

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, Stewardship Director

Take care of the environment and it will take care of you.

Every action produces a reaction. Acts in nature produce reactions - either beneficial or destructive. Aquatic, plant, animal and human life are negatively impacted when the created things of God are abused. Good stewardship of the environment is essential for our well being. Humans can live 5 weeks without food, 5 days without water and 5 minutes without air. If we destroy the created structure into which we were born, we destroy ourselves.

“Flowers are blooming on the slopes of alpine ski resorts and bears are having trouble hibernating in Siberia.”

(Reuters News - 12/3/06)

It is clearly evident that global warming is taking place. During a recent trip to Alaska, I was astounded to learn how rapidly glaciers have retreated. In 1784, explorer George Vancouver found Glacier Bay choked with ice 4,000 feet thick, 20 miles wide and 100 miles long. In 1879, naturalist John Muir, found the ice had retreated 48 miles up the bay. By 1916, the Grand Pacific Glacier had retreated 65 miles from the bay's mouth!

“For more than 20 years we have exceeded the earth's ability to support a consumptive lifestyle that is unsustainable.”

The statement above by WWF Director, James Leape, launched the 2006 “Living Planet Report” at Beijing's prestigious Tsinghua University. Scientific studies of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) indicate that fossil fuel pollution produces heat trapping emissions which increase world temperatures. Deforestation is another culprit. Wildlife losses were also reported. Populations of many species, from fish to mammals, have fallen by about a third from 1970 to 2003 largely because of pollution, clearing of forests and overfishing.

God's first command to mankind involves environmental stewardship.

The first command from God to mankind is found in Genesis 1:28: “Be fruitful and increase in numbers; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air

and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” God entrusted Adam and Eve (and us) with the proper management of His creations. The Hebrew word, “RDH”, (rule) in the verse has the connotation of “gentle, active caring”. Genesis 2:15 states that Adam was placed into the Garden of Eden to “work” it. The Hebrew word, “ABAD” (work) connotes “caring, careful service”. Noah was a caring, careful servant of the animals in the Ark. After the Flood, the responsibility continued, even though animals were then, for the first time, given to mankind as food (Gen. 9:2-3).

Sin struggles to strangle environmental stewardship.

In the past, sinful mankind has done significant disservice to creation. The Bible describes the result as “creation groaning” (Rom. 8:22). We should endeavor to relieve some of the “groaning” in nature by doing what we can to prevent abuses of the environment and furthering what will prove beneficial for God's creation. Gordon Aeschliman writes in “Target Earth”:

**“It is easy to be overwhelmed by the
massive problems our mismanagement
of creation has caused. Yet it does not
belong to our Christian identity to become
paralyzed. Rather, this knowledge spurs
us to little deeds of creation care that add
up to millions of small, yet significant,
acts that restore the earth.”**

DO SOMETHING CREATIVE FOR GOD'S CREATION

- * Reduce energy consumption in your church and home.
- * Eliminate waste caused by over-consumption.
- * Participate in recycling efforts.
- * Become politically sensitive and active regarding government environmental issues.
- * Celebrate Rogate Sunday (6th Sunday of Easter) with environmental emphasis.
- * Personally help reduce pollution.
- * Receive and share environmental information.

Additional Resources

“Stewardship of Creation” in the Congregational Stewardship Workbook, given to congregations by the SELC Stewardship Department, contains suggestions and additional resources.