

Peace Lutheran Church 2026 Creation Care Action Plan

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

Introduction

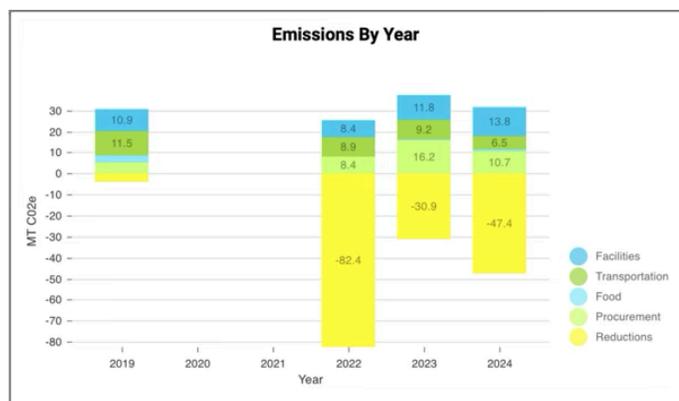
Peace Lutheran first embarked on its mission to care for creation following the 2010 Re-Visioning process, which led to adopting Caring for Creation as our sixth arena of ministry and our goal of being “carbon neutral by 2030.”

The World Economic Forum defines a carbon neutral organization as “having a commitment to evaluate the carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂) emissions it produces, find ways to reduce those emissions, and compensate for these by reducing emissions elsewhere by purchasing carbon offsets.” By this definition, Peace Lutheran has been carbon neutral since at least 2022 when we bought our first carbon offsets to compensate for the emissions we continue to produce from our operations.

We annually conduct assessments to measure our progress toward reducing our impact, constantly seeking ways to reduce our actual emissions by promoting recycling and composting, culling single-use plastics from Peace’s kitchen and supply cabinets as well as encouraging each of us at home to do the same, and using all our communications tools to talk frequently about ways to produce fewer pollutants. To compensate for the previous year’s emissions, we invest in carbon offset projects annually.

How Far We’ve Come

Our 2024 carbon footprint assessment, conducted in August of 2025, indicated we had *negative* emissions for the year. Several factors combined to give us this result: 1) Without a functioning heating system, our natural gas use was down 44% in 2024 from 2023 levels; 2) While the giant electric room heaters that kept us warm guzzled electricity, some of what we needed came from our own solar panels, reducing the increase in our power demand; 3) significantly, we were given credit for the 8 metric tons (mt) worth of carbon credits we purchased in 2024 to compensate for our 2023 emissions; and finally 4) we recycle and compost everything we can, which reduces our impact! Together, these factors more than



A 2019 emissions estimate guided action plan development. We've reported our pollution production at Peace since 2022.

compensated for the 31.7 metric tons of emissions our church operations generated in 2024. Consequently, our plan commitments didn't require us to purchase any offset credits against 2024 pollution production.

Our emissions fall primarily into three of the Cool Congregations Calculator's categories: 1) transportation emissions from all of us getting to and from church, 2) purchasing – a category that covers a vast array of expenditures including contracts for our technologies, office equipment supplies and maintenance, and office, cleaning, bathroom and kitchen supplies – and 3) our natural gas use, which powers two high-efficiency boilers that supply our heat and a connected hot water heater, and the kitchen range.

Our 2025 Action Plan included two major initiatives to reduce our emissions. The first focused on empowering personal actions at the household or family level to reduce pollution, which according to **Project Drawdown**, could provide about one-third of the solutions needed to stop climate change. Every quarter, we shared information and tips through *Peace Notes* articles, Sunday bullet Acts for Creation and social media posts on how to reduce emissions when we heat and cool our homes, grocery shop and prepare meals, get around, and generate power. While we won't continue this particular program in 2026, we will continue to share tips and ideas to encourage household and family activities to pollute less.

Our second major program was forming a **Fossil-Free PLC Working Group** to explore how and when we could replace our natural-gas-fueled appliances with cleaner alternatives. Our most recent heating system changes were made during emergencies. Our boiler/hot water system, installed in 2010 (with a life expectancy of 25 years), replaced an old oil-heating system that failed us. We lived with energy-guzzling electric space heaters for more than a year waiting for the final repair to our most recent HVAC failure. Both situations required emergency capital campaigns—a significant one in 2010 to finance replacing the old oil boiler, and a smaller recent one to bridge the gap between our insurance (which covered the depreciated value of the old equipment above the narthex) and our full replacement costs.

