



## NOVA CARES for CREATION

July 21: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch (GPGP) is the world's largest accumulation of ocean plastic, and it's been growing exponentially for almost 70 years. It's now twice the size of France and is almost totally filled with plastic. Take one more step this month to eliminate plastic in your life.

July 14: A reminder to follow up on the June 30 Care for Creation note in the announcements email regarding "Plastic-Free July" — Please take the time to determine one or more ways you will cut back on your use of plastic. If you don't think one individual can make a difference in the widespread use of plastic, consider that over the past five years, participants in the "Plastic-Free July" movement have avoided adding over 1.5 million tons of plastic waste to their public waste disposal systems, equivalent to filling about 80,000 garbage trucks (See The Washington Post, Home Section, July 4, 2024).

July 7: Here are some surprising environmentally-friendly innovations that are already in place. A hospital ward in Taiwan was built entirely from trash. Solar-powered pavement is in use in Hungary, and 3D-printed homes are being constructed from biodegradable materials in Italy. (Center for Science in the Public Interest, March/April)

June 30: This week begins [Plastic Free July](#). While avoiding all plastic may be impossible, the website urges even small changes. Take an accounting of the plastics you buy and consider alternatives. Mushrooms come in a plastic container? Consider buying them at Trader Joe's, which packs mushrooms in a cardboard box. Want to switch out your liquid laundry detergent in the big plastic jug? A quick web search shows Walmart, CVS and Safeway sell laundry powder in cardboard boxes. More ideas [here](#).

June 23: Here's sound counsel for caring for creation. We take care of what we appreciate by doing but also by seeing and praying:

**"Praying" by Mary Oliver**

It doesn't have to be  
the blue iris, it could be weeds in a vacant lot, or a few  
small stones; just  
pay attention, then patch  
a few words together and don't try  
to make them elaborate, this isn't  
a contest but a doorway  
into thanks and a silence in which  
another voice may speak

June 16: The Mogs are hosting an ice cream social postcarding party this Wednesday, June 19th, 2:00-4:30. Participants will be writing postcards to Arizona voters who have indicated that the environment is a big concern but their voting record is weak or sporadic. The Environmental Voter Project has been researching this kind of data for over 5 years now and has this information on voters in every state. Of course the swing states are getting the most attention. If you can help out, you can join the phone bank brigade or send postcards by signing up on the EVP website at:

<https://www.environmentalvoter.org/get-involved>

June 9: The Sisters of Mercy website ([www.sistersofmercy.org](http://www.sistersofmercy.org)) lists two potential ways to reduce junk mail: (1) To reduce mail from companies and organizations with which you have no business relationship, you can sign up at [DMAchoice](http://DMAchoice.org), a nonprofit organization. The fee is \$5 for 10 years. (2) Credit card and insurance offers are regulated separately by the major credit bureaus. You can opt out of these ads at no cost for five years or permanently at [optoutscreen.com](http://optoutscreen.com).

June 2: We can't emphasize enough the effect that food waste has on the environment. Forty percent of the food grown in the US is uneaten or unsold according to ReFED, a food research organization. This amounts to the same climate footprint of the entire US aviation industry including the military, equivalent to 1.8 percent of the US GDP.

May 26: Some Good News: Wildfire seasons around the globe are becoming longer and more catastrophic than ever. For decades in the United States, federal funding for urgently fighting wildfires was taken from the budget of critical forest restoration that could prevent or lessen these fires. A policy fix was needed, and members of the Nature Conservancy led a four-year campaign to change this funding structure in a way that allocates up to an additional \$2.95 billion each year to pay for major fires. This policy win strengthens the government's ability to proactively make forests less fire-prone without sacrificing its ability to reactively fight wildfires.

