

t EARTHDAY Sunday 2000

WORSHIP RESOURCES

CALL TO WORSHIP

Our help is in the name of the Lord,

Creator of heaven and earth!

Psalm 124: 8

Praise be to Jesus Christ!

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

In Christ all things in heaven and on earth were created.

All things have been created through him and for him.

In Christ the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

Through Christ God was pleased to reconcile all things,

things on earth and things in heaven,

making peace through the blood of the cross.

from Colossians 1: 15-20

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God, in your gracious presence we confess our sin and the sin of this world. Although Christ is among us as our peace, we are a people divided against ourselves as we cling to the values of a broken world. The profit and pleasures we pursue lay waste the land and pollute the seas. The fears and jealousies we harbor set neighbor against neighbor and nation against nation. We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom, of intellect and reason, and have turned them into bonds of oppression. Lord, have mercy upon us; heal and forgive us. Set us free to serve you in the world as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ.

from the Book of Common Worship (PCUSA)

The prayer will continue in silence

LITANY FOR CREATION

Leader: Creator God, breathing your own life into our being
You gave us the gift of life.
You placed us on this earth with its minerals and waters,
Flowers and fruits, living creatures of grace and beauty.
You gave us the care of the earth.
Today you call us: "Where are you; what have you done?"

Silent prayer for creation.

Leader: We hide in utter shame, for we are naked.
We violate the earth and plunder it.
We refuse to share the earth's resources.
We seek to own what is not ours, but yours.

People: Forgive us, Creator God, and reconcile us to your creation.

Leader: O God of love, you gave us the gift of peoples—
Of cultures, races and colors—
To love, to care for, to share our lives with.
Today you ask us: “Where is your brother, your sister?”

Silent prayer for others.

Leader: We hide ourselves in shame and fear.
Poverty, hunger, hatred and war rule the earth.
The refugees, the oppressed and the voiceless cry out to you.
Forgive us, O God of Love,
And reconcile us to yourself and to one another.

**People: Teach us, O Creator God of Love,
That the earth and all its fullness is yours,
The world and those who dwell in it.
Call us yet again to safeguard the gift of life. Amen.**

Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches

SENDING FORTH

People of God:
the creation waits with eager longing
for the revealing of the children of God.
***Such is the love God has given us,
that we should be called children of God.***

People of God:
the day is coming when creation itself
will be set free from its bondage to decay
and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
***We are God's children now;
what will be is yet to be revealed.***

People of God:
In Christ, God was reconciling the world,
and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.
***We are ambassadors for Christ,
God making his appeal through us.***

Go forth, therefore, as signs of the new creation:
***We go in the Spirit of Christ, who calls us
to bring justice to those who are poor;
to make peace among the people;
to tend and keep the gifts of creation.***

(from Romans 8, I John 3, II Co. 5)

SERMON NOTES

Scripture: John 20:19-29

As we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, we must consider our response to the good news. Just as the risen Christ appeared to his disciples, Christ brings us peace, empowers us with the Holy Spirit, and sends us out in his name for the sake of the whole creation.

We are in the midst of a global experiment on Earth's climate. What's at stake are the systems that support life. Talking about the weather is no longer "small talk," but takes on an apocalyptic tone. The problem of climate change seems overwhelming, so we push global climate change to the back of our minds. Feeling powerless, we deny the problem. But the problem is still there and scientists warn that if we do not take action to avert climate change there could be grave consequences. We need to become informed to understand the true risks and take responsible actions before it is too late to change.

We read and hear a lot about climate change and about global warming. What is global warming? Light from the sun enters the atmosphere and warms the surface of the Earth. The atmosphere works like a greenhouse. It contains just enough water vapor, carbon dioxide, and other gases to trap the right amount of heat and solar energy, while allowing the rest to escape back into outer space. Today, however, the balance is being disrupted by human-caused air pollution. Large amounts of CO₂ from burning fossil fuels and other so-called "greenhouse gases" are being emitted into the atmosphere, trapping more heat, causing the Earth's temperature to rise.

And indeed, the climate is changing. Over 2,500 scientists on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that human activities are altering the Earth's atmosphere, and that global

warming is already underway. There is mounting evidence worldwide of the impacts of global warming. Scientists warn that with no action to curb emissions, over the next century the Earth's temperature may become the warmest in human history.

