

# LIVING LIGHTER TIPS

## *Living Lighter at Home*

Sometimes environmental problems seem overwhelming, and you might think, “How can I ever make a difference?” Be encouraged! Psalm 24:1 says, “The Earth is the Lord’s and everything in it!” This is God’s world and He is working to restore His creation. We are called to take care of that creation in its amazing entirety. Small changes at home are better for your health, can save money, and DO make a difference to the environment. But change is not always easy and can be frustrating when you feel like you are the only one doing anything. The entire household will need to commit to living lightly at home. Make things fun. Take small steps towards change. Remember, living lightly is not about deprivation, but joyful simplicity.

### **Some suggestions for individuals and families:**

1. Consider **sharing** your home with another individual or family: higher density housing reduces your ecological footprint.
2. **Reduce waste** wherever possible – recycle, compost food waste, avoid bringing anything disposable into your home.
3. **Clean your home of chemicals!** Buy environmentally-friendly cleaning and body care products that are biodegradable, safe for the water, and better for your health.
4. **Eat well!** Buy **local** and **organic** food products. Choose food that is in season. Buy whole foods that have less processing and packaging. In lieu of watching TV, spend the time cooking meals from scratch. **Learn where your food comes from.** Eat more vegetarian meals, and when you do eat meat consider buying free-range chicken and “grass-finished” beef.
5. **Green your yard!** Grow some food or herbs. Avoid using chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Reduce the area of high-maintenance lawn in your yard – replace it with native species of trees, shrubs, or grasses, which will require less watering. Choose species that will attract birds and butterflies.
6. Look around your home and think about how to slow the **energy flow**. Clothes can be hung to dry, lights can be turned off, appliances can be unplugged when not in use. Always choose high-efficiency appliances when buying new.
7. Renovate only when necessary and not just for cosmetic reasons. **When renovating**, consider finding recycled materials. Paint fumes, fiberglass insulation, and carpet glue can be hazardous to your health. Environmentally friendly alternatives are available for all of these and more.
8. Be informed! Subscribe to online newsletters or organization e-news that can send regular information on local, national, and international environmental concerns. **Learn about how your lifestyle choices affect people in other parts of the world** and commit to making choices that are better for the world community. Let justice be a factor in all purchasing decisions.
9. **Live locally.** Choose vacation destinations close to home. Drive as little as possible and when it’s time to replace an aging car, buy a fuel-efficient vehicle.
10. Maximize **household efficiency:** dust light bulbs, clean fridge and freezer condenser coils, remove dryer lint, fix cracks in walls and door frames, and close the fridge door!
11. **Use “stuff” well.** Donate unwanted stuff to thrift stores. Have a garage sale. Shop at thrift stores. Make a policy when you buy anything new that it must last 5-10 years.
12. **Involve the kids.** Give each child a special responsibility or chore so they can take action on a regular basis. Let them inspire you – learn to see the awesomeness of creation through their eyes.

All over the world Christian communities are waking up to the urgent need to care for God's beloved creation. While much of our country is taking environmental action in response to the fear of ecological disaster, churches can mobilize their congregations based on the hope that Jesus came to restore the goodness of creation. The Bible has a lot to say about humanity's relationship to, and responsibility for, creation. Learning from scripture is a good place to begin a rich and important journey towards holistic and holy stewardship of God's Earth. A good understanding of environmental issues and the obedient Christian response can lead your church community towards more meaningful worship, outreach, and member involvement.

### **Some suggestions for individuals and congregations:**

1. Make Sunday a true day of rest. Take a **Sabbath** from driving and shopping.
2. **Begin with worship** – choose songs and prayers that celebrate God's creation (living lightly).
3. **Celebrate** Earth day, or plan an Environment Sunday. Take the church service outside! Host a "Prayer Walk for God's Creation" at nearby ravines, forests, etc.
4. Use Sunday school, small groups or the sermon to **talk about and discuss what the Bible has to say about our relationship to the environment**. For example, focus on the creation stories in Genesis, references to creation in Job or praise of God's world in the Psalms. Ask a member of the congregation who is involved in the environmental sector to share about their work, or invite a speaker from a local environmental group.
5. Consider how your church can **reduce waste**. Stop using disposable dishes and cups (especially Styrofoam), use less paper and photocopying, and provide recycling bins. These steps can also save money! (If possible, conduct an **environmental/energy audit** for the church facilities.)
6. Be sure to buy fair trade coffee and tea (and other food items). Make it organic if possible!
7. Inspire a **creation care/green committee** or focus group to lead the congregation.
8. Learn about what Christian groups are doing for the environment as a congregation.
9. **Get the youth involved** – they will have ideas for greening the church, and also the energy to see it through!
10. Make the **churchyard a living witness** to creation care; do away with high-maintenance grass and pesticides. Plant native species. Create a vegetable garden and donate the produce to a food bank or shelter. (source: The Green Bible)
11. Become a sister congregation with a church in a community where toxic waste, pollution or climate change threatens the livelihood and health of the church members. If it is a local church invite the leader to speak to your congregation. (Source: The Green Bible)

