

One Earth, One Home, One Table

New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light Joins with the EPA for Food Steward's Pledge for Communities of Faith



The Food Steward's Pledge is part of an ongoing effort to engage with the faith community and raise awareness on the importance of a changing climate.

Faith communities understand the need to care for the well-being of all people and responsible stewardship of our resources for both current and future generations. In 2013, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that about 14.3 percent of households in the United States did not have regular access to enough food in New Mexico it is nearly 1 in 4 persons. The United Nations Environment Program estimates that the 870 million undernourished people worldwide could be fed by wasted food.

In 2013, 35 million tons of food waste was thrown into landfills or incinerators. When excess food, leftover food, and food scraps are disposed of in a landfill, they decompose and become a significant source of methane – a potent greenhouse gas with 25 times the global warming potential of carbon pollution. Much of the food that is discarded in landfills is actually safe, wholesome food that can be used to feed vulnerable populations.

Many Faith Communities are already reducing wasted food and feeding people as part of their overall stewardship mission. Take the Food Steward's Pledge and commit to reduce wasted food and hunger. Simple guides and resources to address this issue and recognition for your success can be found at:

<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/faith-organizations-and-epas-food-recovery-challenge-frc>.



Food Stewardship: Our Spiritual Connection with Food and Community

Why and How To Begin Food Stewardship in your Faith Community

- All Religious traditions are called to steward the gifts of the earth and care for community.
- Food is a natural place to practically implement creation stewardship, care for the community and the hungry, celebrate creation and reduce carbon emissions that cause climate change.

“Open our senses to wisdom’s inner promptings that we may give voice to what we hear in our soul and be changed for the healing of the world”

John Phillip Newell



Beginning Steps:

1. The EPA website <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/faith-organizations-and-epas-food-recovery-challenge-frc> has many resources to help you feel knowledgeable.
2. New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light website has downloads from the EPA toolkit that make it easy to access information, pledge, etc. easily. www.nm-ipl.org under Cool Congregations link to Food.
3. Inform your faith leader that you would like to pursue Food Stewardship in your faith community. Then gather individuals from your faith community, or a youth religion class, adult study group, Green Team who would be interested in an active food stewardship adventure.
4. Discuss how long you would like to do this together.
5. Discuss the elements that might include Meatless Mondays and Food Waste.
6. Meatless Mondays (or Fridays, or several days a week) as a way to grow consciousness about the carbon footprint of food and how eating more produce is also a way to care for the “Temple of the Body”. Meatless Fridays are a recent tradition in some religions such as the Catholic Church. (flyer on Meatless Mondays at www.nm-ipl.org under Cool Congregations, Food)
7. Food Waste Resources at www.nm-ipl.org
8. After discussion invite people to take the **Food Stewards Pledge** within a prayerful context.
9. Discuss ways to share your pledge as a faith group with your faith community and also with NMIPL and the EPA.
10. Celebrate your progress at some point in the next weeks. You might show a film, have a meal. Have a cooking class using local foods and meatless recipes. Work with the children. Invite others to join you. Calculate your carbon foot print savings. Donate \$ amount of food saved to local group. Celebrate at the end of the year. You have many creative ideas, let them flow. This is a celebration of the gift of food and community.



Brief Food Stewardship and Waste Action Guide:

Modify Food Purchases – Determine how much food is actually needed. Buying less food means wasting less food. Be mindful of the ingredients and leftovers you have on hand before going to the market. You will waste less and may even find a new dish in the process.

Donate – Donation not only keeps wholesome food out of landfills, it also feeds those who need it most. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, about 49 million people in the United States do not have access to enough food for an active, healthy life at all times; think about donating extra food to shelters or food banks or using donated food to feed your congregation.

Compost – Not all food waste is edible, however food scraps and spoiled food do not belong in the landfill. Find community gardens or start your own composting site. It's easy, check out [how to start a composting site](#). Adding compost to your soil improves its structure, helps it absorb and hold moisture, supplies slow-release nutrients to plants and reduces erosion. An integral part of sustainable gardening, composting helps you create a vibrant, healthy and beautiful garden while conserving water and energy and reducing pollution and waste.

Meatless Mondays (Fridays)---Why it is good stewardship:

Lowers Carbon Footprint!

The UN estimates that animal agriculture contributes nearly 20% of the man-made greenhouse gas emissions that accelerate climate change, including methane, carbon dioxide, and nitrous oxide. Mass production of farm animals is also a main cause of deforestation for grazing and to grow feed.

Fuel Reduction!

On average, it takes 18 times more fossil fuels to produce beef – including fertilizer to grow the feed grain, and gasoline for transportation – than to produce plant-based proteins.

Water Conservation!

An estimated 1,800 to 2,500 gallons of water go into producing one pound of beef.

Hungry People!

Faith communities are concerned about hungry people. The cry is rising from many voices in many countries, including our own, that having enough to eat is a basic right. Meatless Monday is one way to ease the problem.

Your Budget!

On a more personal level, food can be expensive, especially meat. Getting protein from beans, greens, and grains one day a week, can help stretch the household budget, and introduce the family to delicious new meals.

Your Health!

Evidence is mounting that too much meat is not good for our own health. Americans are eating on average one half a pound of meat a day, double what they ate in 1960. Food made from plants provides many of the nutrients our bodies need, without a lot of the fats, sugars, and other things that can contribute to poor health.

Get others involved:

After taking the Food Steward's Pledge, talk about the work you're doing with your community. Friends, family, local businesses and congregations can all take steps to reduce wasted food.

Share your story:

NMIPL and EPA want to hear from you. Take a picture of your group or faith community with your food savings or sharing a meatless meal. Your success stories can educate and inspire others to take action. E-mail info@nm-ipl.org and epafoodsteward@epa.gov.