For many years we were told that global warming was a non-issue and that climate change was not scientifically proven. It's true that scientific assessments of the consequences of global warming vary, but most climate scientists are convinced that changes will be significant and could be catastrophic. Among the predictions are: increasingly severe and frequent heat waves, more violent hurricanes, melting ice caps, global sea level rise, extreme droughts, increased ranges of disease-carrying insects and rodents, crop failures, heavy rains and flooding, ocean temperature increases, forest fires, migration of bacteria and change in disease patterns, destruction of coral reefs, drying up of wetlands, acceleration of species loss, change in the patterns of seasons, serious social and economic disruption throughout the world, and environmental refugees.

If we do not act responsibly, our children or grandchildren will suffer the consequences of our inaction. We know our society's addiction to fossil fuels is unsustainable, but we feel powerless to stop, hopeless to change the course of events. We try to lock out the reality that threatens the quality of the future of life on Earth. But Jesus empowers us with the Holy Spirit and sends us out to live resurrected lives, and to carry a message of forgiveness, hope, and transformation. We carry this message not just in words, but in the way we live.

As Christians, we believe that Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead. Can we believe God will bring us through these challenges? God is raising

up people even now to carry on Christ's work. Christ is risen! We are not alone. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a sign, not just of the promise of life after death, but of the power of God to transform the world and us. We are invited to accept and offer the peace, courage, forgiveness, and transforming power of the Holy Spirit that we have received. We are sent out as Christ's followers, not motivated by fear, but by faith in God's amazing power and by hope for positive change.

Jim Wallace of Sojourners Community says, "Faith is believing in spite of the evidence and watching the evidence change." Faith in the power of God to bring about change does not mean passive waiting. Rather, says Wallace, "faith leads to hope, hope leads to action, and action leads to change."

Each time we install an energy-efficient light bulb, it can be an act of faithfulness. Each time we ride our bike or take a bus, or walk, instead

of driving it is a spiritual victory. Each time we plant a tree, it is a sign of hope. Each time we struggle to bring the necessary changes to our church, our community, our nation, or our world, we engage in action that can lead to change. Each time we make decisions that will lead to a better world for a grandchild or niece or nephew, or a child in Bangladesh, we share our faith in God who raised Jesus from the dead and who, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can work through us even today to bring about God's future. In these ways we do our small part in helping to preserve God's creation, for the sake of the people we love, for the sake of the whole, for the sake of future generations.

Sermon Notes prepared by the Rev. Sharon Delgado, a United Methodist Church pastor and Executive Director of Earth Justice Ministries.

RESOURCE LIST

Resources to enable your family and congregation to explore, reflect and take action on our call to be faithful energy stewards and to protect God's creation are available from Environmental Justice Resources, National Council of Churches, P.O. Box 968, Elkhart, Indiana 46515-0968. Or call 1-800-762-0968. Ask for EJ9705 for a complete free resource list from the same address.

God's Earth Our Home-EJ9411, \$7.00. This extensive packet contains many suggestions for incorporating environmental ministries into the life of the congregation.

It's God's Word: Christians, the Environment and Global Warming-EJ9701, \$1.00. Adult study on the Bible, the environment and the challenge of climate change.

Climate Change Information and Strategy Packet- EJ9900, \$3.00 This packet contains materials to use with congregations, including a bulletin insert and *It's God's World*.

The Heat is On: The Climate Crisis, The Cover-up, The Prescription--EJ0012, \$13.00 . Eloquently summarizes the issues surrounding climate change. By Ross Gelbspan, Perseus Books, 1998.

Web Resources:

www.webofcreation.org. An environmental web site for faith communities. Offers extensive bibliographies, worship material and other resources.

Environmental Stewardship Guide to Conservation for Congregations, available at <http://members.aol.com/petereco>. A primer on getting your local church to conserve energy.

Becoming Faithful Energy Stewards

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God... in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:19-21)

CALLED TO "TEND AND KEEP"

The Bible tells us that on each day of creation God saw that all was "good" and on the last day that it was "very good". Indeed, according to Genesis 9:10, God has established a covenant "with every living creature" and with the earth itself (Genesis 9:13).

