Fasting

Fasting is not a tradition shared by all faiths; among the 30+ long-term action plans, only seven mention it, and five of these are Christian where fasting is an important feature of Lent – the time in the Christian calendar set aside for personal reflection and sacrifice as preparation for Easter. In 2008, the Christian charity Tearfund launched the idea of a Carbon Fast in which people also make planet-friendly sacrifices, such as switching off electrical appliances or walking instead of using a car, as part of their 40-day Lent observance. That idea has spread rapidly among Christian groups in the last two years.

Some groups, such as the Church of South India and UK-based interfaith group Operation Noah, recommend using fasting at other times of the year, as part of a day of prayer, for example, for personal reflection and to unite people in a common cause.

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Christian

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Lenten Observance and the Environment

Lent is a traditional time in the Christian calendar specifically set aside for personal reflection and sacrifice in order to gain spiritual insight. The gaining of greater wisdom is reflected in the symbolism of the lengthening of the days at that time of year. Lenten observance that takes into account our affect on the earth is to be widely encouraged. This is a time also to make pledges that we can act out in a concrete way; no matter how small, every act makes a difference. We encourage Catholics to support the Cafod Live Simply campaign and Lent Family Fast Day.

Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

<u>Build on Current Efforts</u>: Many of the partners of the Coalition produce their own educational materials. For example, Catholic Relief Services' Operation Rice Bowl, a Lenten fundraising effort used primarily in elementary schools, will focus its 2010 materials on climate change. The Coalition will work with CRS and other organizational education campaigns to encourage greater integration of the themes of care for creation and climate change into their outreach and fundraising efforts.

Church of Norway

- 2. The General Synod challenges parishes and local joint church councils to:
 - give all parishes courage and guidance to live out the faith in a way which
 demonstrates that we are part of nature with a special management
 responsibility. In this we may receive much knowledge and inspiration from the
 traditions of the aboriginal peoples.
 - to cooperate broadly with societies and organisations locally.
 - to follow Christ in their lives and realise that charity today also implies involvement for the environment.
 - to lift up the joy of a simpler life in our consumer society. The key to a necessary change of attitudes is to be found in self-denial and in the joy of a committed fellowship.
 - to become "greener" parishes and work to have local joint church councils certified as "environmental lighthouses".
 - to actively use tools like Grønn Kirkebok ("Green church book") and the Church Network for the Environment, Consumption and Justice.

- to celebrate "Creation Day" and to use the times of Advent and Lent to focus on environmental involvement.

Church of England

Gloucester Diocese: "The Cathedral has been assessed by the Carbon Trust to identify the scope for energy savings and more energy efficiency, and energy and environmental policies are planned for the Cathedral. In 2009 an exhibition on environmental issues, technologies and energy saving was held in the Cathedral. In 2009 the Lent Prayer Guide included 'Green Prayers' and a call for 'carbon fasting' as part of Lenten observance."

Newcastle Diocese: Diocesan Environmental Officer Rob Kelsey has also been working with the Energy Saving Trust on a project called *'Treading Lighter During Lent'*. Based on the idea that Lent is a time for learning new habits of holy living, it has encouraged both clergy and parishioners to measure their carbon emissions on a weekly basis, and to use the season of Lent as an opportunity to shrink their carbon footprint.

• The Church's year

The traditional harvest festival in early autumn may now form part of Creation Time from September to October (see panel on page 15 above), which concludes on October 4th, St Francis Day.

Earlier each year, many churches are also celebrating Creation Sunday on the second Sunday in Lent, and Environment Sunday on the Sunday nearest World Environment Day (5th June). The Lent Carbon Fast is establishing itself as a regular fixture. In addition to these annual events, in 2009 Education Sunday on 8th February was dedicated to the theme "The Earth is the Lord's", and a "Ready Steady Slow" campaign is being introduced for Advent.

It is appropriate that as much time is now given by the Church calendar to the environment as any other topic, save the Life, Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord – through and for whom the world was created.

2009 25 February: The Rt Hon Ed Miliband, Secretary of State for Climate Change launches Tearfund's Lent Carbon Fast, with a lecture at York Minster, 'Renewing the Face of the Earth'.

Church of South India

* Fasting: Choose a day to fast. For 24 hours, eat no solid foods and drink only water and fruit juice. Set aside time to pray. Meditate on your broken relationship with creation and ask God to lead you to repentance and a new faithfulness.