Before we find ourselves in another urgent situation a decade or so down the road, we have an opportunity to plan now to ensure system replacements are both fossil fuel free and fiscally responsible to our congregation. The Working Group included Karl Coy, Larry Cruse, Deb Hagen-Lukens, Dave Kehle and Michael Truog and assessed our current systems, consulted with Seattle City Light to examine how we could further reduce our energy use, talked to congregations which have switched to heat pump systems, and started building financial models to determine how to fund clean energy replacements for existing systems as they age. This work continues into 2026.

We took a small step toward reducing our collective transportation emissions in October by introducing the Share-A-Ride bulletin board in the narthex to help encourage and facilitate carpooling, while fostering personal connections among Peace members who share or pass through others' neighborhoods. We plan to build on this start in 2026.

Finally, we witnessed the closing of Earth Ministry, which guided, encouraged and cheered congregations from all faiths pursuing a just and sustainable future for more than 30 years. Our 2010 Strategic Plan set a goal of being recognized as a Greening Congregation by Earth Ministry and that focus set our course toward adopting Creation Care as our sixth arena of ministry and working to be carbon neutral by 2035. We deeply grieve their loss with heartfelt gratitude for their leadership, inspiration and community.



2026 Plan Development

Approaching this fourth annual action planning process, we benefitted from the research conducted by the Vision Task Force to develop the next strategic plan. The focus groups, online survey and a Post-It notes exercise at the 80th Anniversary gathering generated numerous ideas and requests from our members for every arena of ministry at Peace. For Creation Care, those recommendations and requests broadly fell into three categories.

- Keep reducing Peace Lutheran's environmental impact
 - Facilitate/encourage carpooling
 - Become carbon neutral earlier than planned
- Get more involved with the broader community caring for creation
 - Participate in more community events (e.g. "clean the beach")
 - Increase participation with the creation care teams of other faith communities = strength in numbers
 - Sponsor workshops on electrification, moving off fossil fuels and addressing food insecurity, including partnerships with local growers
 - Move our building off fossil fuels, and provide guidance for other churches, neighbors and building owners to do so
- Deepen our environmental justice work in partnership with Social Ministry and other ministries at Peace
 - Help add climate injustice to the justice issues addressed through Peace's Social Ministry work to help those around the world most impacted by climate change
 - Encourage donations to developing countries, through Lutheran World Relief, to help affect climate issues

- Strengthen relationship with Duwamish Tribe and support their environmental work
- Engage in political solutions to make Seattle welcoming to climate migrants and deal with the effects of stress on a warming planet: food insecurity/price increases, population density/high housing prices/rents and less stable politics

These congregation member recommendations and requests guided development of the 2026 Action Plan.

Key 2026 Programs

Deepen our environmental justice work

One request from the congregation was to add **climate injustice** to the justice issues addressed through Peace's Social Ministry work to help those around the world most impacted by climate change. Seeking environmental justice is the responsibility of both Peace's Social and Creation Care ministries. Climate justice, or environmental justice, highlights and seeks to rectify the disproportionate impact of environmental harm on marginalized communities, harm that often leads to higher rates of health problems and economic challenges.

We are aware that those most impacted by the climate crisis did the least to create it and have the least power to do anything about it. It is our responsibility as Christians who care for *all* of creation to ensure fair treatment and meaningful involvement for all in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws and policies, and access to a healthy, sustainable environment for all communities.

Throughout 2026, volunteers in Peace's Social and Creation Care ministries will collaborate on programs and actions that help our members understand the issues and interconnections of environmental justice around the world and here at home. Specifically, we will

- Continue strengthening our congregation's relationship with the Duwamish Tribe.
- Seek opportunities to engage in political solutions to make Seattle welcoming to climate migrants and deal with the effects of stress on a warming planet. Some of the issues surrounding this are food insecurity/price increases, population density/high housing prices/rents and less stable politics. This work largely entails faithfully advocating for policies that address the root causes of climate change, protect human rights, and establish legal pathways for migration. Our first step will be consulting with Faith Action Network, of which Peace is a member, to determine how they're approaching this issue and how Peace members can engage in that work. Secondly, we can help Peace members understand the causes, effects and challenges of climate migration and

opportunities these challenges can become. We will explore hosting talks with knowledgeable speakers, writing well researched articles for *Peace Notes* and, when there are specific actions Peace members can take, promoting them through our Acts for Creation.

