

In summary:

- ❖ Climate change is an extremely serious issue and our need to respond is *urgent*.
- ❖ The GA resolution provides an opportunity for each of us to make a bold Christian witness to reduce our energy usage and offset our remaining carbon emissions, while reaching out to our neighbors.
- ❖ Making carbon neutrality a mission of each of our churches and families will help lead our nation and the world to combat the devastating effects of climate change.
- ❖ The cost is minimal, compared to the overwhelming costs of not responding.



Guide to Going Carbon Neutral

This Guide was prepared for families and churches in response to the General Assembly 2006 Resolution calling on all Presbyterians and Presbyterian institutions to go carbon neutral as a bold Christian witness to help combat the effects of climate change.

For additional information, contact Pam McVety,
Stewardship of Creation Enabler,
Presbytery of Florida,
mcvety@nettally.com or
www.pcusa.org/hunger/features/climate.htm

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Guide Outline

- WHAT:** Definition of carbon neutral
General Assembly Resolution
- WHY:** Background information
on need to go carbon neutral.
- HOW:** Steps for families to go carbon
neutral
Steps for churches to go carbon
neutral
- COSTS:** Costs for a family/church

Costs for a church:

The cost depends on how much energy your church uses per year. At First Presbyterian in Tallahassee, FL, the 2007 kilowatt usage was 112,320. This equates to 87 tons of carbon emissions. (Multiple 1.55 X KWH and divide by 2000 to get tons.)

The cost also depends on which offset company you use, since carbon offset costs range from \$5 to \$18 per ton. Using Native Energy the cost is \$12 per ton and thus it would cost \$1044 a year to go carbon neutral. Divide this by the number of members and the cost will be two or three dollars per member per year. Very affordable.

Costs for a family:

A fairly typical family of four releases about 65,000 pounds or 32 tons of carbon dioxide annually. These emissions are about twice the global average. It has been calculated that after a family has implemented energy conservation strategies, the purchase of carbon offsets would cost about \$185 per year, which may be deductible from federal and some state income tax. This is about 12 cents per day per person.

It is likely that the family would have achieved some annual savings in electricity and gasoline costs in excess of the carbon offset cost thus substantially lowering or eliminating the cost of going carbon neutral.

What does it mean to go carbon neutral?

Carbon neutrality requires our energy consumption that releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere be reduced and carbon offsets purchased to compensate for those carbon emissions that could not be eliminated.

Keep reading and this will become clearer.

What does the GA 2006 Resolution say?

It strongly urges all Presbyterians immediately to make a bold witness by aspiring to live carbon neutral lives.

It directs the General Assembly Council...to inform all Presbyterians, governing bodies, and churches of the urgent need for them to reduce their energy consumption and of the injustice of our current energy practices.

It also, calls upon all Presbyterians to take this seriously, to pray asking for God's forgiveness and guidance, to study this issue, to calculate their carbon emissions, to educate others, and to use less energy, striving to make their lives carbon neutral.

(The Presbyterian journal, Church & Society (July-August, 2006) carries the Assembly's action.)

And finally it means:

All Church members and staff

- ❖ Live their faith by seeking to right the injustice of their energy usage.
- ❖ Reduce their personal energy usage in their homes and businesses.
- ❖ Support the mission of the church to reduce its energy usage through their pledges and commitments.
- ❖ Work in their communities to help reduce energy usage.
- ❖ Ask our leaders to set carbon emission reduction goals as established by scientists to avoid runaway and dangerous climate change.

It means:

Congregational Care Committee

- ❖ Serves food grown locally at church meals and receptions
- ❖ Recycles leftovers
- ❖ Not use plastics
- ❖ Coordinates trips to visit shut ins

Why go carbon neutral?

It is the consensus of the scientific community that our burning of fossil fuels, like coal, oil and natural gas, emit greenhouse gases which are warming the planet and causing serious harm to the natural and manmade environment. (This is commonly called global warming).

This change is accelerating faster than predicted just a few years ago resulting in:

Ice sheet and glacial melting at alarming rates; rising sea levels, coral reef die-off; entire island nations disappearing; water shortages, flooding, record number of killer storms, plant & animal extinctions; and more.

