NOVA CARES for CREATION

Nov. 1: There are 4,500 data centers in the world, with 38% of the total in the U.S., and mostly in Virginia. Data centers use around 5% of U.S. electricity and that could grow to as much as 17% by 2030 as interest in AI grows, according to the Electric Power Research Institute. Data centers operate highly polluting backup generators, use a huge amount of freshwater, and dramatically increase utility bills for taxpayers. At least 25 proposed data centers were canceled last year after local protests. Solar installations, a target of the Trump administration, declined by 14% in the U.S. last year. However, solar energy was still the largest source of new electricity generation. (The New York Times, and The Virginia Sierran, Spring 2026)

Oct. 25: From Jeanne: Prior to our recent retreat, I used AI to help generate an image reflective of our retreat's theme. While I found it entertaining, what I have found since is sobering: Using AI (generative AI models or AI-assisted search tools) typically consumes significantly more energy and water than a traditional Google search. A generative AI text prompt or conversational response requires live, complex neural network calculations using 4 to 30 times more energy than a traditional search engine request. Conclusion: It may be fun to play around with AI but it is not worth the cost in energy consumption.

Oct. 18: Decluttering responsibly reduces your environmental impact because sending items to landfills increases methane pollution and waste. Instead of throwing things away, consider donating locally, selling items online, using gifting networks or properly disposing of hazardous materials and excess food. By reusing, sharing and recycling thoughtfully, you can clear clutter while helping your community and protecting the planet. The **NOVA Swap Day on Nov. 1** is planned with this in mind! In addition to our Swap Day, there is a wonderful place to recycle stuff. Upcycle in Alexandria takes all those little items we throw away every day – paper clips, empty paper towel and toilet paper rolls, wine bottle corks, string, buttons, bubble wrap – and repurposes it. Teachers, artists, etc., come to the Upcycle shop and buy this stuff to make wonderful artsy things. It's a fun place to visit, in addition to finding a home for stuff.

Oct. 11: "Today, life sustaining rivers, streams and wetlands in the continental U.S. are under threat. In 2023, the Supreme Court found that the Clean Water Act's federal protections do not cover many intermittent streams and millions of acres of wetlands which help filter drinking water for many communities and provide critical habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife. A new rule proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) narrows federal protection even further." (From: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, email dated Oct. 9, 2026). To read entire email, click on: https://www.votervoice.net/USCCB/home. Click on the EPA link at the top and provide your name and email address to support the bishops' initiative.

Oct. 4: Love creates and keeps on creating. Love dances in freedom. Love is the pervading passion of all things that draws diversity into oneness, that knows and pleads for union, that aches for goodness and beauty, that suffers loss and destruction. Love is the power that births and grieves, the laughter that fills the heavens, the tears that water the earth. Love is the energy that fuels, fills and embraces everything everywhere, and there is no end to it. (Dr. Gerald May in "The Wisdom of Wildness: Experiencing the Healing Power of Nature.")

Sept. 27: From a talk Thomas Merton gave to his novices at Gethsemane when rabbits were eating from the abbey's garden: "Life is this simple: We are living in a world that is transparent and the divine is shining through it all the time. This is not just a nice story or a fable, it is true.… If you can see that rabbits are rabbits you suddenly see they are transparent... and that the rabbitness of God is shining through, in all those darn rabbits." ("All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings" by Gayle Boss)

Sept. 20: Our waterways and both tap and bottled waters worldwide contain often toxic levels of microplastics. As consumers, we can phase out the use of all single-use plastic and choose sustainable packaging materials whenever possible. Systemically, work toward the reduction of plastic production and effective waste management systems.

Sept. 13: While Northern Virginia has been blessed with rainfall in recent months, there are 1.7 million Virginia residents who are experiencing drought conditions. To find out more about drought in our state and across the in the U.S., click on this link: www.drought.gov.

Sept. 6: Coral reefs cover less than 1% of the ocean floor but support about 25% of marine species. In the U.S., coral reefs provide $3.4 billion in annual economic value through fisheries, coastal protection against wave damage, tourism and scientific research. They have also been a persistent source of scientific discovery. At least two dozen cancer drugs trace their development to marine organisms that thrive on coral reefs, along with compounds that treat cardiovascular diseases, ulcers and more. (Nature Conservancy Magazine Issue 2, 2026)

Aug. 30: We know the names of corporations, celebrities, politicians and products, but we may not know the name of the tree growing outside our window. So today, learn one name. Find a tree, bird, flower, insect, creek, mountain or other living presence that you cannot name. Spend time discovering what it is, how it lives. Where does it come from? What does it need? What other lives depend upon it? Then go meet it again and approach it by name. There is a difference between walking past "a tree" and walking past an oak you have begun to know. There is a difference between hearing "a bird" and recognizing the call of a chickadee. Relationship begins with attention, and attention transforms what once appeared to be background into community. (Piloting Faith from Rev. Cameron Trimble)

Aug. 23: As we prepare to celebrate the Season of Creation, we are called to consider Living Water. Thomas Berry said the natural world is the larger sacred community to which we belong. The elements in our bodies were forged in ancient stars, the water in our cells has been cycling through rivers, clouds, oceans and other living beings for billions of years. We belong to the water cycle; we drink from aquifers filled long before we arrived. We are sustained by watersheds we did not create and cannot replace. The water that flows through a river has been a glacier, a cloud, a root, an ocean and will be again. Water is not a passive object to be controlled or manipulated, but a vital member of the Earth community. (Thomas Berry, A Book of Hours, edited by Kathleen Deignan, CND)

Aug. 16: 2026 may well surpass 2024 as the warmest year on record. Hotter days increase the temperature difference the AC must overcome to reach the setting you have left it at. Raising your thermostat from 1-5 degrees can significantly reduce the amount of CO_2 produced as well as your energy costs. Turn off the AC whenever you're away, sleeping or don't absolutely need it. Fans are a great alternative.

