

## **Stewards, Not Consumers**

Both the Bible and experience reveal to us more and more how every part of creation is an intricately designed piece of matter and somehow related and interdependent on other parts of creation. When one part of the creation suffers, the rest of creation suffers with it.

If we can orient our thinking to the fact that every part of creation is integral to the whole and that humanity is dependent on creation as is creation upon humanity, it can change us of from consumers to stewards.

Our influence on the environment around us needs to be an integral part of our decision making. Our primary motivation for making good environmental decisions should not result from diminishing natural resources, from unhealthy conditions of our water systems, or from other environmental issues of the day. These are indeed important issues and demand our attention. But our response to them needs to stem from faith: God created it, it is good, and God has given us the job of being stewards for creation (Gen. 1:28-30). Jesus' call for us to be servants of all (Mark needs to be extended to all of God's good creation).

As Christians, we should be leading the way, not following, in caring for the environment. We need to learn to be not only reactive but proactive in our care for the environment. God sent Christ for all of creation. For God saw all that God made, and behold, it was very good.

## **What Christians Believe About our Relationship with Creation**

- We are all a part of the web of creation
- Every part of creation is good
- Christ came to reconcile all of creation to God
- We are called to be about the work of reconciling, serving and preserving creation
- We are stewards, not consumers. Every action we take, every decision we make, is a stewardship decision.



**Northern Illinois Synod**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
**God's Work, Our Hands**



## **Caring for Creation: A Matter of Faith**

A brief look at why Christians should make caring for the environment part of their daily discipleship practices

**Northern Illinois Synod**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

***Mission Gatherings***

**Caring for God's  
Creation Where I Live**

**Fall, 2008**

## Apostles' Creed: The Confessional Foundation

At the very base of our beliefs as Christians, at the very root of our Trinitarian theology, is the belief in the God who created everything.

I believe in God the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
(Apostles' Creed)

This, of course, is particularly true for Lutherans:

### **What does this mean?**

I believe that God has created me and all that exists. He has given me and still preserves... (The Small Catechism)

## Genesis Chapter 1: The Biblical Foundation

The account of creation in Genesis 1 is not just a nice little story about the beginning. Nor is it a scientific explanation of the beginning. It is a foundational story of our faith that tells us:

- God created
- Creation is good
- God put things in a very special order
- God gave special responsibilities to human beings regarding creation

Throughout the rest of the Bible we find that humanity fails miserably but God continues to reach out with grace to restore creation. Ultimately, the salvation that Jesus brings is for all of creation:

For God so loved the world (cosmos in Greek!) that He gave his only Son... **John 3:16**

## The Interconnected Creation

Often times, God's special order of creation has been misinterpreted to put humans at the top of the created order (hierarchical) or at the center of the created order (ethnocentric). The fault in both these schemes is that it places human beings in a position to justify using and abusing creation for its own selfish desires.

Both of these are inconsistent with a God whose love is manifest in a savior who lives a selfless life for others—even to the point of death. This God who created humanity in God's own image, expects humanity to "image" that very same selfless love. That love should be directed toward all of God's good creation.

The hierarchical and ethnocentric models must be rejected. A much more useful model might be found in Paul's body illustration from 1 Corinthians 12. Though he was describing the church in this passage, it is easy to see how this is analogous to the way that God ordered creation—everything is special and useful to the whole. Another helpful model is that of a web (see below). A spider web is dependent on all of its strands for its incredible strength. If one of the strands is broken, the strength of the entire web is weakened. It is the same with creation.