Whether you travel 45 minutes to a downtown office or walk over to the local day care centre there are easy steps you and your workplace can take to care for the Earth. Green choices can increase productivity and lower operational costs for businesses, restaurants, government organizations, and non-profit groups. Individual employees can take action, but the workplace is a great arena for sharing ideas and motivating those in management to take responsibility for workplace environmental impact. Having a full-time job means you are probably spending about half of your waking hours at work, so it makes sense to live lightly there!

### **Some suggestions for individuals and workplaces:**

1. Whenever possible walk, bike, or take public transport for your **daily commute**. Working at home on occasion is another way to save time, money, and energy.
2. If you have the power, continue using your laptop or computer for as long as you can! Update and add memory before getting a whole new system, and don't worry about the "look" of your computer.
3. **Reduce paper use** by avoiding printing emails. Recycled paper products from leading paper companies are widely available.
4. Initiate a **workplace compost**, or check to see if there is compost pick-up available in your area.
5. **Venture outside:** going for walks during your lunch hour is good for your health and reminds you that there is an amazing creation out there!
6. Where possible hold **virtual meetings** rather than have people travel to the office or across the country.
7. Encourage your workplace to do an **environmental audit**. Making changes for the environment will benefit the workers' health and can save money. Healthy workers are happy harder workers!
8. Workplaces can install **bicycle racks** and offer employees bus/train passes to encourage environmentally-friendly commutes. **Carpool** meetings help connect people who live in the same area.
9. **Source local and organic food for the cafeteria or food service**. If disposable dishes must be used, buy ones that are biodegradable!
10. Provide **recycling disposal** for ink cartridges, batteries, cell

phones, and any other electronic devices your workplace uses.

11. Turn off the **lights** and lower the **heating or air-conditioning** when the workplace building is not being used.
12. Donate unwanted office furniture and equipment to charities or thrift stores.



We are made to live in community, yet in the majority of our neighbourhoods we spend most of our time indoors, isolated and disconnected from those living around us. Neighbourhood action is a great way to share ideas, work together, and build relationships with those who live next door. Neighbourhood projects inspire action and a sense of responsibility for local green spaces and wildlife. When neighbours band together to live lightly they are also building community spirit. Yards get green, streets become safe, property values increase, local businesses prosper.

### **Some suggestions for individuals and neighbourhood groups:**

1. Get outside – **meet your neighbours**. Who are the people, plants, and animals that live in your neighbourhood?
2. Organize a block party, giant yard sale, or street **celebration**. Have a party in a local green space.
3. Leave your car at home and **shop local**. You might be surprised at how conveniently close the neighbourhood market is!
4. Initiate or join a **local land stewardship group**. The possibilities for action are endless: from organizing a group to pick up trash, to planting trees along a degraded river-bank, to monitoring wildlife in the local parks.
5. Fight against municipal use of pesticides, fertilizer, and other harmful chemicals in parks and greenways.
6. **Be an example** of a green household and your neighbours will take interest and take action too.
7. **Grow food!** Vacant lots, unused church yards and abandoned rail yards are great locations for community garden plots. Many cities have community garden networks that can provide resources and support for how to start such a project, and there's nothing like a garden to bring all the neighbours outside!
8. Start a **"tool co-op,"** which allows neighbours to share tools and maintenance equipment like ladders, lawn mowers, saws, and garden tools. This will save everyone money and stimulate a sense of neighbourhood cooperation.

9. Take time to think about your connection to the global community. Reflect on ways your lifestyle and consumer habits effect people in other parts of the world.

10. Encourage local municipal politicians to take the environmental issues in your neighbourhood seriously.

11. Write an article in the local newspaper or community journal to encourage personal action.

12. **Volunteer** at the local school. Help them start a garden or nature club. Support school programs that teach students about the environment.