Aug. 9: "Living water never stays still. It flows into relationships, communities, and creation. When we contemplate the Heart of Jesus, we begin to see the world differently. We receive Christ in those who

suffer from floods, droughts, polluted water, and environmental injustice. Like St. Francis embracing the leper, we discover that encounter changes us. Prayer becomes compassion. Compassion becomes care. Compassion becomes hope." (Christina Leano, associate director of the Laudato Si Movement)

Aug. 2: Coral reefs form habitats that support 25% of marine species even though they cover only 1% of the ocean floor. They provide $3.4 billion in annual economic value through fisheries, and coastal protection against wave damage. However, rising ocean temperatures, ocean acidification and pollution have weakened reefs and caused widespread coral death. Some good news. A recent assessment known as the 50 Reefs Study has systematically identified areas where corral might still be saved, through fine-tuning conservation priorities. (*The New York Times and The 1440 Newsletter)*

July 26: Ilia Delio writes in NCR, "There can be no true love of God without true love of all creatures; thus, full union with God must include all creation." Ilia then quotes Eric Doyle who says: "To love is to be in relation with another, creating a bond between the self and a part of the world, and so ultimately between self and all creation. If one person can love one other person, one unique animal, one flower, one special place on this earth, there is no reason in principle why that love cannot stretch out to embrace every single creature to the furthest reaches of space."

July 19: The climate crisis is "heating up" and the U.S. has fallen to 27th place in the World Environmental Performance Index. There is now a political phenomenon called "climate hushing", where politicians, including Democrats, fear speaking up about the devastation that is occurring lest it cost them votes or influence. Tell your local, state and federal officials that they must speak out now because it's almost too late.

July 12: Vatican City became the first fully solar-powered city in the world as of May 2025. As Tarek Salame in EuroWeekly, May 31, 2025, states: "This is not just about rooftop panels; it's about how science, sustainability and faith can coexist and set the pace for the rest of the world to follow."

July 5: We seem to be on an unstoppable path toward relying mainly on renewable energy. Yes, the Trump administration is deeply hostile to both wind and solar and is trying desperately to prop up coal. But even if it succeeds, America is not the world. We account for only 14 percent of world electricity production. China accounts for 32 percent. U.S. policy won't stop the energy revolution. In May, solar supplied more of the nation's electricity than coal, 12.8%, while coal supplied 12.2%. Wind supplied about 10%. A federal judge recently struck guidance from the IRS restricting tax credits for wind and solar projects. States won by Trump accounted for 74% of all solar capacity installed in 2026. Thirty-two states generated at least 10% of their retail electricity sales from solar, wind and geothermal energy last year, nearly double the amount for 2016. Fearing for his heavy investments in fossil fuels, Trump indefinitely stalled 106 planned wind projects in 21 states and agreed to pay several companies $1.8 billion to abandon their offshore wind plans. Groups are asking courts to order reviews of these actions and are suing the Pentagon for stalling clean energy development. (The Washington Post)

June 28: "There are no two realities the same. There are no two leaves on a tree the same. There are no two drops of rain, no two snowflakes. No two atoms, no two of anything that are the same. Sameness is a deficiency. It is the uniqueness that establishes the high value of things. So that each being contributes something to the universe. That no other being ever could contribute or ever will contribute…." – Thomas Berry, "A Book of Hours," edited Kathleen Deignan, CND. The question is: What is my unique contribution toward the healing of our planet?

June 21: Use less plastic: Participate in Plastic Free July by saying “no” to single-use plastics, such as plastic straws, water bottles, shopping bags, takeout containers, plastic wrap, etc. Find out more and take a Plastic Free Pledge at https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/pledge/.

June 14: The Catholic Climate Covenant is hosting a Zoom webinar, Climate Communications to Empower Action and Solutions, from 2 to 3 p.m. June 25. Two climate communications experts will discuss how we can use storytelling to empower climate action and how we can improve our communications regarding climate change. They will also discuss how to communicate with church leaders and members regarding “intergenerational dialogue and our moral obligation to protect future generations.” Register here.

June 7: “The gaseous power duo heating up the Planet consists of carbon dioxide and methane, its fast-acting sibling. Carbon dioxide is mostly the result of burning fossil fuels, while methane (the stuff of cow burps, pipeline leaks, and landfills), can trap 80 times more heat than carbon dioxide over 20 years. But carbon dioxide lingers in the atmosphere for hundreds of years.” *The Washington Post.* We have two huge problems to fix. Thank you solar, wind, and vegetarians.

May 31: Global monthly wind and solar generation beat gas-generated electricity for the first time in April, according to Ember, a think tank in the U.K. Electricity generation for the two renewable technologies totaled a record 531 terawatt-hours, while gas generation clocked in at 477 terawatt hours.

May 24: Implicit in many of our Care for Creation tips is the assumption that we are the most intelligent, virtuous, successful species that ever lived. This thinking has allowed us to exploit the Earth to our own ends. In a new book, "The Arrogant Ape: The Myth of Human Exceptionalism and Why It Matters," author Christine Webb presents a new way of looking at things and leads us to re-evaluate how we should relate to the rest of the world.

May 17: As climate impacts become more disruptive, sustaining our commitment to prevent further warming risks our being overwhelmed. How do we maintain momentum around the clean energy transition, halting deforestation, and other mitigation strategies while navigating extreme weather, biodiversity loss, and other impacts? Climate Interactive is hosting a **webinar on Thursday, May 21**, where Executive Director Andrew Jones will use the En-ROADS Simulator, co-developed with MIT Sloan, to visualize what's possible. He will also demonstrate how this powerful tool is used for communicating the urgency of climate action to decision-makers. Register for a session that fits your schedule at https://www.climateinteractive.org/events/.

May 10: If you receive a bouquet of flowers for Mother’s Day or other occasions, instead of throwing the flowers in the trash when they are no longer fresh, you can compost them. If you live in a condo or apartment, you can also recycle your blooms by drying or pressing them. This link offers several options: https://gardeningdream.com/drying-flowers-guide/

May 4: More than 4,000 companies worldwide report climate commitments, a nine-fold increase over the past five years, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers. Some reasons why: Companies are facing supply chain shocks from supercharged storms, consumers are demanding sustainable products, Gen Z workers are seeking jobs at climate-minded businesses. Some good news for a change.

April 26: More reasons to love, appreciate and wonder at creation:
– Sea otters hold hands while sleeping to avoid drifting apart while sleeping in water.

– A teaspoon of honey represents the entire life's work of 12 bees.

