

Lutheran office buys carbon credits: Ecological modeling

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While it can't cut back on travel for church business, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has indicated, it hopes to elevate its ecological modeling to make up for the heavy environmental cost of air travel.

The Washington, D.C., office of the ELCA decided to start purchasing carbon offsets a few months ago, after implementing more routine changes like printing double-sided, turning off lights and recycling.

Air travel was "an area of pretty major energy use that we really couldn't cut back on but which we could try to offset," said Mary Minette, the director for environmental education and advocacy at the ELCA.

Using an online carbon calculator, the office tallied up its yearly air miles and decided to invest in methane energy harvesting through NativeEnergy, a renewable energy company based in Charlotte, Vermont. NativeEnergy tabulated the carbon output for a roundtrip flight between New York City and Los Angeles at 1.97 tons, which would necessitate a \$24 investment in renewable energy under their plan.

"The idea is that it neutralizes what you've done," Minette said.

The Chicago-based Lutheran denomination has been especially focused on global warming, Minette said, though it has also initiated programs on air and water pollution. "Care for Creation," the church's 1993 environmental call to action, highlighted a need for attention to climate change.

"It has such implications for our future and our entire creation," Minette said. "I think it's something where we have a moral voice to bring to bear." -*Religion News Service*