Interfaith

Operation Noah

Operation Noah also provides a guidance pack for communities to organise a day of of fasting, contemplation and prayer, to help empower the community to tackle climate change. In a world in which so many feel isolated and alone in facing up to the crisis of climate change – a day of fasting and prayer can bring people together, and together make a difference. The message is that by working in community, all those that participate will be inspired, enriched and strengthened by the day, and together discover that, by recognising our limits, by deepening our connectedness to others, to the earth and to God - we regain a sense of community, well-being and leadership.

EcoSikh

Theological story: Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Bhai Mardana (adapted from the version on sikhee.com; http://www.sikhee.com/Guru-Nanak-Dev-Ji-and-Mardana.htm)

Guru ji and Mardana were very close to each other. Most of the time, he did kirtan with Mardana and his rabarb. There are two stories I would like to share with you:

I am sure everyone heard the story of when Guru Ji disappeared in a river, to meet God. Well, not many people heard about the conversation between Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Bhai Mardana the morning after he reappeared:

Bhai Mardana Ji: You don't love me! Guru Ji: Why, O loved one. I love you the most. Why do you think so?

Bhai Mardana Ji: Because you yourself went to meet God. If you had loved me, you would've taken me WITH you!

Guru Ji: Well, i didn't take you on purpose. Basically, if I let you come with me to meet God, He would've told us to sing His praises. And after doing so, he would love ur music so much that he'll keep you, and leave me behind in the world. Tell me, how could I have lived longer without you?

This is how much Guru Ji loved his rabarbi.

One day, Guru Ji was singing praises of the Almighty, while Mardana was playing his rabarb, as usual. But then, Bhai Mardana Ji played such a musical note in such a way, Guru Ji went into "smadhi" state. This lasted for 22 days with no food and no drink.

After the 22nd day, Bhai Mardana Ji grabbed Guru ji's feet and Guru Ji asked why did you stop playing the rabarb?? Bhai Mardana Ji replied: "Baba Ji, you were feeding on my music and keertan, but what about me? You left me hungry".

"You were reading Banni," Guru Ji said "How could you be hungry?"

"But Guru Ji, i remained hungry for your soft priceless bachans which touch my ears. Give me a blessing so I can have darshan of your open eyes. Give me one of your pricelss bachans and then I will carry on with the kirtan as long as you like"

The relationship between Bhai Mardana Ji and Guru Nanak Dev Ji was immense! No other example in the world can equal to this.

Theological story: Guru Nanak and Malik Bhago (adapted from the version on realsikhism.com; http://www.realsikhism.com/miracles/malik.html)

Guru Nanak Dev ji traveled to many places, including Saidpur, now known as Eminabad in the province of Punjab, Pakistan. Even before Guru ji had arrived at Saidpur the word had spread throughout the city that a holy man was going to visit.

When Malik Bhago, the chief of the town, heard of the Guru's arrival he started preparing for the holy man to stay at his home. But Malik Bhago was a corrupt person who had amassed wealth through unfair means, charging extra tax to the poor farmers and taking most of their crop, leaving them hungry. And when Guru Nanak reached Saidpur, he did not go straight to the chief's house. Instead he knocked on the door of a poor carpenter named Lalo, asking him for hospitality. Lalo was joyful, and served Guru ji with the little food that he had and Guru ji would eat the simple offering with love.

News reached Malik Bhago that Guru ji was staying with a poor carpenter, so Malik held a big gathering and invited all the holy men. But Guru ji did not accept his invitation.

Malik reacted angrily and ordered two guards to go to Lalo's home to force the Guru to accompany them, and the Guru went as asked.

When Guru ji arrived with the guards, Malik Bhago said to him: "O holy man, I have prepared so many delicious dishes for you, but you are staying with a poor carpenter and eating his dry bread. Why?" And the Guru replied: "I cannot eat your food because it has been made with money sucked unfairly from the poor, while Lalo's bread is bought with his own hard-earned efforts."

This made Malik Bhago furious and he asked the Guru to prove his point. Guru ji then sent for a loaf of bread from Lalo's house. In one hand the Guru held Lalo's bread and in the other that of Malik Bhago's, and he squeezed both. Milk dripped from Lalo's bread but from Malik Bhago's bread came blood. Malik Bhago was shaken by guilt and asked for forgiveness. The Guru asked him to distribute his ill-gotten wealth among the poor and live an honest life. Malik Bhago was re-born with the Guru's blessing.