April 19. The 2026 Earth Day theme is "Our Power, Our Planet" – a focus on accelerating the transition to clean energy. There are lots of activities and celebrations this week: community clean-ups, tree planting, educational events, etc. Check out the Arlington Earth Day Festival next Sunday on Langston Blvd near Cherrydale, 11-5.

April 12: An article in The Washington Post informed readers that emperor penguins and Antarctic fur seals have been declared officially "endangered" as a species because of the warming of Earth. We as human beings are major contributors to the problem of warming. This article reminds us of why caring for our environment is important every day, in as many ways we can.

April 5: On average, a ChatGPT query needs nearly 10 times as much electricity to process as a Google search. The rapidly increasing use of AI is unprecedented, and AI-powered data centers could consume up to 9% of total US electricity generation by 2030. This could strain existing power grids. It requires both data center regulations and significant infrastructure upgrades for energy transmission.

March 29: March 30 is International Day of Zero Waste 2026. Nearly 19% of all food available to consumers is wasted every year, accelerating climate warming emissions and draining valuable resources such as land, water and energy. Reducing food waste is a top climate solution. Learn more here.

March 22: "The universe is the primary revelation of the divine, the primary scripture, the primary locus of divine-human communion. When we destroy the living forms of this planet
we destroy modes of divine presence." Thomas Berry, A Book of Hours, edited by Kathleen Deignan, CND.

March 15: Spring yard cleanup is best done when temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees for several days, typically early April to early May, once the ground has thawed and dried. Waiting allows pollinators in dead stems and leaf litter to emerge and prevents compacting wet soil, protecting your ecosystem.

March 8: Recently the Rainforest Alliance hosted a panel discussion in Mumbai about "how healthy forests help regenerate the land and rebuild communities – from farm to fork." Forests help farmers mitigate the negative effects of our world's changing climate on their productivity. Among actions explored were: building a regenerative future; choosing sustainably produced products; and governments, nonprofits and philanthropies providing greater financial and educational support to farmers, communities, and consumers. Support care of our beautiful forests however you can.

March 1: On average, Americans waste nearly a pound of food per person every day. Fresh fruits and vegetables make up more than one third of what goes uneaten, according to The Washington Post. Cut up fresh fruit and vegetables for salads, soups, jams, or stews, cutting out the bad parts. Refresh wilted greens in cold water. Freeze leftovers for later use. Freeze peels and other non-meat waste and take frozen waste to a nearby public compost collection site when you have a full bag. In New York City, residents are fined $300 if they put their compost in the trash instead of in compost bins, The New York Times reports.

Feb. 15: Katherine Hayhoe, environmental scientist and communicator extraordinaire, has this to say about the most important thing we can do to help the environment: “Rather than focusing on your carbon footprint, think about your climate shadow: how you influence those around you by using your voice and your actions to inspire change. These changes can even be contagious, in a good way!” According to the social science of change, the most effective thing an individual can do is to start a conversation about solutions and what people can do. “If you don’t know where to start,” she says, ”give my TED talk a watch.”

Feb. 8: The Laudato Si’ Movement is an online organization whose mission is “to inspire and mobilize the Catholic community to care for our common home and achieve climate and ecological justice, in collaboration with all people of good will.” It offers a Lenten meditation that may be helpful to you. Go to https://laudatosimovement.org/lent/

Feb. 1: Some good news: The hole in the Antarctic ozone layer protecting the Earth is smaller than in previous years and is on track to recovery in coming decades. The long-term positive trend reflects the success of concerted international action to phase out more than 99% of the production and consumption of controlled ozone-depleting substances used in refrigeration, air conditioning, firefighting foam and even hairspray. The continuing efforts will significantly reduce risks of skin cancer, cataracts, and ecosystem damage due to excessive UV exposure. (2025 World Meteorological Organization.)

Jan. 25: Soul and soil are not separate. Neither are wind and spirit, nor water and tears. We are eroding and evolving, at once, like the red rock landscape before me. Our grief is our love. Our love will be our undoing as we quietly disengage from the collective madness of the patriarchal mind that says aggression is the way forward. (Terry Tempest Williams)

Jan. 18: About one-third of Earth’s warming has been from methane – a climate super pollutant 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Tackling its emissions is one of the most important and effective actions we can take. The food system contributes methane along its entire supply chain – including cattle, manure and food waste. One step we can take is eating less beef. In addition, there are promising developments in feed additives and biocovers to reduce landfill emissions.

Jan. 11: Large amounts of microplastic particles are released into water systems from our washing machines. To combat this problem, University of Bonn researchers have developed a filter that removes 99% of the particles. “The [filter] design mimics the funnel-shaped gill system used by filter-feeding fish, allowing fibers to roll away instead of blocking the filter.” In the near future, this inexpensive, patent-pending solution could be built into new washing machines. (Source: www.sciencedaily.com – University of Bonn, December 22, 2025)

Jan 4: Engineers in western Finland have created a battery that stores clean energy not in chemicals or metals — but in plain, dry sand. This thermal energy storage system, developed by the Finnish startup Polar Night Energy, absorbs surplus electricity from wind and solar, converts it into heat, and stores it for months inside a massive, insulated silo filled with construction-grade sand. Unlike lithium-ion batteries, this system doesn't degrade over time or lose significant charge. It contains no toxic materials, requires no rare earth elements, and costs a fraction of traditional grid-scale battery systems. The first fully operational sand battery is already integrated into a Finnish town’s heating system, keeping homes and offices warm during harsh Arctic winters — even when the sun disappears for months.

2025

Dec. 21: Reduce Reuse Recycle as much as possible this holiday season. Have a string of lights that are no longer working? Bring them to Mom's Organic Market in Arlington by Jan. 31. Mom's also recycles cell phones, eye glasses, compost, corks, etc. Most tissue paper is not recyclable. If you use it, smooth it out, fold it up and reuse it next year.

Dec. 14: Celebrating the holiday season usually includes preparing extra food and wrapping gifts. At the end of Christmas day, leftover food and wrapping paper may be tossed into the garbage. Try to minimize the amount you discard by, for example, wrapping your gifts in recyclable paper or putting them in cloth bags and by saving leftover food or sharing it with others.

