

It's Time to Do What You Can to Save the Earth

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You've heard the terms "global warming" and "climate change" for several years, and maybe you are waiting for the government, corporations, churches or someone to do something to correct the problem. The response to that is: These entities are doing something, but not enough. Not enough, because it takes effort, and because there are so many special interest groups trying to keep their piece of the pie (oil, chemicals, grazing rights, land development, corn, meat; the list goes on and on) from being affected financially when change takes place.

While we consumers sit back watching government, corporations and special interests with our index finger pointing at this group or that for not doing enough, the other three fingers are pointing right back toward the one person who can, and must, do something. If you live on planet Earth, you must have noticed the terrible floods, droughts, landslides, crop failures, hurricanes, tornados and unseasonable weather patterns in our country and all over the world. Maybe you even saw Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth." At any rate, this is clear: We -- meaning individuals, governments, corporations, churches and other groups -- cannot continue to consume resources at the rate we now consume them. We cannot continue to use unlimited energy, water and raw materials, produce enormous amounts of garbage and drive unlimited miles in vehicles that our planet cannot sustain.

It is time for each one of us to change the way we go about our lives. There are hundreds of small and large actions that each of us can take to reduce our personal carbon footprint on the earth. The bottom line is that when we consume too many resources, we -- not just governments and corporations -- create the greenhouse gases that speed up climate change. And we -- not (just) someone else -- buy and discard an unprecedented amount of stuff that we don't have the landfill space to keep burying.

If you have ever been on a diet, you know that most people cannot sustain a quick change from 3,000 calories per day to 1,000 calories per day; nor a change from couch potato to a five-mile run in a few days. Just as changing your health means a lifestyle change, so too does a change in your individual response to climate change.

The Earth and Spirit Center is trying to help individuals and organizations make a difference in care of the Earth by supporting the changes in values that precede changes in actions to reduce the impacts of climate change. Its mission is to inspire, educate and mobilize religious institutions and people

of faith to assume an active role in building a just and sustainable society. Some of the discussion courses offered by the Earth and Spirit Center to individuals and groups provide help and encouragement on issues that support this mission, including Voluntary Simplicity, Choices for Sustainable Living, Discussions on Climate Change, Deep Ecology, Healthy Children-Healthy Planet. See www.earthandspiritcenter.org for more information.

There are many large and small steps that individuals may take to begin the journey to a sustainable Earth. Some require sacrifice; others do not. Here are a few steps to consider:

- Reduce your driving and stay within the speed limit. Consider biking, bus or carpooling to work one day a week.
- Lower your thermostat a couple of degrees and dress in layers.
- Buy Energy Star for every electronic or appliance purchase you make.
- If you're not using it, turn it off.
- Replace incandescent lights with Energy Star compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Buy local or regional foods with minimal packaging.
- Buy only what you need, and recycle what you don't need.
- Let your elected officials know that climate change is an urgent need that must be addressed.

For a list of other changes that make a difference, contact the Union of Concerned Scientists: www.ucsusa.org. Many other local and national groups can help guide individuals in their pursuit of a more sustainable society.

The city of Louisville has done a much better job than many cities in providing the resources for recycling everything from yard waste to computers and light bulbs; we just have to make the effort to gather and deliver the items to their respective collection points. If your suburban city does not offer recycling, it is time to challenge the "it costs too much" mentality, or contract for your own recycling services. Just do it!

So here's your challenge: Just like your new diet and exercise program can help improve your personal health, choose the changes you can make that will leave the only Earth we've got as a viable, sustainable place for our great-grandchildren.