

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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Smaller Footprints
British Clergy Ask Flocks to Cut Their Carbon for Lent

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What Happened:

Christians often sacrifice something important to them during Lent: meat, chocolate, television, that sort of thing. This year, several Anglican bishops in Great Britain are asking their parishioners to sacrifice something a bit unusual: electricity.

The bishops aren't asking their flocks to forego electricity entirely, but they do want Christians to think about their carbon footprints and what all that carbon may be doing to the planet.

Most scientists believe the earth's climate is changing. While some authorities say this "global warming" is simply part of the earth's natural cycles, many scientists believe carbon emissions are affecting the climate. Electricity is a prime culprit in all of this, many scientists say. The more electricity we use, the more coal power plants burn, thus the more carbon is released into the air.

If the climate *is* changing, most experts believe the countries hardest hit will be the poorest. The Rev. Richard Chartres, bishop of London, said the carbon fast was "an opportunity to demonstrate the love of God in a practical way."

Talk About It:

Lent is a time, in many Christian traditions, to sacrifice something important to us—something that can sometimes distract us from God. Have you ever given up anything for Lent? If so, what?

If you *were* to give up something, what would it be? Caffeine? Television? Facebook? Your cell phone? Remember, it has to be something important to you—a luxury on which you've grown too dependent.

Whether you believe that climate change is a serious issue or not, the *idea* behind the bishop's call for a carbon fast has its roots in trying to help other people. Can you think of other sacrifices you might be able to make that might help others?

What the Bible Says:

"Why have we fasted," they say, "and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?"

“Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers.
“Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists.
“You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.
“Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? ...
“Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
“When you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?” (Is. 58:3-5, 7).

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24).

“What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:8).