#### May 19: **The American Climate Corps Is Now Hiring!**

This initiative will put more than 20,000 young Americans to work fighting the impacts of climate change today while gaining the skills they need to join the clean energy and climate-resilience workforce of tomorrow. The nearly 2,000 positions are located across 36 states, DC, and Puerto Rico. Americans can apply or learn more at [ClimateCorps.gov](http://ClimateCorps.gov). Share this news with your grandchildren!

May 12: Most of us don't think about unplugging appliances, such as toasters, after we finish using them. But any electrical devices that are plugged in, including phone chargers or fans, will continue to use power after they are turned off. It takes only seconds to unplug a device. If more of us get in the habit of disconnecting our many appliances when we're not using them, we will contribute to saving power.

May 5: Cut the BEEF! Its carbon footprint exceeds that of legumes, chicken, pork, and other high-protein foods. This action is important for several reasons, but these are the most important: we're feeding foods to cattle that could be eaten by humans, and we're cutting down forests to open pastures for cattle, (from the Nutrition Action Center for Science in the Public Interest, March/April 2024.)

April 28: The USA has placed the first ever federal limits on toxic 'forever chemicals' in drinking water. The rule, finalized by the Biden administration on Wednesday 10 April, requires utilities to reduce the chemicals to the lowest level they can be reliably measured. Officials say this will reduce exposure for 100 million people and help prevent thousands of illnesses, including cancer.

#### April 21: GOOD Climate News – Happy Earth Day!

- Texas got more of its electricity from solar than coal last month for the first time.
- The Interior Department officially protected huge swaths of Alaskan Wilderness from new drilling and mine activities.
- California hit a new renewables record after exceeding 100% of grid demand with clean energy sources for 30 of past 38 days.
- By 2025 electric vehicles could comprise 20% of new car sales, 40% by 2030.

April 14: Virginia has been part of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) since 2020. RGGI has provided funding for clean energy projects such as improving indoor air quality and lowering carbon emissions as well as supporting community flood preparedness projects throughout Virginia. The Governor has deleted language supporting RGGI from the VA General Assembly's bipartisan approved budget this year. Please take a few minutes to contact your state representatives, asking them to oppose the Governor's amendment that removes funding for RGGI. Click [here](#) for help in composing your letter.

April 7: Scientists are designing a new kind of plastic that can be chemically recycled to depolymerize it. In the meantime, e-commerce firms generated 3.4 billion pounds of plastic worldwide in 2021, most of which was used in packaging by Coca Cola, Amazon, Whole Foods and Costco. Plastic bubble wrap and packaging "pillows" should be flattened and recycled. You can return packaging material to Amazon, but only 5% is actually recycled. Remember, if you can stick a finger through it, the plastic can be recycled at your grocery store. This type of plastic is the most likely to be recycled, often into decking material.

March 31: Food waste is a major source of climate pollution. Learn more at this week's National Food Waste Prevention Week [webinars](#) and [area events](#). For example, in one of the April 1 webinars listed, chefs will demonstrate creative techniques to turn "Waste to Taste."

March 24: REFUSE PAPER RECEIPTS. Did you know that paper receipts are not usually recyclable? Most are made of thermal paper that is coated in BPA (an industrial chemical used to make plastics), meaning they cannot be recycled in the same way as regular uncoated paper. Keep these receipts from ending up in landfills. Ask for e-mail receipts over paper (don't forget to delete them after use to decrease CO2 emissions).

March 17: You can boost your home energy efficiency with 10 simple improvements each costing less than \$100. Read all about it in last Thursday's Washington Post [here](#). The Virginia Elders Climate Action Chapter is hosting a home energy specialist next month to expand on these ideas. Tune in on Zoom Thursday, April 4th, 4:00 p.m. Sign up for the Chapter newsletter and announcements at: [www.Eldersclimateaction.org/Virginia](http://www.Eldersclimateaction.org/Virginia).

March 3: Five U.S. governors are building a shared network for charging electric vehicles. A new technology enables electric buses to charge wirelessly while resting, and an electric school bus can power the electric grid while kids are in school. These are among many efforts to save our Earth. Let's tell our legislators the good news.