Dec. 7: Almost half of the Earth's habitable land is used to grow food, and nearly 80% of that is devoted to livestock. Worldwide, agriculture is responsible for about 70% of our freshwater use and for a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing consumption of meat is a critical step toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions and making sufficient freshwater available for human consumption. (Nutrition Action Newsletter September/October 2025.)

Nov. 30: "Our beliefs have consequences. Our faith should motivate us to action. Perhaps our faith, our general idea of God, needs a little work." So states Sister Elizabeth A. Johnson in her latest book, "Come Have Breakfast". As we enter a time of Advent reflection, this little book of meditations on God and the Earth may motivate us to new understandings of our relationship with God and creation.

Nov. 23: Americans throw away nearly 60 million tons of food every year. That's almost 40 percent of the entire U.S. food supply. During this week of abundance and gratitude, don't buy, cook or serve more than you need. Make good use of leftovers, and compost or otherwise recycle the rest.

Nov. 16: Leaves are our friends! Leaves in a garden bed are beneficial for soil health, acting as a free mulch that suppresses weeds, retains moisture, and enriches the soil with nutrients as they decompose. Pile them 2"-3" deep over all your garden beds. If you mow over them first and break them up, they decompose faster.

Nov. 9: Palm oil is widely used throughout the world. Many processed foods such as crackers and baked goods contain palm oil. It is also in some hygiene products and make-up. Not only is palm oil not good for your body, it is also bad for the environment. It's a major factor in deforestation, destroying the habitat of endangered species such as the Sumatran elephant and the orangutan. Please read the ingredients list for processed foods you may want to buy. Avoid purchasing products that contain palm oil, which are not good for you or for the environment. (earth.org/how-palm-oil-contributes-to-environmental-destruction/)

Nov. 2: Each year the world produces more than 450 million metric tons of plastic, mostly from fossil fuels, and generates 350 million metric tons of plastic waste. The US ranks as the world's top plastic producer, producing almost twice as much as China and more than the entire European Union combined. In addition to the waste problem, plastics disrupt photosynthesis and crop growth, and spew toxic and planet warming gases. And microplastics are everywhere, a health danger to all. The greatest sources of microplastics are textiles (35-40%, especially from fleece), and tires (20-30%). When washing synthetics, use cool water, and trash worn out synthetic fabrics. Here are some pointers on avoiding microplastics, which are in many cleaning products, providing abrasive action. Use tablets and concentrated powders such as Tide laundry, and dishwashing powders sold in cardboard boxes. Avoid liquid in plastic bottles, pods, and sheet detergents. In addition, fiber can help rid your body of microplastics before they enter

your bloodstream, so eat your fruits and veggies. *(The Washington Post, 12/24 and 3/25, and The Virginian Sierran, Fall 2025.) (Note: The landmark Plastic Waste Treaty did not pass. Shame on the US.*

Oct. 26: There is a thought experiment that may begin to introduce sobriety to minds drunk on human supremacy. It has to do with trees. In the hierarchy of being, humans rank above trees. When humans breathe, we inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. In the presence of the sun, trees do the opposite. They take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen. Their photosynthesis is largely responsible for producing the oxygen content of the Earth's atmosphere. Take away trees, and humans would suffocate. Take away humans, and trees would do just fine; probably better, for we would not be cutting them down. Who needs who more? Which is more valuable? By what criterion? (Elizabeth Johnson: "What Does It Mean to Believe in An Ecological God?" America, June 2023)

Oct. 19: Great climate tips for fall: Improve your home's energy efficiency by sealing drafts around windows and doors, and lower your thermostat to around 68 degrees Fahrenheit when you're home. Preparing your home now will reduce your energy consumption and carbon footprint. Also conserve energy by cleaning or replacing furnace filters monthly and insulating your water heater. And consider installing that heat pump before tax credits run out at the end of the year.

Oct. 12: While rising sea levels have caused people living in coastal areas to move further inland, the poor cannot move because they can't afford the cost of relocating. We should all be concerned about the long-term impacts of this problem. More information can be found by clicking the following link: How Sea Changes Hurt the World's Poorest - The Borgen Project.

Oct. 5: A number of startups are coming up with innovative ways to reduce the staggering amount of food we waste. America throws out more than 100 billion pounds (or 40%) of its food each year. That waste has implications for the environment, world hunger, and our wallets. "Too Good To Go," one of the companies trying to combat waste, works with restaurants, bakeries, and grocery stores. Users of its app can buy discounted bags of food that would otherwise be tossed at the end of the night. The company has a new partnership with Whole Foods. Shoppers can pick up "surprise bags" of Whole Foods grocery items as stores close. The $9.99 prepared foods bag has a retail value of $30 and may include soups, ready-to-eat meals, and salads. The $6.99 bakery bag has a retail value of $21 and could come with breads, muffins, scones, or other goodies. Other players include Misfits Market, which sells boxes of "ugly," produce that's perfectly fresh but might have been trashed, and Mill, a green tech startup, sells people plug-in bins that turn their food scraps into chicken feed. New technologies and apps are making big strides, but the most effective way we can all help combat waste is by monitoring our own kitchens.

Sept. 28: Check out Nature's Fynd gluten-free mycelium based products here. They're less demanding on the environment than plant-based products because they're made from fungi. YUM! Here's a blurb from the FYND website: "Fy is a nutritional fungi protein derived from a naturally occurring microbe (Fusarium strain flavolapis) with origins in Yellowstone National Park. Using our breakthrough fermentation process, we grow Fy, an animal-free, complete protein source with all 20 amino acids and minimal environmental impact. With Fy, we create a wide range of truly delicious foods—all free from animal products—that nourish your body and nurture our planet for future generations." You can "fynd" it at your local Whole Foods.

Sept. 21: Today is "Sun Day" -- a day set aside to celebrate all things solar. Consider this: We live 93 million miles away from the sun, yet the amount of solar energy hitting the Earth in less than 1½ hours is equivalent to the world's total energy consumption for a year! It is 6,000 degrees on its surface and about

15 million degrees at its core. Thank you, God, for this clean and free energy given to us in total abundance. Help us to learn to take full advantage of this gift so that we might preserve a sustainable planet we can continue to call home. GO SOLAR! Want a good read? Bill McKibben's "Here Comes the Sun" just came out.

