

Peace Lutheran Church 2025 Creation Care Action Plan

Submitted by the Creation Care Team: Marian Christjaener, Janet Cruse, John Fueger, Kathleen Fueger, Deb Hagen-Lukens, Barbara Hillier, Pastor Erik Kindem, Marcia Olson, Dana Rice

Introduction

Reducing single-use plastics in all our lives was a significant focus for Creation Care at Peace throughout 2024, beginning with a spotlight on ocean plastics during our Baptism of Christ service in January, a *Replacing Plastics for Lent* Challenge, a “Swap your SUP” event distributing samples of alternatives to Single-Use Plastics for Earth Day, and a month-long push to reduce plastic usage using materials from international Plastics Free July campaign and featuring the PBS NewsHour segment *The Plastics Problem* with a virtual showing and subsequent Zoom discussion on July 28th.

We maintained our focus on Creation-friendly eating by sampling plant-based dishes for Creation Care Sundays and Lenten soup suppers and sharing tips to reduce food waste. We contributed books to our Little Library, articles to *Peace Notes*, Acts and Prayers for Creation to each Sunday’s bulletin and further reported our activities back to the congregation through quarterly CCT News postings on the narthex bulletin board.

We accepted Faith Action Network’s 100% Voting challenge and, in response to the number of initiatives on the November ballot, developed a *Rally the Vote* program in partnership with PLC’s Social Ministry team to help us all be well-informed voters. Every Sunday from September’s Rally Day through the election in turn focused on being registered to vote, encouraging others to vote and on the details of individual initiatives to understand why FAN was encouraging “No” votes on specific initiatives.



Kathleen Fueger, Marcia Olson and John Fueger encourage voter registration

2025 Plan Development

The stated goal of our five-year Action Plan, adopted by Congregational vote in January 2023, was to make PLC “carbon neutral by 2030.” According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), a carbon neutral organization has a commitment to evaluate the CO₂ emissions produced, coupled with finding ways to reduce those emissions and with compensating for these by reducing emissions elsewhere through carbon offsetting.

All our work together, structured around Earth Ministry/WAIPL’s Green Fields to help ensure our Creation Care work encompasses every facet of our church life, has inched us closer to our goal

of carbon neutrality and will continue in 2025. Our solar panels dramatically reduced our reliance on utility-supplied electricity (some of which is coal-fired) at the same time our efficiency improvements reduced our overall demand for electricity.

For three years, Peace Lutheran Church has done exactly what the WEF describes—evaluated our emissions, worked to reduce those emissions and purchased offsets to compensate for the emissions we’ve not yet been able to eliminate by investing in projects that reduce pollution in other parts of the world. In 2024, we purchased credits supporting the Mozambique Safe Water Project. Before this project launched, residents needed to cut trees to fuel wood fires so they could boil their water before using it. We needed to offset only 7.7 metric tons of CO_{2e} (carbon dioxide equivalent) pollution as we applied both purchased offsets *and* earned offsets from the excess electricity generated by our solar panels to our 2023 emissions.

PLC’s emissions come primarily from our natural gas appliances (two high-efficiency boilers, which supply our heat; an aging hot water heater; and the commercial kitchen range), transportation emissions from all of us getting to and from church, and from our purchasing. The latter category covers an array of expenditures including contracts for our technologies, office equipment supplies and maintenance, and office, cleaning, bathroom and kitchen supplies. We maintain high rates of recycling and composting and increasingly favor recycled, recyclable and Earth friendly products. We stand united in our commitment to reducing our fossil fuel use, as evidenced by task force deliberations and the congregation’s discussion of options for emergency repairs to our damaged HVAC system last winter. Some Peace members asked at the time if this was an opportunity to further reduce our dependence on fossil fuel at PLC and investing in an electric system. This is an important question with significant financial as well as environmental considerations.

Last winter’s HVAC emergency was the second this congregation has faced. When our old oil-fueled boilers failed in 2010, we also scrambled to evaluate options and raise funds to finance purchasing the twin high-efficiency natural gas boilers we now have. Let’s get ahead of the next appliance emergency. Our natural gas hot water heater is aged. We have an opportunity to plan now to ensure its replacement is both fossil fuel free and fiscally responsible to our congregation. Toward that end, we propose forming a Fossil Fuel Free PLC Working Group as a key focus of our 2025 Creation Care Action Plan.

Key 2025 Programs

Going Truly Fossil Fuel Free at PLC

The CCT proposes to partner with PLC’s Property and Business chairs, as well as other interested Council members, to form a working group charged with developing a detailed *Fossil-Fueled Appliance Replacement Plan*. This partnership will examine, first and foremost, options for

replacing our natural gas hot water heater with an electric model and exploring available financing options. For instance, we recently learned through our Synod about the federal government's new Direct Pay Program under the Inflation Reduction Act, which creates a unique opportunity for congregations to receive reimbursements for clean energy investments. Under this program, should it remain available, the ELCA's Mission Investment Fund and the ELCA Federal Credit Union are offering up-front financing allowing congregations to take advantage of valuable rebates and grants that can significantly offset the costs of clean energy projects.

