

The 2008 Lenten Compact

What is a “Compact”?

A compact is a covenantal agreement among a group of people. Those who voluntarily enter a compact bind themselves to a set of guidelines and standards for the purpose of accomplishing personal and corporate goals.

A Communal Fast

Lent is often considered a personal time to fast, focus ourselves on God, and reflect on the idols that we have been told we cannot live without. Like last Lenten season, this Lent we are calling for a communal fast that focuses us not only on our relationship to God, but also on our relationships to other people and creation locally, nationally, and globally. We are calling Kimball Avenue Church to a true fast – one that is not just the act of denying oneself of something – but a fast that creates justice and reconciliation, by breaking the yokes that bind us and the yokes that bind our neighbors.

In Isaiah 58, specifically verses 6-7, the Lord makes clear what a true fasting should accomplish:

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

This Lent, we seek to reflect on our relationship to God's whole creation and to begin to fast from those things that threaten a righteous stewardship of creation and put us out of just relationship with creation.

Why an “Environmental Compact”?

As people called by God to cultivate and keep the Earth (Genesis 2:15), we are to be stewards of that which truly and wholly belongs to God, not to us. (Leviticus 25:23-24; Psalm 24:1). The destruction of that which we are called to tend is a spiritual matter and should create a crisis of faith for the Church. Through the compact we will become better stewards of God's creation.

As children of the God who created the heavens and the Earth and all creatures therein, we believe that the heavens are telling of the glory of God and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands (Psalm 19:1). Desecration of the Earth and all that is within it is an affront to God as He is revealed in His creation. Through the compact we will reconnect to creation's testament to the glory of God.

As people who know that the liberation of creation from its bondage to decay is part of God's Kingdom vision begun with the work of Christ (Romans 8:18-22; Psalm 96:11-13; Colossians 1:19-20), we seek to live in just, liberating relationship to creation. Any destructive practice or process that submits creation to further bondage through rape, pollution, waste, species extinction, or habitat destruction is an act of sin inconsistent with our role as Kingdom builders. Through the compact we will seek to deliver creation from our own negative impacts.

As people who understand Sabbath rest to be part of God's plan for his people to do justice and build right relationships with one another, we acknowledge that the land and creatures occupying that land were also included in Sabbath (Leviticus 25:1-7; Exodus 23: 10-11). The pursuit of profit, prestige or even self-preservation is not more important than living in sustainable, interdependent, right relationship with creation. Through the compact we will create more sustainable relationships with creation by adopting practices in the spirit of God's principle of Sabbath.

As people who believe that God dwelt among us in Jesus Christ and that he continues to be Emmanuel – God with us – we seek to renew our reverence for this land on which our Lord walked and our God dwells (Numbers 35:34). We acknowledge that we need a lifestyle and mentality change to truly be holistic stewards of creation. We are not interested in “green” trends or fads, but are interested in establishing relationships within God's creation consistent with God's Kingdom vision.

**STARTING WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2008, AND CONTINUING THROUGH EASTER,
WE ASK EVERYONE TO JOIN IN A PLASTIC FAST**

PLASTIC FAST

Abstain from the use of plastic products, including but not limited to plastic grocery and garbage bags, plastic bottles and plastic packaging.

Why Abstain?

Plastic comes from petroleum and natural gas. (It takes 16 million barrels of oil to produce grocery bags for a year.) Both are non-renewable natural resources and the struggle to gain ownership of these resources has led great violence – think war (Iraq) and murder (Ken Saro-Wiwa, Nigeria). Plastic breaks down very slowly (up to a 1,000 years in a landfill) and as it breaks down, it contaminates soil and water. Plastic debris acts like a sponge for toxic chemicals such as PCBs and DDE (breakdown product of DDT). Plastic also devastates wildlife. Bags kill sea turtles, whales, other marine animals that ingest them after mistaking them for jellyfish. The bags choke or block the turtle's intestine leading to a painful death. Plastic bags can also harm land animals (cows, goats) in much the same way. The manufacturing of plastic results in toxic pollution. It also takes a lot of energy to manufacture plastic. Even recycling plastic takes energy and creates air pollution.

Suggestions for successfully fasting:

1. Buy bulk whenever possible
2. Use a canvas bag at the grocery store
3. Use paper for your garbage bags
4. Use a non-disposable water bottle and refill it
5. If plastic is your only option, make sure you recycle or reuse it.

WE ALSO ASK EVERYONE TO CONSIDER AT LEAST TWO OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF GOD'S CREATION.

1. TOXIC CHEMICAL FAST

Eliminate toxic chemical cleaning solvents from your home, including dishsoap, dishwasher detergent, laundry detergent, bleaches, ammonias, and most typical surface cleaners.

Why Eliminate?

Life would be impossible without chemicals. Chemicals and chemical reactions occur constantly in creation.

Humans seriously began manipulating nature's chemical storehouse 150 to 200 years ago and prior to that they relied for better or worse on folk knowledge about what "worked". But in our attempts to make things "Brighter" "Fresher", "Faster", and "Sparkling" we also made toxic soup. A day does not go by when we don't get more evidence of a chemical or drug people have used mistakenly thinking it was safe only to find out tragically it was not. Each of us is now born carrying dozens of chemicals in our bodies never meant to be there. More are added yearly. Although we never meant for this to happen, we can no longer go on fooling ourselves. Life and God's creation are at stake. By trying alternative, safer, natural chemical goods or making your own (economical!) each of us makes a step to end the desecration of the earth. Careful consideration of our choices as individuals and as a church means our guidance will not come from advertisers but from God's will. God give us the strength to make many steps.