- Encourage donations to developing countries most impacted by the climate crisis by advocating for Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran World Federation and other faith-based organizations.
- Make environmental justice a top priority in selecting carbon credit investments should we need to purchase offset based upon our 2025 and 2026 pollution assessments.

Continue reducing Peace Lutheran's environmental impact

- **Tackling emissions and waste**
 - **Creative solutions** – On April 19th, as part of our recognition of Earth Day on the 22nd, engage members in finding solutions for reducing our emissions and waste as a congregation by inviting members to jot ideas on paper cut into car, water bottle and perhaps power plant shapes and then pin them to the Creation Care banner. Our prompt could ask for ideas on reducing personal car emissions, energy efficiency, and using less plastic, specifically.
 - **Bicycle options** – We do our best to promote cycling as an alternative to driving in order to reduce transportation emissions (and be healthier!). But in order to ride to church services and events, Peace cyclists need a safe place to lock their bikes. This need has come up during Creation Care Team meetings, Vision Task Force meetings, and conversations among members. The Fossil-Free PLC Working Group has taken the lead in exploring if and how Peace could apply to a City of Seattle program for bike racks along 39th Ave. SW between our Serviceberry trees or at another location on Peace's property. If we can apply, the Group will seek Church Council approval to move forward.
 - **Carpools and rideshares** – Partner with the Social Ministry team to organize a two-part "Where We Live event" to help Peace members learn more about each other and connect. On the first Sunday, we'll have a large West side map posted in the narthex and will invite folks to use different colored pins to mark the general location of their residence and identify themselves as someone wanting rides, offering rides or interested in ride-sharing and then talk to others also placing pins near theirs. On the second Sunday, we'll use tables in the Fellowship Hall for breakout groups built around the largest "hubs" of pins on the map. Table signage can have the intersection and anyone living near there (or driving through there) is welcomed to join the conversation.
- **Fossil-Free PLC Working Group**

By the third quarter of 2026, the working group plans to deliver a set of recommendations to the Church Council outlining the general type of appliance replacements desired (such as an induction range to replace the gas stove in the kitchen), the work involved in the transition, and the financing mechanisms we could create now to fund those replacements.

Get more involved with the broader community

In partnership with Peace Lutheran's Social Ministry and Youth Ministry, support aligned organizations and groups by sharing information and encouraging volunteer participation.

- **Participate in more community events.** We'll explore opportunities to participate in beach clean-ups and other community events in addition to the ELCA's *God's Work Our Hands* September 13th. We'll particularly look for opportunities with Cleaner Alki, [Friends of Lincoln Park](#), [Seattle Parks Foundation](#), Dirt Corps, and Ocean Blue Cleanup.
- Support our engagement in the **Westside Interfaith Network** (WIN) with particular focus on how we can encourage electrification, moving off fossil fuels, and addressing food insecurity. Explore the idea of hosting workshops on these topics for the broader community.
- **Increase participation with the creation care teams of other faith communities** by continuing our engagement in West Seattle's EcoFair, support for Fautleroy UCC's Recycle Roundups, increased information sharing with the West Seattle Catholic Community and Westside Universal Unitarian, and seeking new opportunities to collaborate and encourage action. Explore how we could help facilitate networking among Westside congregations of all faiths, modeled after Earth Ministry's Colleague Connections program.

Support Continuing Campaigns

The 2026 Action Plan continues our work to support pollinator species, encourage and model earth-friendly eating, and reduce plastic use.

- **Peace Pollinator Project** – During June's 2025 Pollinator Week at the beginning of our Season of Creation, we learned about housing native Mason Bees from Peace member Michael Truog. Many members enthusiastically wanted to help these tiny native super pollinators. So we're organizing a series of 2026 Mason Bee events.



Michael Truog talking about native mason bees as Pollinator Week kicked off the Season of Creation June 15th.