According to Dr. Hansen at NASA, emissions already exceed a safe level.

More on why go carbon neutral.

Prompt action and leadership by individuals, organizations, communities, states and countries can keep global climate change from becoming worse.

Previous GA (1981, 1998, 1999 and 2003) passed overtures, resolutions and policies addressing our unjust energy practices and calling on us to reduce our energy consumption.

It means:

Property Committee

- ❖ Commitment to continual evaluation of energy usage.
- ❖ Ongoing goal of reducing energy usage and switching church to renewable energy sources.
- ❖ Special maintenance and attention to solar equipment.
- ❖ Recycle

It means:

Witness

- ❖ Seeking to make amends for the injustice of our excessive energy usage on others.
- ❖ Developing an outreach initiative to connect with a family or village in Africa or the Arctic to put a human face on climate change impacts.
- ❖ Helping your community to switch to alternative energy.
- ❖ Opposing the construction of coal plants.

How do you go carbon neutral?

1. Calculate your carbon emissions. Use your Internet search engine to find a suitable carbon calculator. Calculators can be found at www.nativeenergy.com, www.co2.org or www.safeclimate.net/calculator.
2. Reduce your carbon emissions as low as possible, aiming for the world average of 4 tons per person per year. To do this, reduce your energy usage. Remember it is your energy usage that release carbon emissions. Energy saving tips are available on the Internet and you are familiar with the most common ones such as installing compact fluorescent light bulbs, driving less, unplugging computers and other electronics when not in use, raising and lowering your thermostat seasonally, etc. One source of energy saving tips is found at <http://www.epa.gov/earthday/tips-saveenergy.htm>.
3. Offset your remaining carbon emissions by purchasing carbon offsets. Carbon offset companies, such as Native Energy, Climate Care, Climate Friendly and many more sell carbon offsets by the ton. The money you pay the offset company is used to fund an alternative energy project that without your money and that of others purchasing carbon offsets, would not be constructed. Two examples are the construction of windmills and methane digesters on dairy farms. These projects either don't emit carbon emissions or remove carbon emissions that normally would go into the atmosphere and contribute to climate change.

How do families go carbon neutral?

Follow the three steps:

1. Identify your energy usage – home, car and plane flights, using a carbon calculator on the Internet, & calculate your carbon emissions.
2. Take steps to lower your energy usage - install compact fluorescent light bulbs, drive less, raise and lower your thermostat seasonally, wrap your hot water heater, etc.
3. Purchase carbon offsets to offset your carbon emissions that cannot be eliminated by lowering your energy usage.

It means:

Financial Commitment

- ❖ Making energy reduction costs a vital and on going part of the annual stewardship campaign.
- ❖ Conducting capital campaign for large energy reducing activities such as solar, replacing windows, etc.
- ❖ Annually purchasing carbon offsets.

It means:

Education

- ❖ Helping church members, session and clergy understand the devastating effects of climate change and how urgent and serious the need is to reduce our carbon emissions.
- ❖ Preaching and teaching on the theology of being a good steward.
- ❖ Explaining over and over that reducing energy is a vital mission of the church.
- ❖ Helping church members to reduce their energy usage in their homes and businesses and to purchase carbon offsets.

How do churches go carbon neutral?

1. Follow the same three steps as individuals, plus more.
2. Going carbon neutral becomes a comprehensive mission of a church that does not end when energy usage is lowered and carbon offsets are purchased.
3. It involves all aspects of church life from the pulpit to the classrooms, to the kitchen, to the community, beginning with a commitment from the Session to make it a mission of the church.

A Church Going Carbon Neutral Involves More Than Purchasing Offsets. It means...

The Session

- ❖ Affirming the Christian mandate to care for creation.
- ❖ Affirming that the urgency, injustice and seriousness of climate change calls the Church to act now and to act boldly to lead the way in reducing energy usage.
- ❖ Affirming the G.A. carbon neutral resolution.

And more for the Session

- ❖ Establishing carbon neutrality as a vital mission the church.
- ❖ Leading the church and its members to live carbon neutral lives.
- ❖ Asking us to pray for God's forgiveness and guidance as the whole church moves in a new direction.

And more