Feb. 25: Clean Up your inbox, please. All those unread emails in your inbox are contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. Our emails are stored in cloud servers, which guzzle up power, mostly from fossil fuels. It takes energy – and CO2 – to send every email and store it, whether opened or unopened, and a single email with an image attachment uses 50g CO2. Here are things you can do to lower your email footprint today:

- Regularly delete emails you no longer need.
- Delete your entire junk folder.
- Do not use "reply all" in response to a group email when your message is directed to an individual and does not need the attention of others.
- Unsubscribe from newsletters you don't need.
- Link to an online resource rather than including an attachment, send comprehensive information in one email, and try to stop yourself from sending one-word confirmations. You can halve your email footprint and save 300 Kg CO2 emissions every year!

Feb. 18: It's a frigid fact that everyone uses more energy in cold weather. Most people spend more time at home in the winter and your heating system has to work much harder to keep you comfortable. Turn your thermostat down to 68 or below and wear layered warm clothing. Invest in 2 or 3 electric space heaters to use wherever you are sitting, eating or working for any length of time.

Feb. 11: Consider joining the call from the Sisters of Mercy for "meatless Mondays" in Lent: "The Sisters of Mercy Justice Team encourages the Mercy Community to refrain from eating meat on Mondays, in addition to Fridays in Lent as is our Catholic tradition. This is one way to care for Earth, as meat production consumes large amounts of water and produces more greenhouse gasses than a vegetarian diet. We also can choose to eat less meat in solidarity with the people of the Amazon rainforest in South America, since their home is being destroyed, in part, by deforestation for cattle grazing for exported beef." Read more at: [2022 Mercy Meatless Mondays \(sistersofmercy.org\)](https://www.sistersofmercy.org/2022-Mercy-Meatless-Mondays)

Feb. 4: A toaster oven uses less electricity than an oven. You can broil, bake & air fry in less time & use less electricity. Another benefit: toaster ovens cost a lot less than standard electric ovens.

Jan. 21: Let's work together to end all war and weapons production. Not only is war death dealing, anti-faith and capital intensive, but war is also one of the largest polluters of the planet. Although environmental destruction may not be deliberate, war causes deep and lasting damage. Soldiers dig trenches, tanks flatten vegetation, bombs scar landscapes and explosives ignite fires. Weapons spew toxic gases and particulates into the air and leak heavy metals into soil and water that will remain there for generations.

Jan. 14: According to the "This Old House" website, each degree you lower the thermostat on your heating system decreases your fuel bill by 3 percent. Help our environment and lower your home heating costs this winter by lowering the temperature setting in your home, especially at night.

Jan. 7: Raising animals for food results in estimates ranging from 14.5% to 30% of the greenhouse gas emissions from Earth. Beef is by far the worst offender. Raising cattle for meat & dairy has resulted in clearing of forests all over the world to feed & pasture them until slaughter. Recent analyses have suggested that production of man-made meat is also costly for the environment. The enzymes necessary to digest beef tend to decrease the less beef individuals eat -- resulting in tummy aches when splurging on a steak dinner. I (Carolyn!), for one, am off beef.

## **2023**

Dec. 17: Christmas is a great time for thinking sustainably! Gift an experience rather than more stuff – concert tix, restaurant treat, spa, etc. Homemade baked goods and recycled gifts are often the most memorable. Wrap them up in reuseable bags, fabric, a pretty scarf – whatever doesn't have to be thrown away. Buy local when possible and make sure that real tree gets composted. Happy Holidays!

Dec. 3: According to research, the No. 1 problem related to greenhouse gas emissions is buildings. Thirty percent is the average amount of carbon released into the atmosphere by buildings, but in many localities it can be as high as 62%, as it is in Arlington. We can push for carbon-neutral building codes for new homes and buildings. Our hope for the future lies in green hydrogen, geothermal energy and fusion energy, What can we do about that? Write letters, and vote.

