

Peace Lutheran Church 2023-2029 Creation Care Action Plan

Sixth Arena of Ministry: Caring For Creation¹

From the beginning God has entrusted the human community with tending and caring for Earth—our common home. In this time of unprecedented threats to the planetary systems that sustain life, we commit ourselves to the vocation of creation care once more. We recognize the interconnectivity and worth of all of God’s glorious creation and commit ourselves to care for the land, the air, the water, and the fellow creatures with whom we share this home. In and through our worship life, policy decisions, education offerings, actions, and ecumenical relationships (Earth Ministry) we commit ourselves to sustaining Earth and seeking justice and compassion for all that God has made.



Submitted by the Creation Care Team Members

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Introduction and Overview

On January 30, 2022, the people of Peace Lutheran resolved to faithfully engage in a year-long process designed to create a common language, understanding and consensus among us to make Peace Lutheran carbon neutral by 2030.

While the ongoing pandemic altered the Creation Care Team’s original 2022 plans, limiting our ability to gather for intended events and conversations, we still gathered input from a wide variety of groups within Peace. During 2022, we took the following actions:

¹ Caring for Creation became one of PLC’s core arenas for ministry in 2020. This description of our commitments was approved by the congregation in January that year.

- Purchased the Lenten devotional, *A Grounded Faith: Reconnecting with Creator and Creation in the Season of Lent*
- Interviewed Peace members and engaged those involved in PLC's, committees and groups to brainstorm input to create these plans
- Responded to a request from the Worship Committee by publishing weekly Acts and Prayers for Creation in the Sunday bulletins
- Used *Peace Notes* to provide May and September updates on our progress and to invite Peace members to continue sharing ideas and opportunities with us
- Addressed climate change and creation care during the Season of Creation
- Began regular Facebook posts on People of Peace and Peace Connection
- Footprinted 2019 emissions using the Cool Congregations Calculator to create a benchmark for action planning
- Applied to EnviroStars, a statewide program that provides environmental assistance and recognition for Washington businesses, including faith organizations, to assess our practices and performance and chart improvements.



Awarded Tier 2: Partner status. This is the result of PLC's many years of actively reducing our environmental impact

- Benefits to us:
 - Free Dec. 5th Seattle City Lights conversion of most remaining florescent and other low-efficiency interior and exterior lighting to LEDs for the offices, Fellowship Hall, classrooms, hallways and exterior lights
 - Free "Toilet paper only" signage in all restroom stalls to prevent water-wasting clogs
 - Free pictorial recycling, trash and composting bin signage to aid accurate sorting
 - Free additional composting bin for the kitchen (coming soon)
 - Free hazardous waste spill kit
- Researched and recommended three carbon offset projects and involved congregation in determining allocation of purchases

This Action Plan document is the result of these efforts. Built upon more than a decade of Earth stewardship at Peace, this plan is a living document intended to be updated and revised annually according to the progress we, the people of Peace, make in reducing our own environmental impact and in response to the inevitable changes we'll see in nature and our community as our climate continues to change.

A History of Environmental Action at Peace Lutheran

For well more than a decade, PLC has been a community of Earth Keepers seeking a more sustainable future. Our concern for Creation is integral to many of our worship services and is part of who we are as People of Peace. Together we have achieved much, including

- Hosting workshops and teaching events focused on educating our membership and community at large about the science of climate breakdown
- Celebrating, from 2010 onward, a series of annual Season of Creation Sunday worship experiences in which we have sought to connect the dots between our identity as followers of Jesus with our vocation as Earth Keepers
- Actively advocating for legislation that would lead to healthier and more sustainable practices at both the state and federal levels
- Making numerous Earth-aiding capital investments, lowering our energy, water and waste bills, including
 - High-efficiency gas-fired boilers, replacing an antiquated oil burning system (2010)
 - Rain gardens with cisterns, participating in the City and County Rainwise program that helps prevent sewage run-off into Puget Sound (2015-2016)
 - Solar panels to our roof to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, converting us to an energy producing community (2018)
 - Energy-saving lighting systems (2007, 2019)
 - Insulation and energy-saving narthex windows (2019)
 - Tree plantings beginning in 2015 and including one in 2016 as a celebration of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home*. The Peace Tree Planting program, including working with the City of Seattle's [Trees For Neighborhoods Program](#), beautifies the church grounds, helps retain water and carbon in our soil and will provide habitat for birds as the trees flourish.