Sept. 7: Nearly half of every pineapple ends up in the trash. But now companies across the globe are turning inedible parts of the plant into textiles, compostable plates, soap, yarn, strong leather-like fabric used in backpacks and shoes, and more.

Aug. 31: Make a "greener" salad. Choose produce with little to no packaging. Buy cheeses by the block – no plastic tubs of feta or blue cheese; no plastic containers of Parmesan. And instead of buying bottle after bottle of salad dressing, make your own. Here's a family favorite recipe: ⅓ cup olive oil; ¼ cup vinegar; 2T lemon juice; 1T mustard; salt, pepper, garlic and herb(s) to taste.

Aug. 25: "Redwood Dharma" by Laura Grace Weldon
Redwood trees have lived on Earth for over 240 million years.
Homo sapiens, about 200 thousand.

Despite massive size,
old growth redwood
root systems are shallow.
Trees reach 350 feet tall
yet don't topple in the strongest winds.

Each one's roots interlace
with its neighbors' roots,
creating a vast network of support
unseen on the surface.

They hold on for a thousand,
two thousand years, maybe more,
all the while showing us
how to grow up.

Aug. 17: Fight against Dominion Energy's six new methane gas plants! Tuesday Aug. 19 at Lubber Run Community Center and Thursday Aug. 28 at City of Fairfax Public Library. Both events 6-8 p.m. Write comments while eating free pizza to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the State Corporation Commission to oppose Dominion's proposal. Alternative proposals of clean energy, storage and energy efficiency could meet the same amount of energy demand as the first proposed plan at half the cost. The comment writing party may be available virtually. Register here.

Aug. 10: To celebrate the Season of Creation (September 1-October 4), the Catholic Climate Covenant this year will have a Feast of St. Francis program available online, which will include resources such as prayers, meditations, art, hymns and liturgies, To receive a free copy of this program, click on the following link: https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/programs/feast-of-st-francis/

Aug. 3: We must significantly reduce our consumption of cheap online goods from China that are sent directly from factories and warehouses to consumers. These items come from TEMU's Whale Company

and Pinduoduo, companies that use forced and child labor, and produce non-recyclable polyester and plastic clothing and other items. TEMU advertised widely during our Super Bowl.

July 27: A movement of visible mending is transforming the act of repairing clothes into a personal and environmental statement. People are sitting down together with worn-out jeans and torn sweaters, patching them not with shame, but with intention. The fashion industry emits more carbon than aviation and shipping combined; extending a garment's life by nine months can cut its environmental footprint by up to 30%. Teaching people to repair instead of replace clothing offers a simple, tangible way to protect the climate while building community and resisting fast fashion. But it's also personal. Mending becomes meditation. It's a chance to reclaim a sense of agency, connect with others, and heal in more ways than one. "It's a smaller, quieter form of activism."— Sam Bennett of Repair Shop.

July 20: The EV market is booming here and around the world. The U.S. now produces 63 fully electric cars and trucks, and they are increasingly more affordable. We fight over who gets to drive the electric car – it is very peppy, easy to handle and easy to charge from the side of our house. You could receive a credit of up to $7,500 now, but this program will expire on Sept. 30. Great time to buy!

July 6: Tiny plastic pellets called "nurdles" are now the second largest source of microplastic pollution in the ocean by weight. Making matters worse, nurdles absorb toxic chemicals like DDT and mercury, turning them into poison pills to be eaten by fish and make their way into the food chain. As many as a trillion enter the oceans every year and there is often no penalty for the companies responsible. Tell your US senators to support the Plastic Pellet Free Waters Act to keep nurdles out of our environment.

June 29: Plastic Free July is a global movement that helps millions of people be part of the solution to plastic pollution – so we can have cleaner streets, oceans, and beautiful communities. Pledge here to refuse single-use plastics.

June 22: "Spiritually, trees play a unique role in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, from the Garden of Eden to the Cross of Christ. Biologically, in great forest communities, they help sustain life on our planet, giving off oxygen, anchoring soil, keeping stream and rivers clear, and providing habitation for thousands of species. How can religious persons not care about the widespread destruction of these creatures of God? We need to love them as our very selves, as neighbors in earth's community of life." Elizabeth A. Johnson

June 15: This is **Good Climate News Sunday** so you should know that last year the solar and wind boom pushed the world past 40% clean electricity! Those of you doing international travel have noted how far ahead most of the other developed countries are compared to the U.S. Solar electricity production in Europe during the first quarter of 2025 was up by over 30% from the previous year. Change is happening everywhere but people aren't talking about it enough. Please share these facts and others on our website under "Care for Creation" with whomever will listen. It's people-to-people communication that brings about political action. **Save the Dates:** The Virginia Chapter of Elders Climate Action supported by NOVA is hosting a postcard party and ice cream social to get out the vote in Virginia. It will be held on **Wednesday, August 6, 2:00-4:00 p.m.** at the Mogs' home in Arlington. There will also be a 2-hour canvassing event on **September 27.** More info coming – save the dates!

June 8: Most of us have to admit that we aren't doing all we can to live more simply and in ways that help preserve our earthly home. Maybe we think that our small changes don't really matter. Emily Mentock cites Pope Francis' encyclical, "Laudato Si," in which the pope wrote: "We must not think that these efforts

are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread." From: "Every Small Act: Discipleship in the Spirit of Laudato Si," Jesuit News, May 27, 2025

June 1: Starting in 2019, NIH and The Nature Conservancy began an experiment to study the health impacts of trees in Louisville, KY. More than 8,000 trees were planted in the heart of the city. The organizations compared the health of residents in a nearby area without trees. In 2024 they found a direct link between air quality and human health. In the tree area, there was a significant decrease in air pollution and in a marker for inflammation in blood tests compared with pollution and residents' health in the non-treed neighborhoods. Nature Conservancy, Spring 2025

May 25: "We come here to begin to relieve an ancient wrong. We wish especially to restore to this earth its ancient joy. For while much of what we have done is beyond healing, there is a resilience throughout the land that only awaits its opportunity to flourish once again with something of its ancient splendor." (Thomas Berry)

May 18: Sometimes the bravest thing we can do when facing an existential crisis is to joyously imagine life on the other side. Read Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's new book, "What If We Get It Right? Visions of Climate Future" and come to the book discussion on June 8 to envision together what we need to do to sustain our beloved planet.

