



# Guide to Going Carbon Neutral

This Guide was prepared for families  
and churches in response to the  
General Assembly 2006 Resolution calling  
on all Presbyterians and Presbyterian institutions to  
go carbon neutral as a bold Christian  
witness to help combat the effects of climate  
change.

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[www.pcusa.org/hunger/features/climate.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/hunger/features/climate.htm)

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## Guide Outline

**WHAT:** Definition of carbon neutral  
General Assembly Resolution

**WHY:** Background information on need to go carbon neutral.

**HOW:** Steps for families to go carbon neutral  
Steps for churches to go carbon neutral

**COSTS:** Costs for a family/church

### What does it mean to go carbon neutral?

Carbon neutrality requires our energy consumption that releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere be reduced and carbon offsets purchased to compensate for those carbon emissions that could not be eliminated.

Keep reading and this will become clearer.

### What does the GA 2006 Resolution say?

It strongly urges all Presbyterians immediately to make a bold witness by aspiring to live carbon neutral lives.

It directs the General Assembly Council...to inform all Presbyterians, governing bodies, and churches of the urgent need for them to reduce their energy consumption and of the injustice of our current energy practices.

It also, calls upon all Presbyterians to take this seriously, to pray asking for God's forgiveness and guidance, to study this issue, to calculate their carbon emissions, to educate others, and to use less energy, striving to make their lives carbon neutral.

(The Presbyterian journal, Church & Society (July-August, 2006) carries the Assembly's action.)

## **Why go carbon neutral?**

It is the consensus of the scientific community that our burning of fossil fuels, like coal, oil and natural gas, emit greenhouse gases which are warming the planet and causing serious harm to the natural and manmade environment. (This is commonly called global warming).

This change is accelerating faster than predicted just a few years ago resulting in:  
Ice sheet and glacial melting at alarming rates; rising sea levels,  
coral reef die-off; entire island nations disappearing; water shortages, flooding,  
record number of killer storms, plant & animal extinctions; and more.

According to Dr. Hansen at NASA, emissions already exceed a safe level.

## **More on why go carbon neutral.**

Prompt action and leadership by individuals, organizations, communities, states and countries can keep global climate change from becoming worse.

Previous GA (1981, 1998, 1999 and 2003) passed overtures, resolutions and policies addressing our unjust energy practices and calling on us to reduce our energy consumption.

## **How do you go carbon neutral?**

1. Calculate Your Carbon Emissions. Use Calculate your Internet search engine to find a suitable carbon calculator. Calculators can be found at [www.nativeenergy.com](http://www.nativeenergy.com), [www.co2.org](http://www.co2.org) or [www.safeclimate.net/calculator](http://www.safeclimate.net/calculator).
2. Reduce your carbon emissions as low as possible, aiming for the world average of 4 tons per person per year. To do this, reduce your energy usage. Remember it is your energy usage that release carbon emissions. Energy saving tips are available on the Internet and you are familiar with the most common ones such as installing compact fluorescent light bulbs, driving less, unplugging computers and other electronics when not in use, raising and lowering your thermostat seasonally, etc. One source of energy saving tips is found at <http://www.epa.gov/earthday/tips-saveenergy.htm>.
3. Offset your remaining carbon emissions by purchasing carbon offsets. Carbon offset companies, such as Native Energy, Climate Care, Climate Friendly and many more sell carbon offsets by the ton. The money you pay the offset company is used to fund an alternative energy project that without your money and that of others purchasing carbon offsets, would not be constructed. Two examples are the construction of windmills and methane digesters on dairy farms. These projects either don't emit carbon emissions or remove carbon emissions that normally would go into the atmosphere and contribute to climate change.

## How do families go carbon neutral?

Follow the three steps:

1. Identify your energy usage – home, car and plane flights, using a carbon calculator on the Internet, & calculate your carbon emissions.
2. Take steps to lower your energy usage - install compact fluorescent light bulbs, drive less, raise and lower your thermostat seasonally, wrap your hot water heater, etc.
3. Purchase carbon offsets to offset your carbon emissions that cannot be eliminated by lowering your energy usage.

## How do churches go carbon neutral?

1. Follow the same three steps as individuals, plus more.
2. Going carbon neutral becomes a comprehensive mission of a church that does not end when energy usage is lowered and carbon offsets are purchased.
3. It involves all aspects of church life from the pulpit to the classrooms, to the kitchen, to the community, beginning with a commitment from the Session to make it a mission of the church.

## A Church Going Carbon Neutral Involves More Than Purchasing Offsets. It means...

### The Session

- ❖ Affirming the Christian mandate to care for creation.
- ❖ Affirming that the urgency, injustice and seriousness of climate change calls the Church to act now and to act boldly to lead the way in reducing energy usage.
- ❖ Affirming the G.A. carbon neutral resolution.

### **And more for the Session**

- ❖ Establishing carbon neutrality as a vital mission the church.
- ❖ Leading the church and its members to live carbon neutral lives.
- ❖ Asking us to pray for God's forgiveness and guidance as the whole church moves in a new direction.

**And more**