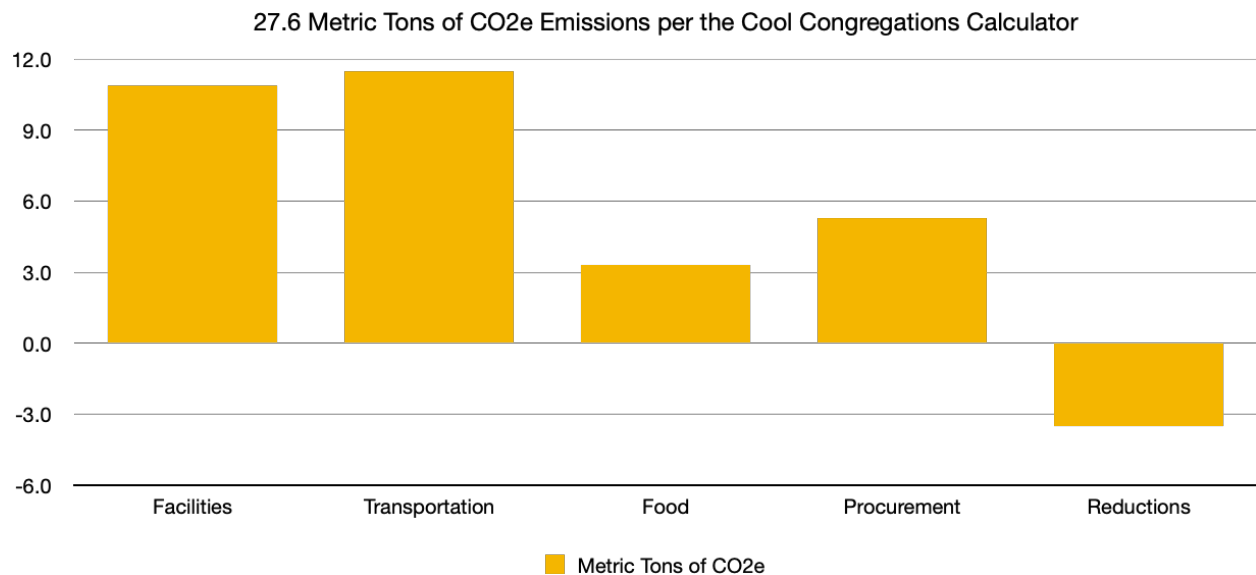


Determining Our Environmental Impact at Peace Lutheran

Using the Cool Congregations Calculator, we created a benchmark using our 2019 emissions (the last full year of church activities before the Covid pandemic changed everything). We can use this benchmark to measure our plan progress. The Calculator tracks four emission categories

- Facilities – electricity, gas, garbage, sewer and waste. This data came from our 2019 utility bills

- Transportation – All of us getting to our church building for all church activities. Staff graciously recreated 2019 mileage reports. To estimate transportation emissions for the rest of us, we used the default setting built into the Calculator according to congregation size
- Food – All we buy, eat and drink at PLC. Rather than trying to recreate our consumption in 2019, we also used the Calculator’s default settings for food
- Purchasing – All our purchases from copier paper and pens, to restroom and cleaning supplies. Again, we used the default settings in the Calculator rather than trying to recreate this.



As the chart above illustrates, our total 2019 emissions were less than 28 metric tons. Our largest contributors were Facilities and Transportation. To put our emissions footprint into perspective, [The Nature Conservancy](#) reports that *the average person in the U.S. has a personal footprint of 16 tons*. This is one of the highest rates in the world and compares with a global average carbon footprint closer to 4 tons.

Yet even 4 tons is too high. To have the best chance of avoiding a 2°C rise in global temperatures, the average global carbon footprint per person per year needs to drop below 2 tons by 2050. This is why we at Peace Lutheran are committed to continually reducing our congregation’s emissions and encouraging the changes to bring global missions into a sustainable range.

Structuring our Action Plan

Earth Ministry/WAIPL (Washington Interfaith Power and Light) recognized Peace Lutheran as a Greening Congregation in 2016. The organization, which exists to transform faith into action for the well-being of communities and the environment, offers a toolkit to help congregations become more Creation-friendly by working in five Green Fields encompassing the different areas of community life into which environmental stewardship can be incorporated. We used these Fields to organize the Peace Action Plan.

