



# *Down To Earth*

*January 2021 – September 2021*

*And other helpful information*

*Down to Earth* is a series of weekly articles published by the Earth Care Action Group as helpful tips in First Matters, the weekly newsletter sent by The First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York to its membership.

### **Jan. 29, 2021**

We're almost out of time. Our window is closing to impact global warming. If our global temperature reaches 1.5 degrees Celsius, the quality of life on our planet – and even life itself – will be irrevocably changed. We can each do what we can to reduce our footprint and care for our planet. This can be composting, recycling, or eating more plant based meals. What can YOU do, starting today?

### **February 5, 2021**

Help curb the recycling disaster. A bold new bill is going before the NY State Legislature this spring that switches the responsibility and cost for recycling packaging from the consumer to the manufacturer. It will also compel manufacturers to reduce their packaging and use far more recycled materials in their packaging from the start. Please join us in writing the NY Senate to support this bill called E.P.R. #S1185.

<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S1185>

### **February 12, 2021:**

As a Matthew 25 church focused on dismantling structural racism, we are mindful that communities of color are exposed to far more environmental hazards than their white counterparts. This year, we are exploring ways that our members, our action groups, and our whole church can reduce our environmental footprints to contribute to the goal of creating a more just and equitable world for future generations. We hope you will join us on our journey.

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/>  
<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/racism/>

### **February 19, 2021:**

Money talks. In December 2020, NY State announced that it will divest all fossil fuel investments from its \$226 billion pension fund. To honor our pledge as an Earth Care congregation, our trustees are looking into following suit. Won't you please consider what you can do with your financial portfolio to care for our resources, too?

### **February 26, 2021:**

Do you have a large sunny roof with a brand-new solar panel array? (Neither do we.) But thousands of New Yorkers save money on their electric bills through community solar programs. Electric companies have installed community solar gardens at offsite sunny rooftops to provide clean energy to our local grid while passing on clean-energy discounts to their subscribers. Anyone who pays your own electric bill can participate. Learn more about community solar [here](#).

<https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/NY-Sun/Solar-for-Your-Home/Community-Solar>

### **March 5, 2021:**

**Composting.** Did you know that food scraps in American landfills emit as many greenhouse gases as 37 million cars? And smell really bad? FPC helps by composting half of our organic waste. If you live near Union Square, please join the effort by taking your scraps to the

compost drop-off at the Farmers Market on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, or Saturdays. Other locations are [here](#). And some intrepid congregants compost at home, as described [here](#).

<https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/wasted-2017-report.pdf>

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/site/services/food-scraps-and-yard-waste-page/nyc-food-scrap-drop-off-locations>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/06/climate/new-york-coronavirus-composting.html>

### **March 12, 2021:**

**Fix a Leak Week is next week!** The EPA's annual Fix a Leak Week is March 15-21. Household leaks can waste nearly 1 trillion gallons of water in the U.S. each year. Finding and fixing leaks in your home will save you water and money all year long. 10% of homes have leaks that waste 90 gallons or more per day, so get ready to fix yours. For more info and events, click [here](#).

<https://www.epa.gov/watersense/fix-leak-week>

### **March 19, 2021:**

**Reducing meat consumption helps.** Once a week, consider omitting meat from your menu. You will be caring for [the planet](#), [the animals](#), [your finances](#), and [your heart](#). Demand for inexpensive meat drives the destruction of forests to increase grazing lands. Forest loss leads to the extinction of species, water and air pollution, increased carbon dioxide, and global climate change. Animal agriculture [rivals vehicle emissions](#) in production of climate warming greenhouse gases. Check out <https://www.mondaycampaigns.org/meatless-monday> for wonderful alternative recipes.

<https://www.rd.com/article/no-meat-once-a-week/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffmcmahon/2019/04/04/meat-and-agriculture-are-worse-for-the-climate-than-dirty-energy-steven-chu-says/?sh=103e282e11f9>

### **March 26, 2021:**

**Bring a reusable water bottle with you.** If you use a reusable water bottle, you'll reduce the 315 plastic bottles used every year per person in the US: over 100 billion bottles in total. It will cut into the 800 million tons of plastic that end up in our oceans annually, and the microplastics that last forever in our environment. Aim for metal or glass bottles to reduce plastic manufacturing and disposal waste.