- *House building event series.* Sunday, February 1, we'll host an after-service Fellowship Hall event and build some bee houses.
- *Starting a Population.* Through our February *Peace Notes* article and with information sheets available with the free plans, we'll share information on attracting wild mason bees to your area by setting up a suitable nesting house and providing the right habitat, or how to purchase cocoons from a reputable seller in early spring to encourage habitation.
- *Clean-your-bee-house event.* At the beginning of Oct., we'll host an event for any Peace or community member wanting to make sure they're properly cleaning their bee houses. We'll have washing stations on the patio and Michael Troug, who's housed mason bees for years, on hand with advice and answers to our questions.
- ***Cooking for Creation*** –To maintain our focus on how eating plant-based diets and consuming less red meat, in particular, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, we'll again contribute plant-based dishes for Lenten suppers and coffee hours following the five Creation Sundays, and share tips and ideas throughout the year.
- ***Replacing Plastics*** – This work will include
 - Continuing to advocate for replacing plastics with fellow WIN congregations and those who've been involved in organizing the West Seattle Ecology Fair.
 - Exploring how we could add 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.
 - Recommend revisions to our facility use agreement to help all organizations meeting at Peace make green choices.
 - Continue supporting the international *Plastics Free July* program.

Sharing Knowledge and Keeping our Community Informed

Knowledge sharing and reporting have been core activities of our Creation Care work since we began this work. CCT produces weekly Acts and Prayers for Creation in Sunday bulletins; monthly *Peace Notes* articles; quarterly *CCT News* letters distributed to Peace members and posted in the narthex; and annual reports of PLC's environmental impact. We also contribute creation care-related content to PLC's branded social media platforms and the Peace Connections Facebook page. Additionally, the CCT will

- Continue contributing ideas for January's Baptism of Our Lord Sunday, the June Season of Creation, and October's Feast of St. Francis of Assisi worship services

- Continue the Little Library book donations program
- Continue engaging with West Seattle EcoFair planning and development
- Managing communications to support fall volunteer native pollinator plantings
- Partnering with all staff and the Property Chair to plan for and request our 2-year re-evaluation of PLC’s EnviroStars ranking
- Supporting the annual West Seattle carpools of advocates to join Faith Action Network’s annual Interfaith Advocacy Day in February and help organize other advocacy throughout the year, focusing specific attention on climate injustice at the local level with the City, County and national and international levels including advocating for responsible business practices

2026 Budget

Line items:	Cost Estimates:
Creation Care-focused lending literature	\$150
2025 Carbon Offset Investment Fund	\$300
Mason Bee housing project fund for building and cleaning materials, equipment and potentially bee purchases	\$250
Misc. campaign materials support	\$100
2026 CCT Budget Request:	\$800

2026 Activity Calendar

<p>Q1 January-March</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Baptism of Christ Sunday + plant-based treats at coffee hour ● Promote mason bee housing with free plans, invitations, and table at Annual Meeting ● Bee house building with 2/1 kick off ● FAN's Interfaith Lobby Day TBD ● Provide plant-based soups for Lenten soup suppers 2/25-3/18 ● Supply books to PLC Free Little Library ● Publish/post/email 3/31 <i>CCT News</i> 	<p>Q2 April-June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 4/19 "brainstorming" with the Creation Tree banner for 4/22 Earth Day 4/25 Arbor Day ● Earth Month sidewalk flags ● Season of Creation 6/14, 21 & 28 ● Pollinator Week is June 22-28, 2026 ● <u>First</u> Season of Creation Sunday treats ● Publish/post/email 6/30 <i>CCT News</i> ● Supply books to PLC Free Little Library
<p>Q3 July-September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Plastics Free July</i> annual campaign ● Conduct annual emissions assessment, Identify carbon offset options as needed, report to congregation through <i>CCT News Special Report</i> ● Promote Duwamish River Festival ● Help organize the Eco Fair ● Free Little Library books ● Submit Fossil-Free-PLC Working Group report to Council ● Publish/post/email 9/30 <i>CCT News</i> 	<p>Q4 October-December</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote <i>Peace Pollinators Program</i> planting ● Clean-your-bee-house event 10/3 ● St. Francis of Assisi Sunday plant-based treats at coffee hour ● Promote more plant-based cooking and less plastics use for Thanksgiving ● Free Little Library books ● Publish/post/email 12/31 <i>CCT News</i> ● Write submission for Annual Report