Nov. 26: Chocolate is a universal pleasure, but our "guilt" should be around unwittingly supporting global chocolate brands that turn a blind eye to child or slave labor and/or contribute to deforestation by using

palm oil in their bars. Look for independent brands that work directly with farmers and only use cocoa certified by Rainforest Alliance or Fairtrade.

Nov. 19: Can we turn Black Friday into Green Friday? Most of us already have way too much “stuff” and most of it will end up in a landfill somewhere. Stay out of the stores the day after Thanksgiving and take a walk in the park, sign up for the “Climate Action Now” app or just pass out more hugs than usual.

Nov. 12: Throwing your old household batteries in the trash is convenient but harmful to the environment. Home Depot stores have collection boxes at their stores for some types of batteries. A helpful and comprehensive source of information on safe disposal of all sorts of batteries can be accessed at [www.epa.gov/recycle/used-household-batteries](http://www.epa.gov/recycle/used-household-batteries)

Nov. 5: Many of us have stopped eating red meat, and reduced our use of dairy in our diets. Cheese is also a problem for the environment. Making one pound of cheese requires 10 pounds of cow’s or goat’s milk. TheWorld Economic Forum and many scientific reports suggest that cheese generates the third-highest emissions in agriculture after beef and lamb. Cheese is also high in fat, and we should keep that in mind.

Oct. 29: Let us be mindful to develop an ecological spirituality, opening ourselves daily to the mysteries of life, reverencing each other and other life forms and regularly reflecting on the many ways in which we are all connected.

Oct. 22: As the leaves begin to fall, make sure you use an old fashion rake to clean up your yard. While a leaf blower may get the job done faster, it uses energy that can harm the environment and is a source of sound pollution. Once you’re done, reuse the leaves by transforming them into mulch for your plants or compost them to enrich your soil.

Oct. 8: The fall season is an excellent time to plant trees, shrubs, and other plants because the soil is still warm enough to allow the roots to grow before the ground freezes. Try to plant a small tree this fall. Trees help our environment in so many ways. They not only help to clean the air we breathe, they also support wildlife, and aid in flood prevention.

Sep. 3: Individuals can have the largest impact on reducing climate warming by doing two things: by reducing their consumption of meat and dairy, and by flying less often. The first is easy because there are so many other nutritious options in the grocery stores. Flying less often means taking trains, buses, or cars, and deciding not to fly when possible. France has decided to ban short-distance flights, forcing travelers to use other forms of transportation instead.

Bonus tip in Season of Creation: Watering a lawn three times a week with a typical sprinkler consumes about 12,000 gallons of water per month. If you have a lawn, dig up a patch of it and plant a tree or some flowers to draw bees. Trees and bees are part of the solution!

Aug. 27: This week let’s remember that we are part of creation and creation cares for us. Consider how our houseplants improve our lives. A study done at Virginia Tech led researchers to conclude that houseplants can reduce indoor dust by 20%. Filling as little as 2% of a room with plants will make an impact. In effect houseplants are efficient air cleaners. Plants release water vapor into the air which increases humidity. This can improve respiratory and skin health by offsetting the drying effects of heating systems. Plants also increase oxygen levels in the air by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen during photosynthesis. Increases in oxygenation can result in improved mood, energy and mental focus.

Aug. 13: In addition to tasting better, eating locally grown produce is better for the environment because it hasn't traveled thousands of miles using fossil fuels that produce large amounts of greenhouse gasses.

Aug. 6: When improving your wardrobe, and shopping for clothes, look for items in cotton, silk, wool, hemp, rayon and bamboo. Yes, it's hard to find what you want that's not polyester, but polyester is PLASTIC and will be despoiling our environment for thousands of years, maybe millions, until our scientists find a way to chemically destroy plastic. Non-polyester is even harder to find in thrift shops, but I've bought cotton from Land's End and LL Bean's catalogs.

