

Environmental Assessments as Preparation for Holy Actions

February 25 is Ash Wednesday, a day that in the Christian tradition begins a 40-day period of assessing one's life and behavior, ending in the celebration of Easter. This formal, extended period of reflection and change is also found in the Jewish tradition in the time of preparation for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and in the Muslim month-long observation of Ramadan. Each of these traditions follows practices that involve asking forgiveness for past sins, praying for guidance and help in refraining from everyday evils, and trying to purify through self-restraint and good deeds. One rabbi with whom I consulted quoted Torah:

"We shall examine our ways, and we shall return to you, O G-d."

One often hears the question, "What are you giving up for Lent?" Younger children often forego candy. As we become older we focus on giving up various pleasures. Yet the tendency is that these acts of "giving up" are temporary, that we can return to life as we knew it.

However none of our religious traditions intend that. This 'giving up' is not transitory. It is to be transformative. The time during Lent, or Ramadan, or leading up to Yom Kippur, is a time of discipline for learning self-control, to assess what is truly important and to be kept and what is not important or even harmful and to be eliminated. It is a time to learn how to say 'Yes' to good, and 'No' to bad, and make it stick.

What is true in each faith tradition is that this assessment is of everything. And in each tradition the time is spent leading up to what is the holiest of days, Easter, Eid ul-Fitr, and Yom Kippur. These holy days are baseline, they send us forth to the next year of holy action, consistent with our faith and our need to practice it every day, in every way.

So I invite each of us to use the next 40+ days as a time of personal, faithful environmental assessment. Earth Day is April 22. It is a once-a-year time when we all affirm our need to care for the earth.

This month's *Everyday Environmental Assessment* **brief** is on Home Energy Audits. You can download it—and related information—at the *Everyday Stewardship* link of the MIP&L web site. Preparing for such an audit is "an examination of our ways". It is a way to identify what is important, what to keep, what to eliminate, what to change. And when the Audit is finished, we have been guided (and even financially assisted) to change, in ways that will help the environment, — starting at home for ourselves, and our neighbors, and our communities, and, yes for all world.

So I encourage each of us to prepare for, then invite in the Home Energy Audit professionals. And encourage all your friends and neighbors to do the same. Assess what to change, then act in that holiest of ways, caring for each other. After all, *If We Don't, Who Will?*

Tom Nutt-Powell

President

From MIP&L newsletter, February 2009



Massachusetts

Interfaith Power & Light

www.MIPandL.org