



let it shine

Our Stewardship of God's Creation

Our United Church of Christ has not been silent or inactive about the abuse, misuse and overuse of the environment as a whole. In numerous General Synods and Conference Annual Meetings, Resolutions and Pronouncements about many aspects of the situation before us have been issued over the last 40 years. Across the Church we have sought increasingly to reduce our environmental "footprint" in our churches and homes. We have spoken out about environmental injustices such as air and water pollution, the loss of wetlands and the effects of toxic waste dumping in the air, on land and in the oceans. We have heard calls for more careful stewardship of the earth and the need to rethink population growth and industrial expansion. In response to the harmful results of toxic waste disposal, a visionary report by the United Church of Christ in 1987 has increased our awareness of the tragic impact of environmental racism.

Thanks be to God, for we cannot attribute any of these accomplishments to our own wisdom or goodness, but to the power of God at work in us. Along with our gratitude, there is an equal need to humbly acknowledge our past and present sin in not responding more fully, consistently and effectively to reduce our impact on the environment.

In 2005, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ passed two Resolutions. The first calls for environmental education and action; the second providing for guidance in the era of declining fossil fuels.

The biennial General Synods of the UCC have spoken often on similar matters. Paul teaches us in Romans 8.19 that "the whole creation groans," awaiting healing and wholeness. In Micah.6.8 God expects his children to "do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God." Genesis 2.15 reminds us that the earth is a "garden" for humans to till and keep.

Working from both the Bible and the Book of Nature, our call today is to be evangelists not just for personal salvation but also for God's creation and for a wiser use of our natural resources. The exploitive, wasteful and selfish consumption of God's gifts now threatens civilization on every continent. As

Our Mission and Ministry Legacy

disciples of Jesus, we are called particularly to care for those children and adults, world-wide, who are being or may be especially harmed by the drastic climate changes now affecting our planet's land, sea and air.

The following list points to areas in which our evangelistic witness for God's compassionate love is most needed:

- Recycling, re-using, refraining and restoring.
- Conserving our use of water, gasoline, and other essentials.
- Educating adults and children about God's natural gifts.
- Praying for guidance in our stewardship of creation.
- Advocating for those without voice or hope.

Reflections:

- Compare our biblical call to "care for (or till) the garden" in Genesis 2.15, with the mandate to exercise "dominion over the earth" in Gen.1.28 and Psalm 8.3-8. Where does each passage lead us in our stewardship of God-given resources?
- Where should we see humanity within God's Creation, in relationship with living things such as plants and animals; and in relation to non-organic things like water, minerals, the air we breathe and the space beyond earth?
- The idea of "Sustainable Development" has taken hold across the globe. What do you think it means? How do you see it playing out in your area?

Resources:

- James Gustave Speth, *Red Sky at Morning*, R.R. Donnelley & Sons, 2004
- Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, Sierra Club Books, 1990
- Lester R. Brown, *Plan B 2.0*, Earth Policy Institute, 2006
- *The Earth Bible Project Series* Re-examining the Bible from the perspective of the environment and earth's present climate crises. Pilgrim Press, 2002
- Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*, Fortress Press, 1993
- www.nrdc.org (The National Resource Defense Council)
- www.eco-justice.org/ucc
- "An Inconvenient Truth," a film produced by Laurie David, and book by Al Gore
- "Toxic Waste and Race," a UCC Justice Witness Ministries report, 2007.
- "Troubled Waters," a DVD on the global water crisis, produced by JWM, 2006

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