

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY USE

Integrity of Creation Series #5

Rising seas, more frequent, severe storms, droughts, floods, changing growing seasons: all of these have been in the news in recent years. Scientists have determined that our climate is changing; that the average temperature on Earth has increased. We know that these changes are mostly due to human action. We also know that “the Earth is the Lord’s and all it holds, the world and those who dwell in it.” Ps. 24:1b. So, how do we honor God’s Creation? How do we make a difference for the rapidly changing climate that threatens the Earth and all of its inhabitants: human and animal?

A good place to start is to examine our household energy use. Did you know that the average household causes its greatest negative environmental impact through energy use? Fossil fuels (coal, natural gas, and oil) are used to heat, cool and power our homes. The burning of these fossil fuels causes the carbon emissions that are warming our planet. Reducing our dependence on fossil fuels can begin to moderate this warming.

Reducing your use of fossil fuels can be as simple and inexpensive as turning off your lights when they are not in use and as complicated and expensive as installing alternative energy for your home. Below is a list of things you can do in your home to decrease your energy use. Before making an investment, you may want to have an energy audit done for your home. OLQP will be sponsoring a home energy workshop in the coming months from LEAP (Local Energy Alliance Program) and they will be making audits available at a discount.

1. Change some habits
 - a. Turn those lights off when no one is in the room or when the sun provides enough light.
 - b. Close the drapes on a sunny summer day and keep them open on a sunny winter day.
 - c. Use ceiling fans for cooling, but turn them off when you are not in the room – fans cool people, not spaces.
 - d. Learn to appreciate a lower indoor temperature in the winter (wear sweaters) and a higher temperature in the summer (wear light clothing).
 - e. Wash your clothes in cold water and line-dry.
2. Make some small investments
 - a. Insulating your home may be the best investment you can make, as needing less energy is the quickest way to using less fossil fuel.
 - i. Caulk or weather-strip windows and doors.
 - ii. Place insulating covers behind switch plates and outlet covers.
 - iii. Install a water heater blanket.
 - iv. Wrap water pipes in insulating material.
 - v. Insulate your attic.
 - b. Purchase Energy Star appliances to replace older models.
 - c. Use LED or CFL light bulbs –their high cost is outweighed by their long life (as much as 25,000 hours!)
3. Invest in renewable alternative energy sources.

The best way to use alternative energy in northern VA is to install it in your own home. Wind energy is not very practical for the small lots owned by most homeowner parishioners. Solar energy, though, is a good possibility. There are a few parishioners who already have installed solar collectors. My husband and I attended a workshop for the program described on the back side of this page. We are joining the Co-op and hoping to have solar panels installed at our home in the near future. It is expensive, but much less when purchased in bulk! Can you join us? We can reduce our energy use together as a parish!

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NoVA Interfaith Solar Co-op

A group of interfaith congregation members are forming the Northern Virginia Interfaith Solar Co-op to go solar together and get a discount. If you've ever wanted to go solar, now is your chance!

HOW DOES THE CO-OP WORK?

Based on the same principal as buying in bulk, the co-op will go through the process of purchasing solar systems together. The group will select a single contractor to install systems on all of the homes, but each participant owns their own system and will sign their own contract with the chosen installer.

By going solar as a group, members will save 30% off the cost of a solar system. They'll also have the support of the co-op throughout the process instead of having to go it alone. This buying group is being sponsored by **Interfaith Power & Light**, the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS), Temple Rodef Shalom, and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, and welcomes any Northern Virginia homeowner to participate.



Visit <http://www.vasun.org/solarize-virginia/nova-interfaith> and sign up to join the coop! Email them at NoVAInterfaith@communitypowernetwork.com with questions.

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