July 30: Have salad for supper. You help the environment by keeping your oven off. You can help the environment even more by making your salad meatless. Try this [Broccoli Kale Salad](#).

July 23: Summertime is here and many of us may find ourselves at the beach. Let's reduce our carbon "finprint." How about a walk along the beach carrying a trash bag? Not only do we get exercise but we care for our Mother Earth. Remember you can trash a beach without being physically present. No matter where you live, the ocean is downstream. Don't use chemical fertilizers and pesticides on your lawn. On the driveway, avoid harmful cleaning products and take proper care of spilled oil to prevent contaminated runoff.

July 16: Moving gradually toward a plant-based diet is one of the best things you can personally do to benefit your own health as well as that of the planet. We gave ourselves a year to make the transition over 25 years ago. By 6 months we were all in and couldn't believe how little we missed meat and how relatively easy it was to convert most favorite recipes. Summertime with its bounteous fresh vegetables everywhere is a great time to try this out. You will not be sorry and the whole world will be better off for it.

July 9: If you are trying to recycle conscientiously, do not discard items that are "maybe" recyclable in your recycle bin. It's likely that these items will have to be removed at your waste management facility, which adds to its costs and efficiency. Please take the time to visit your local government's waste management website and find out what can be recycled in your area:

-- Fairfax County's website is: [Curbside Recycling | Public Works and Environmental Services \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/CurbSideRecycling/Pages/Public-Works-and-Environmental-Services.aspx)

-- For Arlington, click on the following link:

[www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Recycling-and-Trash](http://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Recycling-and-Trash). Scroll down the page to "Popular Topics" and select "Recycling Made Simple 2023."

July 2: Don't toss those leftover bits of veggies, rice, pasta, potatoes, meat, or fish, and the delicious juices. Put them in a container in the freezer, and add to it during the week, or month. Defrost and mix with a couple of eggs and some cheese, sprinkle crumbs on top, and bake (yummy frittata), or add some broth, a can of tomatoes, or other canned soups, and bring to a boil (yummy soup or stew)! Keep it out of the landfill and reduce methane! YAY!!

June 18: Summer is here. Air Conditioning: **Refuse. Reduce. Recycle.** Keep the **AC off** as much as possible. If you turn it on, **add 1-2 degrees** to your normal setting and allow your body to gradually acclimate to that temperature. Make good **use of fans** – ceiling, floor, table – they're all good.

*The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.* –Robert Swan

June 11: So many products we use every day are packaged in plastic, most of which is not recycled. However, products such as liquid hand soap and even shampoo are available in solid bar form. You can

also use powdered laundry detergent in boxes. Given the harm discarded plastic has already done to our oceans and waterways, it's worth the time and effort to seek ways to lessen your use of plastic.

June 4: The weapons/gun industries are major contributors to war, death and pollution throughout the planet. Please continue to take actions against the NRA and all those politicians who take donations from the industry and continue to vote against gun control legislation. Write letters, send email messages, leave voicemails, march, and contribute to gun safety advocates such as Gabby Giffords, Everytown for Gun Safety, Moms Demand Action, Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. Patronize businesses that support gun safety legislation and tell them why you are a customer. ALDI, CVS, Walgreens, Walmart, Wegmans, Subway are some of the businesses that publicize their support for gun control.

May 21: Reusable mesh produce sacks are available for purchase at your supermarket, and replace single-use plastic bags. Your fruits and veggies will be happy in the breathable bags, and you will be happy that they are so much easier to open.

May 14: Keeping your heating and cooling system operating efficiently saves energy. It's important to have your home's ductwork cleaned and to replace your system's filter regularly. Turn off your HVAC on lovely spring days like today. Open the windows and let the fresh air in!