The biblical word "covenant" implies mutual trust and responsibility, and describes the special relationship between God and all creation. Humankind has been given an important role in this covenant relationship. God calls us to "tend and keep" this garden call Earth (Genesis 9:13).

"THE LAND MOURNS"

But we all know that we have not always been faithful partners in this covenant. In our sinfulness, we have hurt each other and the rest of creation. The biblical prophet Hosea warned that as a consequence of human disobedience and selfishness "the land mourns and... even the fish of the sea are perishing" (Hosea 41-3).

Today we are recognizing in new and alarming ways the truth of the prophet's warning. Most climate scientists now agree that our increasing over consumption of fossil fuel has led to climate change.

Consider these facts:

- Each year we are pumping nearly the seven billion tons of heat-trapping carbon into atmosphere.
- The eleven hottest years on record have all occurred since 1980.

2500 of the world's leading atmospheric scientists agree that global warming already has begun. They warn that if we do not curb automotive and power plant emissions of global warming pollution, we will change the climate, triggering more extreme weather, floods and droughts that would damage croplands and forests, deadly heat waves, a rise in the sea level that would flood coastal areas, and severely affect human, animal and plant health and survival.

A FAITHFUL RESPONSE

Christians believe that God heals what human beings have broken and calls people of faith to participate in the restoration of creation. When we use less energy in our homes and churches and use it more efficiently, and when we move away from our reliance on fossil fuels and use instead more renewable energy sources, we point to and participate in God's healing of creation. Though it may be too late to prevent climate change, we can design policies and take actions to slow it down.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Become an "Energy Stewardship Congregation":**
Examine your congregation's and your own individual energy consumption. Your church can make a commitment to use less energy and to make your building more energy efficient.
*For more information on the "Energy Stewardship Congregation" program call 1-800-288-1346.
- **At home and at church:**
 - ♦ use compact fluorescent light bulbs;
 - ♦ tune-up your heating and air conditioning systems;
 - ♦ install programmable thermostats and sensors on lighting;
 - ♦ buy the most efficient model furnaces and air conditioners and correctly "size" them to your needs.
- **Walk, bike, and use public transportation whenever possible.**
- **Encourage your local, state, and national elected officials to endorse a "Clean Energy Agenda"**
which would including:
 - ♦ clean power
 - ♦ clean cars
 - ♦ clean air
 - ♦ clean investments*For more information about the "Clean Energy" Agenda, go to "Web of Creation" at:
www.webofcreation.org/NCC/CleanEnergyAgenda.html.

A Climate Change Information and Strategy Packet is available without cost by calling 1-888-9climate. It includes *It's God's World: Christians, Care for Creation and Global Warming* - a five session Bible study for congregations

ADVOCATE FOR CLEAN CARS!

The most important single step we can take to meet the challenge of climate change is to improve the fuel efficiency of new cars and light trucks to a combined average of 45 MPG by 2010. Cars, minivans, sport utility vehicles and pickups all spew carbon dioxide, the chief global warming gas, into the atmosphere. For every gallon of gas burned, 26 pounds of carbon dioxide are pumped into the atmosphere. The average car emits about 50 tons of carbon dioxide over its lifetime.

Strengthening the Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) standard for cars, minivans and other light trucks would:

- reduce air pollution;
- decrease our reliance on imported fuels;
- decrease the need to open sensitive wilderness areas to oil and gas exploration;
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the dangers of climate change.

A higher CAFE standard would:

- reduce our fuel consumption,
- lower our gasoline bills.

For the past five years, riders attached to Appropriations bills have barred the Department of Transportation from even considering stronger Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards (CAFE). Write, phone, or fax the President and your Senators and Representatives. Urge them to support higher CAFE standards and protect human health, increase our energy security, and curb the warming of the earth that threatens all of God's creation.

US House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

US Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

US Capitol Switchboard - 202-224-3121

The President
The White House
Washington D.C. 20500
202-456-1414 (switchboard) 202-456-1111 (comment line)

CLEAN ENERGY NOW!

