



By [Erica Hobbs](#)

FAITH

Members of Ann Arbor church practice energy efficiency to observe Lent

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Members of Ann Arbor's St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church meet to discuss "Jesus' Journey to the Cross," written by Ann Arbor author Jeanne Kun, as part of a six-week study and reflection class for Lent.

Erica Hobbs | [AnnArbor.com](#)

In addition to abstaining from meat, sweets or some favorite activity, some members of a local church are making a different kind of fast during Lent - one that will help alleviate hunger for others and help the environment.

Ann Arbor's St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church is encouraging its parishioners to take part in a carbon fast and reduce their use of electricity, gas and other energy.

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"God has given us everything we have, how do we use this well?" the Rev. Jim McDougall said. "By fasting from these things as well, then we're making a difference in the world that we're a part of and responsible for."

The effort is part of the church's "Sack Hunger Sack," a larger project to donate money to [Food Gatherers](#), which provides food to local families in need. Parishioners are asked to reduce their own energy use during Lent and then donate their savings on Palm Sunday, the week before Easter.

The act, McDougall said, is a way for people to recognize and reflect on the selfishness in their own lives and help those in need.

He said the church has done similar events in the past during Lent, raising between \$10,000 and \$25,000 for local charities.

"It's a special time of renewal," he said. "We ask people to simplify their lives to be better stewards of their lives."

Lent is a Christian tradition where observers traditionally partake in acts of prayer, self-denial and almsgiving over the course of about 40 days in preparation for Easter.

McDougall said the acts are meant as a time of reflection and renewal prior to Easter, the day Christians believe Jesus Christ rose from

the dead to save humanity from its sins.

"It is in preparation of the renewal of our baptismal vows on Easter," he said. "The six weeks of Lent are a time that help us prepare to remake that commitment each year."

While giving up sweets, alcohol and other vices are popular Lenten acts, some parishioners are observing the season by meeting once a week to reflect on its meaning.

"Instead of giving something up, we're giving up our time to study together," Mary Lynn Bridge - Fosdick said, a facilitator of one of several Lenten study groups at St. Francis.

Bridge - Fosdick's group is reading "Jesus' Journey to the Cross," a book written by Ann Arbor author Jeanne Kun that discusses the events prior to Jesus' crucifixion.

Fellow group member Don Hobkirk of Saline said he is also joining the Stephen Ministry as a way of observing Lent this year. The cross-denominational organization trains members to provide one-on-one Christian support for those who are suffering.

"I just went to one of their meetings, after that meeting I knew I needed to join," he said.

Group member Ken Schmanske, also from Saline, said Lent can be hard but it is all about becoming closer to God.

"I look forward to (Lent), because I think of Jesus on the cross and what he sacrificed," he said. "There's nothing compared to what he gave up."

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Tags: St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, church, energy, environment, faith, religion,