May 11: Some good news! Virginia passed a significant clean energy bill this year that will help its citizens meet their electricity needs with clean and affordable energy. (SB 1100/HB 2346). This act includes electricity produced from rooftops, residential battery storage systems, and smart thermostats and water heaters. People who enroll their systems in the program will get paid for contributing electricity to the grid. (Source: an email sent by Victoria Higgins, Virginia director of Chesapeake Climate Action Network, May 9, 2025).

May 4: Some good news for a change! Scientists have developed a plant-based material that could offer an environmentally friendly alternative to see-through plastic (from New Scientist, quoted in The Week, May 2, 2025). Also, the XPrize for Carbon Removal, a competition funded by Elon Musk's charitable foundation, announced $100,000 in awards for companies exploring promising ways to pull carbon out of the atmosphere (The Washington Post).

April 27: We take care of those things which we appreciate. Often poetry helps us to see and appreciate much of what we take for granted ... movement, community, dirt:

"Ode to Dirt" (Sharon Olds)

Dear dirt, I am sorry I slighted you,
I thought that you were only the background
for the leading characters--the plants
and animals and human animals.
It's as if I had loved only the stars
and not the sky which gave them space
in which to shine. Subtle, various,
sensitive, you are the skin of our terrain,
you're our democracy. When I understood
I had never honored you as a living
equal, I was ashamed of myself,

as if I had not recognized
a character who looked so different from me,
but now I can see us all, made of the
same basic materials-
cousins of that first exploding from nothing-
in our intricate equation together. O dirt,
help us find ways to serve your life,
you who have brought us forth and fed us,
and who at the end will take us in
and rotate with us, and wobble, and orbit.

April 20: Today is Easter Sunday, a time for hope and renewed beliefs. The Nova book group has selected for future reading a recent offering by marine biologist and climate policy expert, Ayana Elizabeth Johnson. We encourage everyone to read this book about envisioning the possibilities if somehow, as quickly as possible, we "get it right." What If We Get It Right? Visions of Climate Futures. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, 2024

April 13: EPA Administrator,Lee Zeldin plans to roll back many of the regulations currently in place to protect our environment. Please let him know how harmful eliminating these protections will be. The Sisters of Mercy website provides a message you can personalize easily and quickly. Use the following link and then click on “Oppose rollback of environmental protections.”
https://www.sistersofmercy.org/mercy-for-justice/action-alerts/

April 6: More than 3.7 million abandoned oil and gas wells litter the country, belching 300 kilotons of methane every year according to the EPA. More than half are unplugged and "orphaned," that is, no owner can be found to be held responsible. Their number is increasing exponentially as oil companies go out of business. In California alone, 41,000 wells lie idle, which would cost $23 billion to cap according to The Sierra Club. Capping such wells would create a lot of well-paying jobs. *Readers' Digest*

March 30: Fairfax County recently launched the Sustain Fairfax Challenge, a new platform to encourage residents to take everyday actions that address climate change. By joining the challenge, residents can access climate resources and have a positive impact on the environment. Arlington County residents can sign up for the similar GetGreen app. And, for those who cannot compost at home, Arlington County collects food scraps and food-soiled paper from bins located outside select multifamily properties. Download the Bigbelly Smart Compost app here.

March 22: Plastic never decomposes, it just gets smaller. Furthermore, plastic can only be recycled once and doing so requires the production of more plastic. The only solution to plastic pollution is to stop plastic production. According to a February 18, 2025, article in the Guardian: “Because there are a limited number of times that it can be resurrected, plastic invariably requires inputs of virgin resin during the manufacturing process, meaning that even the act of “recycling” plastic is never reducing waste but only ever guaranteeing more of it.”

March 16: Nearly two-thirds (61%) of U.S. adults are concerned about global warming or climate change, with 40% worrying about it “a great deal” and 21% worrying “a fair amount." Regardless of the actions of the Trump administration, public opinion and private actions are driving an unstoppable movement toward clean energy and lifestyle changes. Even the Middle East with its oil-based economies, has taken

significant steps to embrace clean, mostly solar, energy. Keep the faith and spread the word, “we are NOT going back.”

March 9: Care for both yourself and the environment by eating more meatless meals. A challenge can be finding a variety of vegetarian recipes. A good resource is the Sisters of Mercy web page. Even if you already have meatless recipes, you will probably find some new tasty ones by scrolling down the page at the link: 2022 Mercy Meatless Mondays

March 2: Imagine that one-third of the shelves in the grocery store and at the farmers' markets are empty. That's what would happen without bees. Strawberries, apples, potatoes, vanilla, almonds and coffee are just some of the foods that rely on pollination by bees. We must act to save the bees. Our food supply is in big trouble from the use of toxic pesticides called neonicotinoids or neonics. They attack bees' brains and may pose serious problems for our brains as well. They are sprayed on farmers' fields and even coat some seeds. Make phone calls, write letters. (Public Interest Research Group, PIRG, a federation of state-based organizations.)

Feb. 23: Climate action isn’t waiting on Washington. States are proving they can drive the clean energy transition — whether through policy, investment or the courts. According to The Guardian:
– New York is forging ahead with climate legislation despite delays on key carbon pricing programs. A state agency is positioned to expand wind and solar, though its leadership is hesitant, frustrating advocates.
– California is bracing for legal battles, setting aside $50 million to fight the administration’s policies, including its attacks on EV mandates and emission rules. Environmental advocates are pushing for new laws to hold fossil fuel companies accountable.
– Red states are benefiting from Biden-era clean energy incentives, with Republican lawmakers and labor unions urging the federal government to preserve renewable energy tax credits.
Says Patrick Crowley, president of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO: “Building decarbonization doesn’t need federal money or approval.”

Feb. 16: (The Care for Creation Team is committed to bringing you GOOD NEWS about the environment at least once/month – a LOT of good things are going on and we want you to know about it.)
Article from Canary Media by Akielly Hu, ‘The US smashed clean energy records last year.“ Clean energy installations in the U.S. reached a record high last year, with the country adding 47% more capacity than in 2023, according to new research by energy data firm Cleanview. Boosted by tax credits under the Inflation Reduction Act and the plummeting costs of renewable technologies, developers added 48.2 gigawatts of utility-scale solar, wind, and battery storage capacity in 2024. In total, carbon-free sources including nuclear accounted for 95% of new power capacity built in the U.S. last year; solar and batteries alone made up 83%.