### **April 9, 2021:**

**Eco-Friendly Dishwashing Tips.** An Energy Star-certified dishwasher uses only three gallons of water per load (handwashing your dishes can use up to 27 gallons). To maximize your dishwasher's efficiency, run it when it's full. If you handwash, turn the water off as much as possible, start with minimal water in the sink, and rinse quickly. Also consider using eco-friendly dish soap: many standard products emit toxic waste in both the water and the air. Source: *Natural Resources Defense Council*.

### **April 16, 2021:**

**Earth Day Celebration at First!** Join us Sunday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, from 1-3 as we honor the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day. We'll clean up the trash on our grounds and on Fifth Avenue from

14<sup>th</sup> Street to Washington Square Park. This family-friendly gathering will include a scavenger hunt, mural painting, and snacks. Wear your mask, bring gloves if you have them, and we'll provide the trash bags. Can't wait to see you in person!

#### **April 23, 2021:**

The First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York Earth Care action group wants to know about your environmental profile – and also let you find out about us. We invite you to take our survey here.

Meatless Monday Recipes:

<https://www.thespruceeats.com/top-meat-free-monday-recipes-435719>

#### **April 30, 2021:**

##### **Earth Care Pledge: Won't you join us in taking our FPC Earth Care 30-Day Challenge?**

Pledge to do one (or all) of these five actions over the next 30 days:

1. Take our Earth Care Survey, (survey has ended)
2. Don't use or purchase any plastic straws, or water bottles of any size.
3. Practice Meatless Mondays (plant-based meals) Meatless Monday Recipes- see below
4. Start the process of looking at eco-friendly investing options
5. Join any Earth Care meeting or event.

Many thanks for taking care of God's Earth

<https://www.thespruceeats.com/top-meat-free-monday-recipes-435719>

#### **May 7, 2021:**

**Check Out Your Local Library.** Instead of buying a book, use your local library for your next read, either in-person or virtually. Chances are you'll only read the book once, so no need to purchase a copy. And libraries are valuable community centers. If you like using e-readers and have a valid library card, the **Libby app** allows you to borrow books from many libraries digitally.

<https://www.overdrive.com/apps/libby/>

#### **May 14, 2021:**

**Honor Endangered Species Day on May 15, 2021.** Did you know that an estimated one in five species is threatened or endangered? And one million plants and animal species are in danger of extinction? There are many things we can all do to save God's creation from the threat of extinction. Check out this article to find materials to raise awareness about endangered species.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/06/climate/biodiversity-extinction-united-nations.html>

<https://www.creationjustice.org/endangered.html>

#### **May 21, 2021:**

**Make Some Changes on Laundry Day.** Here are some tips for helping our planet: Reduce energy use by using cold water and opting for a shorter wash cycle. Wait to do laundry until the load is full to save water, electricity, money, and time. And consider using a laundry line or drying rack

instead of the dryer to conserve energy from the clothes dryer and cut down on your electricity bill too!

**May 29, 2021:**

**Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle Paper Goods.** Toilet paper, paper towels, and tissue paper made with virgin wood pulp are hurting our boreal forests and planet. Try to use less. For many projects, you can use reusable cloths. And recycled paper products require less chlorine bleach and sulfur dioxide (a main cause of acid rain), use less water, emit less gases and hazardous air pollutants, and avoid harming wildlife and Indigenous communities' way of life. Find more information and recommended products [here](#).

**June 4, 2021:**

**Reduce Our Food Waste: Part 1.** The U.S. is the global leader in food waste, the single largest component in our landfills. Americans discard nearly 40 million tons of food annually. What can you do? Buy only what you need and eat what you buy. Learn labels: the “use by” date is for perishable goods, while it’s often still safe to consume products whose “best by” date has expired. Freeze what can’t be eaten immediately. And share the wealth: donate food to food pantries.

<https://www.rts.com/resources/guides/food-waste-america/>

**Friday, June 11, 2021:**

**Reduce Our Food Waste: Part 2.** The average American family spends \$3,000+ a year eating out. While dining out is fun, food waste in restaurants in the U.S. adds up to \$162B every year. All-you-can-eat buffets create huge quantities of discarded food. You can help by only ordering what you will eat, taking any leftovers home (ideally in your own containers), and staying informed!

**June 18, 2021:**

**Air Conditioning: Use Sparingly.** Nothing feels nicer than walking into an air-conditioned room after spending hours in the heat. But A/C is a key driver of the growth of electricity demand, accounting for 10% of all global electricity consumption. And it’s often produced by the burning of fossil fuels. So please, set your A/C to 75F; use only when needed, not continuously; and turn it off when you leave home. Source: *International Energy Agency (IEA)*.