Further, aligned with the mission of our Creation Care Ministry, this working group would also examine options and restrictions for replacing newer natural gas appliances with electric models at point of failure or earlier should programs and incentives make it financially feasible to do so.

The end product of this working group's deliberations would be to know what generally we want as appliance replacements, understanding the potential work involved, and what financing mechanisms we could create to fund those replacements. The Fossil Fuel Free PLC Working Group will be tasked with providing the Church Council with purchasing and financing recommendations before 2026 financial planning begins.

Empowering Personal Actions

Yes, we need system change to address our climate crisis, but personal actions are a key part of that system. Project Drawdown and others have shown that about *one-third* of the solutions needed to stop climate change are best [implemented at the household or family level](#). Indeed, the Drawdown Solutions analysis reveals that **individual and household actions have the potential to produce roughly 25–30% of the total emissions reductions needed** to avoid dangerous climate change. Moreover, "every individual action results in unseen ripples that influence the larger systems of which we are all a part." For instance, by switching to an EV or installing solar panels you "not only reduce your own carbon emissions but also influence those around you to do the same and send a signal to politicians and the market that what's good for the planet is also good for their politics or their bottom line."

Our individual actions do indeed matter, particularly those that fall into four categories: 1) How we eat; 2) How we power up; 3) How we travel; and 4) How we heat or cool.

The graphic below of Project Drawdown's ["Top 20 High-Impact Climate Actions for Households and Individuals"](#) for communications and further program development illustrates our potential impact. Throughout 2025, the Creation Care Team will create opportunities for us to learn more about what we each can do to make a difference.

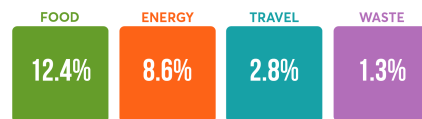
TOP 20 HIGH-IMPACT CLIMATE ACTIONS FOR HOUSEHOLDS AND INDIVIDUALS

The data presented here represents cumulative Gt CO₂-eq over 30 year period



BY SECTOR

Together, the individual and household actions presented here have the potential to produce roughly **25–30 percent** of the total emissions reductions needed to avoid dangerous climate change (>1.5°C rise)



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DRAWDOWN.**

Learn more about these & other climate solutions at: projectdrawdown.org

Continuing Campaigns

The 2025 Action Plan continues our work in three key areas: supporting pollinator species, earth-friendly eating, and reducing plastic use. We’ll support all three campaigns through *Peace Notes* articles, Sunday bulletin Acts for Creation, and social media activities.

- **Peace Pollinator Project**—To invite our neighbors and our members to plant and share native pollinator plants, we’ll promote the two native plant exchanges in West Seattle throughout the planting seasons. In early October, when we celebrate St. Francis of Assisi Sunday, we intend to host a native pollinator plant swap and a natives planting event on PLC’s grounds, potentially tapping the resources and expertise of [The Dirt Corps](#) and King County’s native plantings programs. We’ll also explore installing an “adoptable plants box” on our grounds, similar to our little lending library, to facilitate donating and adopting plants.

- **Cooking for Creation**—Combined, eating plant-based diets and reducing food waste have the potential to produce 12.4% of the total emissions reductions to avoid dangerous climate change. To continue promoting these actions, we’ll supply plant-based dishes for Lenten suppers and coffee hours following the five Creation Sundays. We’re also planning an in-person or virtual screening and discussion of the three-part documentary film *“Regenerating Life: How to cool the planet, feed the world, and live happily ever after”* in the spring.
- **Replacing Plastics**—Recycling and reducing or eliminating the use of plastics are both on Project Drawdown’s Top 20 list of high-impact actions for households and individuals, and we’ll keep our focus on both during 2025. This work will include
 - Being ambassadors to help Westside Interfaith Network (WIN) congregations replace plastics, including exploring how we could help found and expand a coalition among congregations already working together on the West Seattle Ecology Fair.
 - Adding contributing compostable sandwich bags and waxed paper sandwich bags to the Free Trade shop in the narthex.
 - Creating a checklist/order sheet for bulk purchasing of not-plastic alternatives to plates, utensils and napkins, including those with holiday/seasonable themes to encourage hosts to select those rather than bring in non-compostable items.
 - Reviewing our facility use agreement to make sure we encourage green choices.
 - Making *Plastics Free July* an annual program to put intense focus on this challenge mid-summer.
 - Sharing information and tips for how we can all reduce our dependence on plastics in our lives and in our homes throughout the year.



