill? How long do I expect this item to last and what will I do with it once it can no longer be used? Is there a more sustainable option, a more ecologically friendly option, or an option that was produced locally?

**Avoiding unnecessary consumption:** Decreasing consumption decreases the strain on the planet as a whole by reducing waste, energy, and pollution associated with the production of goods. We can minimize or eliminate impulse buying by creating and maintaining a budget, getting rid of credit cards altogether and making purchases with cash. Where credit cards are necessary, enclose them in scripture verses, such as Matthew 6:19–21. That way, each time we make a purchase, we are reminded of our faith and our call to serve God first.

**Minimizing packaging:** Any time we must buy something, we can reduce our environmental impact by selecting an item with the least amount of packaging possible. When packaging cannot be avoided, seek items with recyclable, biodegradable or reusable packages.

**Avoiding disposables:** Reuse non-disposable items instead of plastic or biodegradable food-based disposable items. Bring your own utensils and dishware to potlucks. Take collapsible, reusable plastic containers to restaurants for leftovers. Further reduce waste by using reusable cloth shopping bags.

**Scrutinizing our purchases:** We can draw upon the wisdom of others and research items we intend to purchase by utilizing *Co-op America's Green Pages* or *National Geographic's Green Guide* (see our

Resources section for websites). If green guides don't prove helpful, aim for a product produced close to home.

**Making it ourselves:** Many items we purchase we can make ourselves, which avoids extra pollution from production, transportation, and packaging. Consider raising or growing your own food, making your own pottery, sewing your own clothes, or knitting or crocheting hats, scarves, and socks. You can create toys and games from simple household objects. Handmade objects are unique and come with the added benefit of knowing what went into creating the item.

**Sharing with others:** Some products such as landscaping tools, recreational equipment, kitchen appliances and other household items can be shared within groups of people. No matter where we live we can find others with whom to share possessions and minimize consumption. As such we practice Biblical models of sharing in community and reduce consumption in significant ways.

**Going local, organic, and fair trade:** By purchasing items produced locally, we minimize fossil fuel consumption, emissions, and pollution from transportation. Farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture groups offer opportunities to support local production chains. Organic production does not contaminate the environment with chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Fair Trade items are required to maintain some specific standards of environmental protection.

**Food:** There are a number of ways in which we can eat to honor God. Perhaps the most common way is by praying before each meal. Learning about where our food comes from and how our food is produced strengthens connections between us, God, and the earth. Together we can reduce our environmental impact by eating more vegetables and less meat. Enough for Everyone offers a separate resource on food and how we, as God's children, may practice our faith with responsible approaches to food.

**Water:** Bottled water is largely unnecessary and comes with a tremendous environmental toll both in terms of oil consumed to produce the plastic bottles (80% of which end up in landfills) and in terms of transporting the water to consumers. By using and reusing glass, metal, or plastic bottles and drinking tap water or filtered water we will save money and reduce waste. Enough for Everyone offers a separate resource on water and how Christians may live justly in using and caring for the waters of life which sustain creation.

## Green Transportation

Transportation accounts for a significant portion of our greenhouse emissions. In the ways we transport ourselves and our goods we can be good stewards of resources and live out God's call by caring for the planet.

**People Power:** Utilizing transportation that does not require the use of fossil fuels or bio-fuels is a great way to reduce environmental impact. Walk, bike, rollerblade, skateboard, or find other creative ways to travel. Among the many benefits of person-powered transportation are exercise, time for reflection, cleaner air and less time spent waiting in traffic.

**Mass Transit:** Take advantage of mass transit systems in your area. Buses, trains, and other transit options reduce our collective consumption of fuel. Mass transit systems free up time for reading, devotions or other reflections during travel and allow you to become more familiar with people in your community.

**Drive Responsibly:** We can share our vehicles with others by coordinating trips and sharing the costs of travel. Carpooling should at least halve expenses and travel emissions as commutes are shared. Schedule similar trips on the same day to maximize efficiency by taking one longer trip rather than multiple short trips. Increase fuel efficiency by keeping vehicles maintained. Properly inflated tires are the easiest way to ensure fuel efficiency.

## The Green House Effect

Where we live and how we live reflect how we care for the earth. By greening where we live, we can make a positive impact on the world by reducing our carbon footprint and emissions. In transforming our living spaces, we share the witness of stewardship and eco-justice with others.

**Heating and Cooling:** Set your thermostat to 75°F (or warmer) in the summer and 65°F (or cooler) in the winter to reduce energy expenses. Also prevent heat loss through proper insulation and weather-stripping. Water heaters set to 120°F or solar heaters also cut costs. Utilize window shades and plant shade trees to naturally cool a building.

**Lighting:** Lighting accounts for a significant portion of our energy consumption. Compact fluorescent bulbs last about 6 times as long as incandescent bulbs and consume 75% less energy. Recycling centers must be used to prevent mercury from leaching into the

environment. LED bulbs are a newer form of lighting technology that last longer than compact fluorescents and use even less energy. These bulbs work well in exit signs, nightlights, flashlights, and reading lights.

**Electronics and Appliances:** Our electronic devices and appliances are large consumers of energy and account for 70% of the hazardous materials in landfills. To save energy and reduce pollution, we can use Energy Star certified appliances; when old items must be replaced, recycle them to prevent heavy metals and other toxins from seeping from the landfill into the environment. Unplug electronics when they are not in use to reduce energy consumption by up to 40%. Use appliances efficiently by doing full loads of laundry in cold water and washing only full loads of dishes.