Feb. 9: One of the most consequential things that each of us can do for the planet is reduce or eliminate beef consumption. Results would include a powerful reduction in methane production, massive conservation of water resources (each vegetarian meal is estimated to conserve 200 gallons of water), preservation of land for habitat and biodiversity, and with the reduction of food waste and composting, an actual drawdown of carbon from the atmosphere. Big health dividends include reducing heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes. (From: www.projectdrawdown.org, “What’s the best climate action you can take? You tell me.” By Jonathan Foley, Ph.D., Perspective. May 15, 2024)

Feb. 2: Our research shows that bottled water, on the average, has significantly more microplastics than tap water. Bottled water contains microplastics because they are in rivers, lakes and groundwater, which results in roughly 7 times more plastic in bottles than in tap water. Tap water gets filtered at water treatment plants. Some municipalities do a better job than others, as do water bottling plants. It is not yet clear how microplastics may affect our health. (Center for Science in the Public Interest, March/April 2024)

Jan. 19: Multiple studies have found that climate change has already led to an increase in wildfire season length, wildfire frequency, and burned area. Humans cause nearly 90% of wildfires in the United states. Human activity, especially the burning of fossil fuels is the greatest contributor to climate change. Work toward limiting/eliminating your use of anything fueled by gas or oil.

Jan. 12: In this section of NOVA's weekly announcements, members of the community's Care for Creation team provide information as well as actions you can take to help preserve our environment and mitigate some of the adverse impacts of climate change, but our contributions are intentionally brief. A good source for keeping more fully informed about environmental issues affecting our lives in Virginia and what you can do about them is www.wildvirginia.org/environmental-ip-virginia-is-facing/. Take a few minutes and check this site.

Jan. 5: Guayule (pronounced why-OO-lee) is being grown in Arizona, an alternative to other natural rubber supply cultivation centralized in Southeast Asia and threatened by climate change and political instability. Retreading tires is more sustainable, but foreign-made tires are less likely to be retreaded due to poor quality. Retreading tires is cheaper than buying new ones, and high-quality tires, including those made from guayule, are durable enough for 3 to 5 retreading cycles, saving 90 to 100 pounds of materials each time by avoiding new tire casings. Consider buying high-quality American tires and having them retreaded when they become worn. (Washington Post, 11/3/24)

2024

Dec. 22: What's not recyclable under the tree:
– Metallic, shiny or glittery wrapping paper. If the paper doesn't hold its shape when you crinkle it into a ball, it is not recyclable. Tissue paper also is not recyclable.
– Ribbons and bows. Not only are they made on non-recyclable materials, they clog machines at recycling facilities.

Dec. 15: Give the Earth and all its inhabitants the gift of sustainable practices this holiday season. Here are a few ideas:

- Think reusable fabric wraps – scarves, tea towels, festive bandanas, etc. – to wrap presents.
- Use natural materials for centerpieces and other décor: pinecones, holly branches, wood slices, etc.
- Use LED ornaments and string lights and add solar-powered lights for outdoor displays.
- Choose gifts that create memories and are personal, impactful and leave no waste behind: e.g. concert tix, local classes, meditation apps, special restaurants.

Dec. 8: Nature provides "carbon sinks," which help to manage the carbon released by human activity (such as driving cars, construction work, manufacturing, etc.) by storing it for periods of time. The earth's principal carbon sinks are the oceans, forests, and soil. Unfortunately, these carbon sinks cannot keep up with the excess of CO^2 being released today into our air. While there have been some new technologies developed to help capture some of this carbon, they are insufficient to meet the need. This is why it's so important that we do all we can to protect our natural resources. (Source: www.treehugger.com)

Dec. 1: Toilets require the greatest percentage of water in a typical household, more than showers, faucets and clothes washers. High-efficiency toilets use less than 1.3 gallons per flush versus 3 1/2 to 7 gallons per flush in pre-1993 models. A typical American home uses 80 gallons of water a day (Center for Science in the Public Interest, March/April 2024) . Drought is increasing in frequency, in diverse locations and in severity. Get in the habit of turning the water off when brushing your teeth, and conserve whenever you can.

Nov. 24: To many, the quest for CLEAN energy in Puerto Rico includes achieving grid stability using solar energy and so much more. "Clean not only from CO2 emissions but clean from imperialism, clean from colonialism, clean from oppression, and clean from corruption."
-- Castro-Sitiriche, Sierra Magazine, Fall 2024

Nov. 17: In the U.S., 305 million pounds of food are wasted from the Thanksgiving dinner alone! Here's a couple ideas:
– Plan carefully – buy a smaller turkey, increase vegetables and salad items, have no more than 2 dessert choices
– Have containers ready to send home leftovers with all who want them (80% of guests according to research).
– Use leftovers and scraps from cooking creatively. Check out this site:
https://ivaluefood.com/resources/cooking-eating/creative-ways-to-use-leftovers/

Nov. 10: Did you know the U.S. is the second-highest country in the world for food waste per capita? Lost or wasted food in the U.S. generates the equivalent of 37 million cars' worth of greenhouse gas emissions. All of us need to be more mindful of the food we don't eat and how we dispose of it. (Source: Earth.org)

Nov. 3: In 2022, 600 million tons of plastics, made from fossil fuels, were produced. Microplastics pass through the food chain into humans and have been found in brains, human breast milk, placentas, testicles, hearts, kidneys, lungs, and colons. A March 2024 study found them in carotid plaque, increasing risks of heart disease, stroke, increasing risk of death by 4.5% in a three-year period. Don't heat anything plastic in the microwave or dishwasher. Recycle or reuse plastic bags that bread comes in, look for paper or cardboard packaging. *Source: Hopkins Public Health, Fall/Winter 2024*

Oct. 27: It's raining sideways and you're battling with your cheap umbrella which has turned inside out yet again. How many umbrellas have you gone through over the years? One billion are chucked every year-that's one for every eight of us on the planet. Why not invest in an umbrella with a lifetime guarantee or one that can be repaired. Every time you decide not to buy another cheap plastic umbrella you save the environmental impact equivalent to 300 plastic straws. Better yet you might find that a good waterproof coat with a decent hood is a better option. Either way, think durability and sustainability.