**June 25, 2021:**

**Avoid Single-Use Plastic.** Shockingly, in the last 10 years we have produced more plastic than in the entire last century. A plastic bag has an average “working life” of 15 minutes. More than one million bags are used each minute, contributing to the 10 million+ tons of plastic dumped into our oceans each year. Please shop with your own reusable bags, avoid plastic food packaging, and buy loose fruits and vegetables in their natural state. Source: *plasticoceans.org*.

**July 2, 2021:**

**Keep Your Smart Phone for Longer.** According to *environmental-action.org*, New Yorkers dispose of 23,000 cell phones each day, and discarded devices are part of the electronics making up 70% of waste going into landfills. New phones require mining precious and limited resources that are destroying habitats around the world. If we each kept our phones for one

year longer than our normal upgrades, it would be like taking 37,300 vehicles off the road. Let's be smart about our smart phones!

**July 9, 2021:**

**Visit Ghost Forest in Madison Square Park!** Maya Lin, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial designer, has created a new work: *Ghost Forest*, an installation of 49 dead trees that were removed from the New Jersey Pine Barrens. Ghost forests are trees that were killed by saltwater. With rising sea levels, they are becoming more common along the East Coast of the U.S. This moving, free exhibit reminds us that the effects of climate change have already reached our front door.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/10/08/climate/ghost-forests.html>

**July 16, 2021:**

**The Impact of Fashion.** In her new book, Unraveled: The Life and Death of a Garment, Maxine Bédard discusses the “fashion horror stories” of current clothing consumption, from cotton fields, to toxic waste from acid-washing blue jeans, to one landfill filled with chemicals used to destroy 2.8 million items of clothing a week. We can each help by buying less clothes, buying them second-hand (Levi's and Patagonia's websites both sell used clothes), wearing them until they are worn out, and donating worn-out textiles.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/03/style/jeans-fashion-sustainability-.html?smid=em-share>  
<https://www.grownyc.org/clothing>

**July 23, 2021:**

**COVID-19 Has Produced More Food Insecurity.** One of the many impacts of the novel coronavirus in the US is increased food insecurity, which is predicted to affect more than 42 million people, 13 million of whom are children. Many households experiencing food insecurity now have less access or don't qualify for federal nutrition programs. Please help provide extra support through local food banks and programs.

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>

**July 30, 2021**

**Take a Few Minutes to Listen to the Birds!** Last year during the height of COVID-19, The New York Times ran a piece on how so many of us noticed the abundance of birdsong here in New York. This on-line version lets you enjoy listening to 13 local species. And give yourself extra credit if you can also spot them in nearby trees and gardens!

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/05/31/nyregion/coronavirus-birding-nyc.html>

*The First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York  
is a PCUSA Earth Care Congregation,  
and has signed the following pledge:*

**EARTH CARE PLEDGE (PART OF THE EARTH CARE CONGREGATIONS PROGRAM)**

The Social Justice and Peacemaking Unit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in consultation with congregations and presbyteries across the denomination, developed a five-part resolution as a model for mobilizing congregations to respond to the General Assembly's "CALL TO RESTORE THE CREATION." The resolution was simplified to a four-part pledge in 2010. Churches applying to be an Earth Care Congregation must have the Earth Care Pledge affirmed by their session and signed by the clerk.

Earth Care Pledge

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Peace and justice is God's plan for all creation. The earth and all creation are God's. God calls us to be careful, humble stewards of this earth, and to protect and restore it for its own sake, and for the future use and enjoyment of the human family. As God offers all people the special gift of peace through Jesus Christ, and through Christ reconciles all to God, we are called to deal justly with one another and the earth.

1. Our **worship** and discipleship will celebrate God's grace and glory in creation and declare that God calls us to cherish, protect and restore this earth.
2. In **education**, we will seek learning and teaching opportunities to know and understand the threats to God's creation and the damage already inflicted. We will encourage and support each other in finding ways of keeping and healing the creation in response to God's call to earth-keeping, justice and community.
3. Our **facilities** will be managed, maintained and upgraded in a manner that respects and cherishes all creation, human and non-human, while meeting equitably the needs of all people. In our buildings and on our grounds we will use energy efficiently, conserve resources, and share what we have in abundance so that God's holy creation will be sustainable for all life and future generations.
4. Our **outreach** will encourage public policy and community involvement that protects and restores the vulnerable and degraded earth as well as oppressed and neglected people. We will be mindful that our personal and collective actions can positively or negatively affect our neighborhood, region, nation and world. We will seek to achieve environmental justice through coalitions and ecumenical partnerships.