Green Fields

- **Worship** – The sacraments, tangible signs of God’s radical love, and the Gospel message of the incarnation, or Earthly presence, of Jesus Christ both offer theological foundations for an environmental ethic that can be conveyed in the context of worship throughout the liturgical year.
- **Education** – Effective education can help people explore the many connections between their faith and the earth. Teaching children and youth through movement, song, and outdoor experiences alongside story and text that include earth-based images and themes of stewardship or justice lays the spiritual groundwork for tomorrow’s leaders. Adult education offers abundant ways to develop the desire for sustained environmental action, and can provide reflection, support, and ongoing learning to equip us for communal reimagining and transformation.
- **Buildings and Grounds** – Congregational Building and Grounds are great places to practice stewardship and sustainability and reduce our house of worship’s ecological footprint. We have many opportunities to reduce our impact by focusing on Landscaping and Grounds Care, Hospitality, Office, Waste Disposal, Water Efficiency, Energy Efficiency and Transportation.
- **Community Engagement** – To extend our mission as Earth Keepers beyond greening our own congregation, we can host environmental events and live out the call to care for Earth and work for justice in the broader community. Through various acts of Community Engagement, our congregation can play a lead role in advancing social change.
- **Faithful Advocacy** – Part of our task as Earth Keepers lies in providing the tools and opportunities for members to advocate for systemic change that centers the wellbeing of communities and the environment. Faithful Advocacy is putting our faith into action to reform the political, social,



and corporate systems that perpetuate environmental racism, pollution, poverty, and injustice. With support from Earth Ministry/WAIP, members of our congregation can speak truth to power at all levels of the political process (local, state, and national) and across various environmental justice issue areas like climate, fossil fuels, toxics, and salmon recovery.

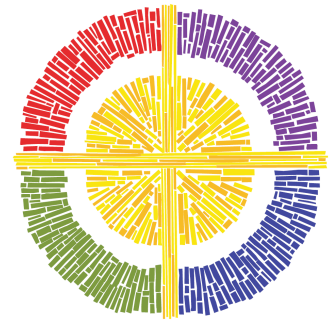
Measure, Reduce, Offset

The United Nations recommends all nations, organizations and individuals working to reduce their environmental impact start by measuring their emissions to know precisely how much they're contributing to global warming. The next step is to reduce those emissions as much as possible through energy savings, smart transportation, water savings, waste reduction and composting. Finally, the UN recommends purchasing carbon offsets that will help finance the pollution-reduction and prevention work necessary to prevent warming above 2°C.

Core Strategies

<p>Adopt, fund and implement annual action plans built around Earth Ministry's Green Fields of Worship, Advocacy, Community Engagement, Buildings and Grounds and Education</p>	<p>Monitor our progress annually using the Cool Congregations Calculator and bi-annual Washington's EnviroStar program evaluations</p>	<p>Purchase carbon offsets annually to compensate for the emissions we can't yet reduce and in support of our Social Ministry objectives</p>	<p>Increasingly view all we do at Peace through a lens of Creation Care and Environmental Justice</p>
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2023 Peace Lutheran Creation Care Action Plan



Worship

- Celebrate Creation *in all seasons* – propose to the Worship Committee an Earth-tending emphasis during the Baptism of Christ Sunday in January and in October on St. Francis of Assisi Day (Jan.)
- The Seasons of Creation Tree – using a durable wall decal or mural, add a Tree to the narthex as an old-fashioned interactive bulletin board, changing leaves according to seasons and Creation Care initiatives at Peace (June)
- Supply *All Creation Waits* by Gayle Boss as our Advent devotional text (Dec.)

Education

- Add and maintain a Creation Care page to our PLC website to share information, progress reports and volunteer and engagement opportunities (launch by Earth Day)
- Help plan Earth-centered youth and adult education activities during Earth Month (April) such as screening Paul Hawken’s *Regeneration: Ending the Climate Crisis in one generation* YouTube film for discussion
- Support planning and development for Sunday School, Youth activities and Adult Education 2023-2024 programs to encourage creation-centered curricula additions (summer)
- Share the stories of Peace’s Creation Care projects with our congregation and community widely through our website, Peace Notes, social media and our narthex “tree” (ongoing)
- Continue weekly Acts for Creation and Prayers for Creation in Sunday bulletins (ongoing)

Buildings and Grounds

- Create Earth-friendly purchasing guidelines to contribute to a Council-driven set of purchasing guidelines for Peace (deliver to Council in March)
- Offer recommendations on how to determine if gatherings need to be in person or could be virtual, thus reducing transportation, building heating and lighting emissions (Feb.)
- Support Community Engagement’s *Peace Pollinators Program* by helping organize grounds care volunteers (Jan./Feb.)
- Continue to improve our waste management at Peace by
 - Tracking all the single-use plastics used at Peace through 2023 as foundation for full 2024 *Replacing Plastics* campaign (Feb.-Dec.)