Oct. 20: It's better not to use any appliance that you don't actually need if you're trying to cut your home's carbon footprint. For instance, your garbage disposal uses two to five gallons of water every time it's used. Food waste contains a lot of nitrogen, which can act like a pollutant. Nitrogen contributes to algal blooms that harm aquatic life once released to natural bodies of water. A better choice is composting either in your own yard or through your county's facilities.

Oct. 13: The COP29 (Conference of Parties) is the decision-making party of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change. This year, in November, the convention will meet in Baku, Azerbaijan. If you are concerned about the damaging effects of climate change, go to Join people of faith. At this site, you can sign a petition urging President Biden to support bold initiatives that will make a significant difference in mitigating further harms to the environment. (Source: Oct. 1, 2024 Blog, Washington Report)

Oct. 6: The U.S. government is the world's largest purchaser of goods and services, for which it spends more than $650 billion annually. The federal government phasing out the procurement of single-use plastic will have a huge and far-reaching impact on the overall amount of plastic used -- and discarded -- in the U.S. It's the federal government's most comprehensive plastic pollution plan to date. The multi-pronged strategy includes goals to phase out the federal procurement of single-use plastics from all federal operations by 2035. We can't wait! We must start NOW. Tell every establishment that offers you plastic eating utensils, straws, plastic take-out containers, and other unnecessary plastic packaging that they must stop NOW. When plastic packaging is soft, pliable and you can stick your finger through it, recycle it with your other plastic bags (e.g., from the grocery store) and it will be used for decking material. (source US PIRG)

Sep. 29: You don't have to quit meat cold turkey to help the planet and improve your own health, according to a Norwegian food science nonprofit called EAT. The biggest change most people would have to make is eating more legumes, nuts and whole grains. Read a sample Weekly Planetary Health Menu here.

Sep. 22: SKIP THE SLIP: Production and disposal of receipt paper generates unnecessary waste and emits the carbon equivalent of over 471,000 cars on the road. Every year in the US, receipt use consumes over three million trees and nearly nine billion gallons of water. An estimated 93 percent of paper receipts are coated with Bisphenol-A (BPA) or Bisphenol-S (BPS), which serve as color-developers to make the text appear on receipts (2). When we touch receipts, the chemical coating is absorbed into our bodies through our hands. Health issues linked to BPA include but are not limited to: Fetal development issues, Reproductive impairment, Type 2 diabetes, and Thyroid conditions. A little "no" to printed receipts can become a big "yes" to caring for our planet.

Sep. 15: "Planting trees decreases the effects of urban heat sinking, it lowers temperatures, increases oxygen levels, and it's a no-lose situation all around." Check out the Arlington Tree Stewards at www.treestewards.org or www.fairfaxtreestewards.org for more information.

Sep. 8: As lawmakers prioritize passage of spending bills for the federal government this fall, please encourage them to support funding to assist vulnerable countries with adapting to climate change and shifting to a renewable energy economy. The Sister of Mercy website has a message you can personalize and send to your U.S. senators and representative. There is also more background information about this issue at the website: https://www.sistersofmercy.org/mercy-for-justice/action-alerts/

Sep. 1: Electronics manufacturing is growing five times faster then recycling, especially smaller items such as phones and disposable vape pens. Sixteen thousand jumbo jets worth of electronic waste is dumped per year, which includes lithium and other rare earth metals critical to future green technology, such as batteries for electric cars. Before you toss broken phones, laptops, televisions, microwaves, and other such items, take them to electronic waste facilities. (Source: U. S. PIRG)

Aug. 25: Today's creation tip comes from Global Warming Solutions:

Endangered species protections are back! The Biden-Harris administration has reinstated protective regulations rolled back by Donald Trump over his four years in office. All species that are newly classified as "threatened" will receive blanket protection. This rule now affords all animals this initial protection while scientists work to figure out how best to help them. This has already had a positive impact on North American wolverines, snapping turtles and spotted owls.
Officials can declare habitats as "critical to species survival" even if that species has been driven out of that historic habitat. If those areas are protected and healthy, it's much easier to restore habitats to their former glory. This rule is expected to particularly aid fish and freshwater mussels species. Species designation decisions will now be made without regard to any financial impacts. That means scientists are allowed to make scientific judgments with no pressure to go one way or another based on what they think the folks in charge might want.
These changes underscore the importance of the "boring" parts of government. The wording of regulations, the nitty-gritty details, and the day-to-day work of natural resource and land management agencies can have a huge impact on our natural environment – for better or for worse.

Aug. 18: We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the Earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation.
The Season of Creation begins on September 1st and continues for the 5 Sundays of September. The theme this year is “Hope with Action”. We will kick off the season with an agape and brief presentation by Joe Keyes on the personal commitments he and Sally have made on behalf of the environment.

Aug. 11: Many of us have enjoyed visiting national parks and other beautiful places. While too many tourists can negatively affect the environment, tourism can have positive effects as well. The African continent is a good example of tourism that has led to the protection of wildlife as well as job creation and adding to the continent’s economy. For more details on “sustainable tourism,” click here.

Aug. 4: The Atacama Desert in northern Chile is known as the "great fashion garbage patch" for the world. Forty-six million tons of used clothing and shoes from Europe, Asia and the Americas was discarded there last year alone. When shopping for new clothes try to avoid polyester and nylon, which have the greatest environmental impacts. Clothes made from linen, hemp, viscose, lyocell and model have the least. Although wool and cotton are biodegradable, wool production emits eight times as much carbon as cotton production while cotton production requires 187 gallons of water per pound of cotton. Suggestions: buy used clothing and keep your clothes until they wear out. (National Geographic, April 2024)

July 28: Recently I noticed the abundance of clover on our lawn. In the past I might have been upset at the lack of a neat, tidy lawn. Now I know that clover needs less water than grass, is hardier, improves soil health by holding in nitrogen and hardly ever needs cutting. In addition it produces pretty flowers that bees love! So be happy when you are looking over your clover, even if it isn't the 4 LEAF variety!

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) 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, 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.

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. 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.

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)

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 ar 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

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)
-- For Arlington, click on the following link: 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. You can also check out the local master gardeners' website: 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.