**Energy Audits:** Having a professional energy audit will help identify the energy drainers in our homes. Many utilities offer energy credits for audits or will send someone without charge to perform an audit. You may also choose to do a home audit yourself relying on guidelines from energy stewardship groups and organizations. Energy Star offers some helpful resources for home audits.

**Cleaning Supplies:** Many cleaning solutions on the market today contain unnecessary toxic ingredients. Most cleaning jobs can be done with simple household ingredients such as vinegar and baking soda. Where new cleaning supplies are needed look for concentrated formulas and products made with natural ingredients that when disposed break down into non-toxic components.

**Waste:** Composting organic materials and recycling paper, glass, plastic, metal, batteries, ink cartridges, and other recyclables are all great ways to reduce your waste. Aiming to take out only one garbage bag a week can be a good way of reducing your waste too. Think ahead before purchasing to select products that will result in the least amount of waste.

**Water:** Install water-reducing showerheads, low-flow toilets, and water-restricting faucets to reduce water usage. Minimize water waste by fixing leaks and dripping faucets as well as shutting off faucets while brushing teeth, shaving, and lathering up in the shower. Water gardens and lawns during morning or evening hours to minimize water lost to evaporation.

**Gardening:** Gardening is a great way to share the beauty of the earth with others and to teach about God's good earth. Many parables and scriptural metaphors are based on gardening. Getting our hands dirty may give us a greater appreciation and understanding of God. If a home garden is not possible, visit a community garden, create a window garden or care for houseplants.

## Resources for Further Study

We hope the information in this guide will provide a faith basis for you and your family as you seek to live justly in God's world. However, there are many other resources that can assist each of us as we strive to live responsibly in the world. As our world is ever changing, it is important to utilize a variety of resources to inform our understanding of God's world. We have compiled a brief list of resources that provide excellent information for further study and reflection.

### Online:

- Just Living: Access companion materials to Green Living. Join the Enough for Everyone network and explore how individuals, couples and families can practice faith in daily life.  
[www.pcusa.org/justliving](http://www.pcusa.org/justliving)
- Explorations in Just Living: The Enough for Everyone blog is dedicated to exploring lifestyle integrity. We invite you to share in this lifelong journey with us.  
[www.pcusa.org/blogs/just-living](http://www.pcusa.org/blogs/just-living)
- PC(USA) Policy: Denominational policies that guide and shape the ministry of Enough for Everyone can be found online at [www.pcusa.org/enough](http://www.pcusa.org/enough)
- PC(USA) Environmental Justice Ministries: Offering resources for churches and congregants as well as links to PC(USA) resolutions and resources dealing with environmental justice.  
[www.pcusa.org/environment/](http://www.pcusa.org/environment/)
- Creation Justice Ministries: Providing a wealth of resources for Christians addressing a wide range of topics related to environmental justice. [www.creationjustice.org](http://www.creationjustice.org)
- Earth 911: A great resource for general information about environmental stewardship. Includes a search engine to find local recycling options for any product that may be reused or recycled.  
[www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org)

- Energy Star: A nice home energy guide can be found here as well as a number of energy saving tips. Be sure to check out the interactive guide to energy saving. [www.energystar.gov/](http://www.energystar.gov/)
- Green Guides: National Geographic: <http://www.thegreen.guide.com/>, treehugger: [www.treehugger.com](http://www.treehugger.com), and Co-op America: [www.coopamerica.org](http://www.coopamerica.org) offer excellent and comprehensive guides to greening your purchases. These guides are searchable and organized by category for convenience.
- Carbon Footprint: Calculate your carbon footprint at [www.nativeenergy.com](http://www.nativeenergy.com)

## Enough for Everyone

Our scripture and tradition call us to care for the natural world so that all may live abundantly. God cares deeply for all of creation and seeks to preserve the diversity of life. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to live in accord with the call to economic and environmental justice, and the Presbyterian Hunger Program aims to assist individuals in living a just life that honors God.

At the heart of the Presbyterian Hunger Program is a deep concern for global economic justice and a commitment to live out our faith in Jesus Christ with integrity. We are called by God in Christ to bring good news and to proclaim release to those held captive by human structures and injustices. Living as global disciples means evaluating our lifestyle choices. Adopting changes for individual and congregational lifestyle integrity witnesses to our faith and God's creation.

Join us for a Fair Trade Delegation to visit the producers behind our fair trade gifts and products. Visit [www.pcusa.org/delegations](http://www.pcusa.org/delegations) for more information on upcoming opportunities.

Just Living is produced by the Presbyterian Hunger Program. Your financial support enables PHP to witness to the healing love of Christ and to bring hope to communities and individuals struggling with hunger. Give online at [www.pcusa.org/give/hunger](http://www.pcusa.org/give/hunger). Or mail your check, made out to PC(USA) with "H999999 Hunger" on the memo line, to PC(USA), Box 643700, Pittsburgh PA 15264- 3700. Thank you!

Download this resource at [www.pcusa.org/justliving](http://www.pcusa.org/justliving). Or order by calling Presbyterian Distribution Service at (800) 524-2612 and request PDS #25432-08-370.



Presbyterian Hunger Program  
100 Witherspoon Street  
Louisville KY 40202-1396  
800-728-7228 x5626 and x5553  
[enough@pcusa.org](mailto:enough@pcusa.org)  
[www.pcusa.org/enough](http://www.pcusa.org/enough)