- Creating fun “Where does it go?” events for adults and children to help us all properly sort what we throw out (Schedule events for May)
- Stenciling the City of Seattle’s “No Dumping” notice by all 3 storm drains adjacent to our property (requires applying to City program) (July)
- Buying and installing occupancy sensors for restrooms’ and storage areas’ lights (Aug.)

Community Engagement

- Launch the *Peace Pollinators Program* – intended to build toward rallying community support for a pollinator pathway including PLC; we’d launch this multi-year program in 2023 with an early spring Native Pollinator Plants seminar at Peace (March) followed by select native plantings on Peace grounds and a follow-up event in the fall (Sept./Oct.)
- Highlight *Earth-friendly Eating* with a series of events:
 - Volunteer demonstrations as part of Earth Month program (April)
 - Eco-friendly potluck (May)
 - Eco-friendly eating Thanksgiving recipe swap event among members and friends (Nov.)
- Continue supporting the Duwamish River Community Coalition (DRCC) and Delridge Neighborhood Development Association (DNDA) with Pass The Hat offerings and God’s Work, Our Hands work days (Sept.)
- Encourage participation in UCC Fauntleroy’s Recycle Roundup event (Sept.)

Faithful Advocacy

- Invite Earth Ministry to teach a Faithful Advocacy workshop at Peace (TBD pending Earth Ministry availability)
- Organize volunteers for Faith Action Network’s Interfaith Lobby Day in Olympia (Feb. 9th)
- Kick off quarterly “Inform & Invite” postings in *Peace Notes*, social media and the Peace website on policy, political and corporate issues (Jan.)
- Hold our first annual *eARTH Advocacy Day* featuring advocacy letter writing, art projects and other creative activities for adults, youth and children (June)

2023 Budget Request

Line items:	Cost Estimates:
PLC Event Speaker Fund	\$500
2022 Carbon Offset Investment Fund	\$300
EnviroStar improvement investments (e.g. signage & equipment to support waste reduction & recycling; 8 motion sensors for offices, classrooms, nursery, restrooms and storage area lights)	\$300
Multi-purpose narthex tree graphic + materials	\$100
All Creation Waits Advent devotional	\$500
2023 CCT Budget Request:	\$1,700

2024 Action Plan Development

The Creation Care Team (CCT) proposes dedicating our 2024 programs to the world's plastics problem with a year-long *Replacing Plastics* campaign. The CCT will again solicit new ideas and feedback mid-2023 on the priorities listed below in order to finalize our next annual plan and develop our budget request. 2024 planning will continue to employ these four key strategies:

- Adopt, fund & implement annual action plans built around Earth Ministry's Green Fields of Worship, Advocacy, Community Engagement, Buildings and Grounds, and Education
- Monitor our progress annually using the Cool Congregations Calculator and Washington's EnviroStar program
- Purchase carbon offsets annually to compensate for the emissions we can't yet reduce and in support of our Social Ministry objectives
- Increasingly view all we do at Peace through a lens of Creation Care and Environmental Justice

Worship

- Propose to the Peace Worship Planning Team a repeat of our Earth-tending emphasis in January with the Baptism of Christ Sunday, during the June Season of Creation, and on St. Francis of Assisi Day in October, and the addition of one Sunday in the spring and one during Advent
- Build upon our Seasons of Creation Tree

Education

- Explore how we can further bring caring for creation *through water* into our church space through the Watershed Discipleship [Toolkit: Our Watershed Moment](#), an initiative of the EcoFaith Network, Minneapolis Synod, ELCA, and/or Portland-based [Ecofaith Recovery](#)'s Columbia River Watershed Discipleship program
- Continue building up our PLC Creation Care webpage with information, progress reports and volunteer and engagement opportunities. Use all communications tools available to us to tell Peace Lutheran's stories
- Partner with youth education encouraging *Replacing Plastics* and other earth-centered curricula for Sunday School, Youth activities
- Partner with Adult Education planners to integrate book and/or film studies of biblical and Lutheran connections to explore the ways plastics damage all of creation and create advocacy possibilities. Explore opportunities to invite Westside Interfaith Network congregations to join us
- Communicate sustainability practices to PLC membership