Boots and Paul Winterstein accept a bag of sample alternatives to single-use plastics from Kathleen Fueger during our April 21st *Swap your SUP* event.

Additional Green Field Activities

Worship

- Through our shared members with the Worship Planning Team, collaborate the planning of worship services for the Baptism of Our Lord Sunday in January, the June Season of Creation, and the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi in October.
- Contribute weekly Prayers for Creation to Sunday bulletins

Education

- Plan live or virtual screenings of the [three-part documentary film](#) *“Regenerating Life: How to cool the planet, feed the world, and live happily ever after”*
- Contribute weekly Acts for Creation to Sunday bulletins
- Contribute monthly articles for *Peace Notes*
- Post creation care-related content to PLC’s branded social media platforms and the Peace Connections Facebook page
- Continue building the PLC Creation Care webpage with information, progress reports, and volunteer and engagement opportunities. Use all communications tools available to tell PLC’s stories
- Supply plant-based dishes for Lenten suppers and Creation Sundays coffee hours
- Encourage adding more plant-based dishes to holiday menus and daily meals
- Conduct annual carbon footprint assessment of PLC’s environmental impact and invest in offset projects to compensate for emissions we cannot yet eliminate
- Produce Quarterly *CCT News* reports for Narthex bulletin board and electronic sharing

Buildings and Grounds

- Organize fall volunteer planting of more native pollinator plants
- Partner with all staff and the Property Chair to plan for and request our 2-year re-evaluation of PLC’s EnviroStars ranking
- Conduct annual carbon footprint assessment and invest in carbon offsets as needed to compensate for emissions we cannot yet eliminate
- Adopt ideas from Vision Plan to create work plans that continue greening our grounds and operations at PLC

Community Engagement

- Fund and create signage for self-guided tours of PLC’s pollinator plantings
- Second Annual #PlasticsFreeJuly social media campaign, accompanied by sidewalk signage such as the flags developed for the November 3, 2024, Community Prayer Vigil
- Continue Little Library book donations program
- Continue engaging with West Seattle EcoFair planning and development

Faithful Advocacy

- Organize annual West Seattle carpools of advocates to join Faith Action Network’s annual Interfaith Advocacy Day in February and support other advocacy during this longer, biennial budgeting legislative session
- Expand our faithful advocacy work to address local issues at the local level with the City, County and businesses

2025 Budget

Line items:	Cost Estimates:
Creation Care-focused lending literature	\$150
2024 Carbon Offset Investment Fund	\$300
Underwrite <i>Regenerating Life</i> film “screening event”*	\$100
Develop/build native plant exchange box	\$150
Misc. campaign materials support	\$100
2025 CCT Budget Request:	\$800

*\$100 Small Community Screening for 1-50 people. \$200 for 51-100 people.

2025 Activity Calendar

<p>January</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Baptism of Christ Sunday + plant-based treats at coffee hour 	<p>February</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FAN's Interfaith Lobby Day
<p>March (Ash Wed. 3/5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide plant-based soups for Lenten soup suppers ● Supply books to PLC Free Little Library ● Publish/post/email <i>CCT News</i> 3/31 	<p>April (Easter 4/20, Earth Day 4/22)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue plant-based contributions to Lenten soup suppers
<p>May</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2024 carbon footprint assessment ● Identify carbon offset options for team review ● Organize screening and discussion of <i>"Regenerating Life: How to cool the planet, feed the world, and live happily ever after"</i> documentary (May or June) 	<p>June – Season of Creation, 6/15, 22, 29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Publish carbon assessments in June <i>Peace Notes</i>. Share offset plan ● Supply books to PLC Free Little Library ● Offer plant-based treats at coffee hour for three Season of Creation Sundays ● Publish/post/email 6/30 <i>CCT News</i>
<p>July (Plastics Free July)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 31 Days of <i>Plastics Free July</i> 	<p>August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote Duwamish River Festival ● CCT 2026 brainstorming
<p>September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Peace Pollinators Program</i> planting ● Support God's Work, Our Hands ● Support West Seattle EcoFair ● Begin drafting 2026 Action Plan ● Free Little Library books ● Publish/post/email 9/30 <i>CCT News</i> ● Build/display/promote native pollinator plant adoption/sharing box ● Submit budget request to Council 	<p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Neighborhood <i>Peace Pollinator Project</i> plant swap ● <i>Peace Pollinator Project</i> planting ● St. Francis of Assisi worship service, linking to Ecumenical Season of Creation themes. 10/5 with plant-based coffee hour treats ● Create 2026 Action Plan for team input and review
<p>November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote more plant-based cooking and less plastics use for Thanksgiving 	<p>December</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Send 2026 Action Plan to Council ● Free Little Library books ● Publish/post/email 12/31 <i>CCT News</i> ● Write submission for Annual Report