Suggestions for successfully fasting:

1. Make your own cleaning solvents with some handy, environmentally friendly items, including vinegar, baking soda and lemon juice (Recipes for homemade cleaning solvents available at your request).
2. Replace your cleaning solvents with non-toxic cleaning solvents – Greenmaker Supply in Logan Square sells non-toxic cleaning supplies, including dishsoap and detergents. You can also find these at your local Jewel.

2. GAS CONSUMPTION REDUCTION

Reduce your gasoline consumption drastically during Lent

Why Consume Less Gas?

Over 200 million passenger cars and light trucks log almost 2 trillion miles on American roads every year, accounting for about 50% of air pollution nationwide. The smog-filled air is devastating to the environment, reducing growth and survival of tree seedlings, and heightening the susceptibility of plants to disease and pests, among other damages. By reducing smog-producing pollutants, greenhouse gases, and run-off from paved surfaces that degrades the water supply, and by conserving ecologically sensitive lands and open spaces, public transportation reduces pollution, thus protecting the environment and promoting better health. People across America are suffering from air polluted to a large degree by vehicle emissions, causing some 159,000 trips to the emergency room, 53,000 hospital admissions and 6,000,000 asthma attacks. Walking is another great way to – it's free, provides exercise, and causes none of the environmental effects of vehicle emissions.

Suggestions for successfully fasting:

1. If you have to use a car regularly, abstain from driving at all at least one day a week
2. Use public transportation or carpool when able
3. If your destination is within 8 blocks of your home, then consider walking

3. DOUBLE DOWN MEAT

Cut your meat consumption in ½. If you eat meat four times a week that would mean you would cut your consumption to two times a week. If you feel ambitious, fast from meat completely.

Why Double Down?

Raising meat uses a lot of resources. Valuable land – about 30 percent of the earth's ice-free land - is being devoted to livestock production (This has ramifications for both the hungry and the environment.) In addition, modern farming methods use a lot of fossil fuels, so feeding crops to animals multiplies our energy consumption. Mass production of meat also causes pollution. Instead of fertilizing the soil, the enormous amounts of animal waste in centralized locations contaminate water and emit greenhouse gasses - livestock production generates nearly a fifth of the world's greenhouse gases. Raising meat in this manner makes it extremely cheap but the prices we pay at the grocery store do not account for the costs passed on to society. Large amounts of meat are not a necessary part of a human diet. Although cutting it out entirely may require some care to replace the protein and nutrients, we don't need to eat nearly as much as we do. If Americans were to reduce meat consumption by just 20 percent it would be as if we all switched from a standard sedan to the ultra-efficient Prius.

Suggestions for successfully fasting:

1. Post recipe needs to the Google Board at Kimball and see what great vegetarian recipes people come up with.
2. If you buy meat often, try buying organic, sustainable meat from a local source.

4. ENERGY CONSUMPTION REDUCTION

Reduce your energy consumption, particularly through your use of electricity.

Why Reduce Your Energy Consumption?

The generation of electric power produces more pollution than any other single industry in the United States. Generation of electricity (mostly through burning coal) produces 63% of all sulfur dioxide emissions and 33% of all mercury emissions, contributing to global warming, acid rain, respiratory illness and soil contamination. About 50% of Illinois' electricity is produced by nuclear power plants. The other half is produced by coal fired plants. Illinois has more operating nuclear power plants than any other state. While nuclear power plants emit fewer greenhouse gases than coal fired plants, nuclear power produces tons of radioactive waste each year. Reducing our energy consumption and promoting the use of renewable and sustainable sources of energy represents responsible stewardship of God's creation."

Suggestions for successfully fasting:

1. After dark limit your light use to 1 light. Turn out all lights in the parts of your home which you are not actually occupying.
2. If you are ambitious, try to use no lights after dark at least once a week (use candles, remembering to monitor them).
3. Unplug all appliances when not in use
4. Support companies that are conserving energy (think Mom's Best cereals available at Tony's - Mom's Best purchases 100% of their electricity from Windsorce and has reduced its water usage in production 41% since 1996. They also recycle 99% of their waste!)
5. Replace all light bulbs with energy efficient CFL or LED bulbs
6. Turn off electronics when not in use (TVs, radios, DVD players)

5. RECYCLE

Reduce your waste!

Why Reduce Your Waste?

Recycling reduces waste because paper accounts for 40% of all municipal waste. Recycled paper means less trash, lower taxes and other disposal costs. It also saves energy. The paper industry is the nation's 3rd largest energy user. Recycled pulp from paper products saves 60% to 70% more energy than virgin pulp (or pulp from a tree vs. recycled paper products). Recycling also protects natural resources. The U.S. uses 100 million tons of paper a year and that number is increasing all the time. Recycled paper uses 55% less water and helps preserve our forests. Finally, the paper industry is one of the largest water polluters in the world. Recycled paper reduces water pollution by 35%, reduces air pollution by 74% and eliminates many toxic pollutants involved in the process of turning virgin pulp into paper products.

Suggestions for successfully fasting:

1. Only use recycled paper products – paper towels, napkins, paper plates, toilet paper, notebooks, etc.
2. Use your local library for book, music and movie rentals or, if you must buy an item, then buy used.
3. Recycle your batteries and other hazardous items at a designated recycling center.
4. Recycle your glass, aluminum, paper and plastic items at a local recycling center.