Buildings and Grounds

- Develop *Replacing Plastics* checklist for replacing single-use plastics everywhere possible within Peace
- Establish policy to make all equipment replacement purchases as energy efficient, plastic-free and low carbon impact as possible, despite upcharges
- Switch to creation-friendly cleaning products certified through After Choice, GreenSeal or similar per EnviroStars
- Begin annual employee training on the sustainability best practices EnviroStars' checklist
- Explore mechanisms for sharing earth-friendly product recommendations, buying guides, etc.
- Organize a "Who's your neighbor?" event for Peace members to learn who lives near them or on their route to church to encourage carpooling (and friendships!)
- Explore replacing some of the cement between the power poles on the Thistle side with permeable materials, creating some strategically placed deeper "wells" so that handicapped parkers will still be able to enter/exit vehicles without a problem and possibly erecting handicap parking signs to provide a fixed sense of what area of that walk would be dedicated to what purpose.
- Host neighborhood block party for *Peace Pollinator Project*

Community Engagement

- In connection with our *Replacing Plastics campaign*, organize support for the Duwamish River Community Coalition (DRCC) and Delridge Neighborhood Development Association (DNDA) (Sept.)
- Organize a drive supporting UCC Fauntleroy's Recycle Roundup event (Sept.)
- Building upon the first year of the *Peace Pollinators Program*:
 - Sponsor and host Pollinator Pathway community workshop (March)
 - Hold neighborhood Native Pollinator Plant swap and sale on the Peace patio (Sept.)
- *Cooking for Creation* demos, potlucks and recipe swap events
- Track and support all West Seattle organizational efforts to reduce our community's environmental impact by helping publicize events and resources
- Purchase Creation Care related books to distribute through our Free Little Library

Faithful Advocacy

- Increase frequency of *Inform & Invite* posts to help Peace members be aware of issues and opportunities and linking to original source material. Disseminate through the Creation Care website, our social media outlets, Peace Notes articles, the narthex tree's leaves, etc. (bi-monthly or monthly)
- Help organize carpools for Westside FAN member churches to join Faith Action Network's Interfaith Lobby Day in Olympia (Feb.)
- Hold second annual *eARTh Advocacy Day* (June)

2025 Action Plan Development

Action planning for 2025 will begin in earnest mid-2024 as the Creation Care Team again gathers congregational input to update plan priorities and develop our 2024 budget request. The team will begin that planning process with the following ideas in each Green Field area.

Worship

- Enter into collaborative planning processes with the Worship Planning Team with a lens for Creation Care
- Continue seeking ways to bring nature into our worship and our worship out in to nature

Education

- Build upon our 2024 exploration of bringing caring for creation *through water* into our church space with additional programs from Watershed Discipleship's [Toolkit: Our Watershed Moment](#) and/or [Ecofaith Recovery](#)'s Columbia River Watershed Discipleship program
- More fully integrate creation care into all levels of education at PLC

Buildings and Grounds

- Plan for 2-year re-evaluation of PLC's EnviroStars ranking
- Explore switching to electronic alternatives from paper for payroll and staff communication
- Explore capital improvements to building including replacing or facing amber windows in Sanctuary and entry and staff offices

Community Engagement

- Produce *Cooking for Creation: Celebrating 80 years of Peace Lutheran Church* cookbook – series of events to capture Peace members' original eco-friendly recipes for publication in time for the 2025 Bazaar and for holiday giving
- Conduct door-to-door campaign around Pollinator Corridor potential
- Host Gentle Giving Fair at PLC featuring Fair Trade and Equal Exchange products, handmade crafts, used books and other Creation-friendly gift items
- Engage Peace Piecers to explore creation-themed quilts
- Issue community-wide invitation to creative West Seattleites to create Creation Care-themed gifts and arts, such as items crafted from repurposed/recycled materials to be featured in a special exhibit during the fall Bazaar with all proceeds from those items going directly to the artist
- Launch an annual Caring for Creation Film screening at PLC, inviting all of West Seattle through community event notices on the West Seattle Blog among other
- Host Creation-friendly eating cooking demonstration with professional nutritionist/chef

Faithful Advocacy

- Organize West Seattle carpools of advocates to join Faith Action Network's annual Interfaith Advocacy Day in Feb.
- Continue *Inform & Invite* posts to help Peace members be aware of issues and opportunities and linking to original source material. Disseminate through the Creation

Care website, our social media outlets, Peace Notes articles, the narthex tree's leaves, etc. (quarterly at minimum)

- Establish PLC Alerts network for Creation Care Action
- Hold PLC's third annual *eARTh Advocacy Day* (June)

Setting 2026-2029 Action Plan Priorities

By the time we begin detailing our fourth annual Action Plan in mid-2025, governments around the world will have less than five years to meet their Paris Accord obligations to halve global emissions. Without dramatic action from world leaders and major corporations, the pace of climate change will continue to accelerate, requiring us all to adapt.