May 7: PLASTIC: Let's reduce what we trash! Many of the items you buy in the grocery store, or receive from Amazon, are in **reusable** plastic bags. If you can push a hole in it with your finger, it goes back to the grocery store to recycle to make TREX for decks, etc. Or save it to use again. Put a drop of liquid soap in it, fill it with hot water, swish it around, empty it, hang it to dry and use it again. No need to buy any more plastic bags!

April 30: Choose the cold cycle on your washing machine. By washing four out of five loads of laundry in cold water, you could cut 864 pounds of CO2 emissions in a year, an amount equivalent to planting 0.37 acres of U.S. forest, [according to the American Cleaning Institute](#). Modern laundry detergents, even those that aren't marked for cold-water use, are typically formulated to clean just as well at lower temperatures.

April 23: Make every day Earth Day. Care for the Earth in all you do. For example, in the car:

- Drive at the speed limit.
- Avoid sudden starts or stops.
- Don't overfill the fuel tank.
- Check the tire pressure monthly.
- Change air and oil filters regularly.

April 16: April is Earth's Month – what will you give back? With waste pollution entering our environment at an ever-increasing rate, it's time for major corporations to do their part. Costco can make a big impact right now by stopping its excessive use of bulk packaging. Will you sign our petition [here](#) today?

April 9: This is the best time of year to get out of the house and enjoy a walk while taking in our annual "resurrection" of Mother Nature. While on your walk, consider how you can help conserve this amazing world our Creator has given us.

April 2: Don't throw your coffee grounds out and no need to compost them. Save them in a canister next to your coffee pot. When it's full, sprinkle the grounds around the base of your evergreen trees and shrubs. Your hollies, pines and azaleas love the gentle acid in coffee grounds.

March 26: Give the gift of adventure and experience over factory-made products.

March 19: Caring for Water Resources. The average household's leaks can account for nearly 10,000 gallons of water wasted every year and ten percent of homes have leaks that waste 90 gallons or more per day. Common types of leaks found in the home are worn toilet flappers, dripping faucets, and other leaking valves. An easy way to see whether your toilet tank is leaking into the bowl is to put a few drops of food coloring in the tank. If color shows up in the bowl before the next flush, you have a leak. Another way is to simply listen for non-stop running water in the toilet. Fixing water leaks can save homeowners about 10 percent on their water bills.

March 12: If you plan to add new plants to your garden or yard this spring, you should look for ones that are native to your area. These plants thrive with less watering or use of toxic sprays for pests. One source for locating plants native to your area is: [www.audubon.org/plants](http://www.audubon.org/plants). You can also check out the local master gardeners' website: [mgnv.org](http://mgnv.org)

March 5: Beginning to feel like Spring. Some of us may be putting seeds or plants into the ground for food/flowers. Some of us do not have "green thumbs." But we can support local farmers, reduce food-transport costs & bad environmental effects, eat healthier and enjoy meeting other kindred souls when we **shop at area Farmers' Markets**. Most function over the weekends. Are costs sometimes a little higher? Yes, but still worth it!

Feb. 26: Go outside. Connecting with creation and being reminded of God's goodness is a powerful way to motivate ourselves and others to care for our Earth. Not only that, numerous research studies show spending time in creation is so good for us in many ways – mentally, physically and spiritually. Make some time this week to spend time in nature and give thanks for this beautiful world God created. Plant something in the garden, walk in your local reserve or find a nearby hiking track. Share with a friend or family member what you saw, heard and experienced. Give thanks to God for creating such a precious and amazing world.

Feb. 19: About 15% of global greenhouse emissions result from livestock farming — almost on par with those produced by all sectors of transportation. Each year the amount of forested land cleared for cattle grazing releases emissions equal to driving 600 million cars. This Lent give your health and the planet's health a boost and consume less red meat.

Feb. 12: By using vinegar to clean mirrors, kitchen counters, bathroom sinks, etc., you can save money and avoid buying more plastic spray bottles of cleaners that contain a lot of chemicals. Mix equal parts water and vinegar in a spray bottle. Use full strength vinegar to clean mildewed tile or grout.