The Earth Day 2000 Clean Energy Agenda seeks to mobilize support for a rapid transition to renewable energy sources. A Clean Energy Agenda for the 21st Century includes:

- **Clean Power:** By 2020, produce at least one-third of the nation's energy from non-hydro renewable sources (sun/wind) and double the efficiency of energy use.
- **Clean Air:** Clean up our power plants by setting tighter limits on all power plant pollutants (including old coal-fired power plants).
- **Clean Cars:** Make SUV's, pick-ups and minivans as clean as cars. Raise CAFE to 45 MPG by 2010 and 65 MPG by 2020. Increase the market share for clean vehicles powered by hybrid motors and fuel cells by offering incentives.
- **Clean Investments:** Quadruple federal investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency within five years. Stop the taxpayer subsidy of the coals, oil and nuclear industries. Provide resources for a just transition for affected workers and communities.

Please consider sending a message to your public officials to support just energy policies that ensure a safe and equitable future for all God's creation. Reproduce the messages on the opposite page onto post cards to send a message to our public officials that the time is now to begin a transition to a just and sustainable energy economy.

(For more information on the Clean Energy Agenda go to www.webofcreation.org/NCC/CleanEnergyAgenda.html)

ENERGY STEWARDSHIP CONGREGATIONS

A growing number of congregations are attempting to be good stewards of God's creation by reducing their use of energy. One way to use less energy is to make your facilities more energy efficient by taking measures such as:

- using compact florescent bulbs instead of incandescent bulbs,
- doing an energy audit,
- installing programmable thermostats and light sensors,
- buying equipment and appliances that are energy efficient. Look for those labeled "Energy Star".
- making energy efficiency a high priority, if you are replacing your heating, ventilation and air conditioning system or considering a renovation or addition.

For more information, call the Energy Stewardship Congregation program (formerly known as the Energy Star Congregation program) at **800-288-1346**. This is a project of the Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of the Churches of Christ.

There are two resources on the Energy Stewardship Congregation program you can order by calling 800-762-0968:

Guide for Energy Stewardship Congregations - EJ 9960 \$.75 Offers concrete suggestions for using less energy by making your facilities more energy efficient.

Energy Stewardship Congregations Brochure - EJ9925 - Free. Describes the help that is available to congregations to consume less energy.

CLEAN ENERGY AGENDA SUGGESTED MESSAGES

(Consider reproducing onto post cards)

Dear Senator:

I am writing as a person of faith to urge you to support a Clean Energy Agenda for the 21st century. Our society's addiction to fossil fuels, as seen by the growing evidence of global warming, is unsustainable. It is now time for a transition to a just and sustainable energy economy that includes support for clean and efficient cars, clean power plants, increased funding for non-hydro renewable resources such as wind and solar; an end to taxpayer support for the coal, oil and nuclear industries; and provision of resources and job retraining for affected workers and communities.

I encourage you to support efforts which ensure the protection of God's creation and the future of all our children.

Sincerely, (Name) _____
Address _____

Dear President Clinton:

I am writing as a person of faith to urge you to support a Clean Energy Agenda for the 21st century. Our society's addiction to fossil fuels, as seen by the growing evidence of global warming, is unsustainable. It is now time for a transition to a just and sustainable energy economy that includes support for clean and efficient cars, clean power plants, increased funding for non-hydro renewable resources such as wind and solar; an end to taxpayer support for the coal, oil and nuclear industries; and provision of resources and job retraining for affected workers and communities.

I encourage you to support efforts which ensure the protection of God's creation and the future of all our children.

Sincerely, (Name) _____
Address _____

EARTH DAY SUNDAY 2000

GOOD STEWARDS OF GOD'S GIFT OF ENERGY

Because Earth Day (April 22) is between the western Good Friday and Easter, your congregation may want to choose another Sunday for its Earth Sunday celebrations such as April 30, the Sunday after Easter or April 2 a day that many evangelical Christians will celebrate as "Creation Sunday".

This year we celebrate the gift of energy. To help your congregation with your celebration, this resource contains:

- Worship materials
- Sermons notes
- A Resource list
- A Bulletin Insert
- Information about clean cars and clean energy
- Information about the Energy Stewardship Congregation Program
- Suggested messages to senators and the President about the Clean Energy Agenda

Additional copies of this resources can be ordered from Environmental Justice Resources at 800-762-0968. The price is \$.75 each for 1 to 19 copies; \$.20 each for twenty or more. The order number is EJ0035. This resource is on www.webofcreation.org/NCC/Earthday.html.

GOOD STEWARDS OF GOD'S GIFT OF ENERGY

Earth Day Sunday 2000