Meanwhile, we at Peace will have annually measured our impact and continually stepped up our efforts to reduce our congregation's environmental impact and—critically—increase our role as knowledge sharers, community leaders and advocates for change in our community, our state, our nation and our world in pursuit of achieving carbon neutrality.

We will annually deploy our core strategies to build meaningful campaigns supported by appropriate budgets to fund our Earth keeper tasks. As our 2023-2029 Action Plan progresses, we'll diligently work to view all we do at Peace through a lens of Creation Care and Environmental Justice. Increasingly, we'll seek to gather input for new ideas and feedback on themes, campaigns and priorities from community members in addition to Peace congregation members. Each annual plan will include key programs and campaigns for each Green Field.

Worship restores our relationship with creation. During the final four years of this Action Plan, we propose asking the Worship Planning Team to continue its embedding of the spirit of our Seasons of Creation in all worship planning throughout the full church year, bringing nature inside our church home, taking our church activities outside into the natural world, and highlighting our role in seeking Environmental Justice in our hearts, homes, communities and beyond.

Education helps our members and our community explore the many connections between their faith and the earth. Priorities through the end of this Plan will encourage making caring for creation core to all educational programs at Peace, exploring new groups within our community such as a Food and Faith Group built upon our eco-friendly eating programs and campaigns and new book and film study groups to understand how Creation is adapting to the changing climate and what we can do to help.

Buildings and Grounds priorities through plan end will include constantly identifying new opportunities to reduce the emissions generated by heating and lighting our structure, and minimize our waste production through smart purchasing, recycling and composting; prioritizing environmental impact when evaluating all replacement capital expenditures and purchases; and annually purchasing values-aligned carbon offsets to compensate for reductions we're not yet able to make.

Community Engagement priorities through 2029 will increasingly engage our broader neighborhood in helping create a sustainable future as PLC becomes a base for community education and social events focused on environmental education, protection and action, environmental justice and sustainable planning. Programs may include facilitating a Pollinator Pathway that includes the Peace Church site and sustainable eating conversations inside of Peace and among our broader neighborhood and world. We'll seek to create opportunities for Peace members and our neighbors to reject our throw-away economy through events and education, and to continue our support of native peoples and our local natural environment through ongoing partnerships with Duwamish River Community Coalition, Delridge Neighborhood Development Association and other identified groups.

Faithful Advocacy programs through the remainder of our Action Plan will include developing annual advocacy campaigns that leverage our memberships in Earth Ministry and Faith Action Network to invite more and more members of Peace and the broader West Seattle community to engage politicians, businesses and community organizations to choose a sustainable future for all creation over short-term profits or benefits.

Examining all we do at Peace through the lens of Creation Care

Your Creation Care Team is so grateful to represent a congregation so deeply committed to sustaining Earth and seeking justice and compassion for all that God has made. We invite each Peace member to join in the initiatives outlined in this plan, following your personal passions and employing your individual talent. We look forward to collaborating with you as we flesh out the details of each year's Action Plan to help repair and preserve our precious, God-given Earth.



Paul Hawken's 2021 book, *Regeneration: Ending the Climate Crisis in One Generation*, begins with this powerful statement:

“Regeneration means putting life at the center of every action and decision. It applies to all of creation—grasslands, farms, people, forests, fish, wetlands, coastlands, and oceans—and it applies equally to families, communities, cities, schools, religions, cultures, commerce, and governments. Nature and humanity are composed of exquisitely complex networks of relationships, without which forests, lands, oceans, people, countries, and cultures perish.”

“It applies to all of creation.” We, the People of Peace, recognize this truth and have demonstrated our commitment to act upon it time and time again. While the stated objective of this plan is to make Peace Lutheran, as a facility, a congregation, a community, carbon neutral by 2030, the Creation Care Team sees countless opportunities within these actions to encourage urgent action far beyond our own membership.

In the Afterword to Hawken’s book, artist, activist and storyteller Damon Gameau writes that “In this moment, we need a revived culture with a radical empathy for the living world.” Let us embody that radical empathy and help show others the way.