Salvation Through Overconsumption?

No one can serve two masters . . . You cannot serve God and wealth.
(Matthew 6:24, *NRSV*)

Consumerism identifies a lifestyle in which a large number of individuals obtain more than is needed, more than is necessary for fulfillment, and more than the planet can sustain. Because consumerism intensifies pollution and resource depletion leading to an immense degradation of God's earth and creation, this lifestyle is at the heart of what Christians are called to question and confront.

Since World War II, we've seen the most massive experiment that's ever been undertaken in programming the psyche of a civilization. And it has worked. The advertising culture has succeeded in creating an identity based on consumption—a sense that our significance in life depends upon what we consume.

Victor Lebow, a retail analyst who promoted consumption as necessary to our economy in the postwar period, was clear about this. He said, "Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of

Consumption and Compassion
Ecology and Equity

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need . . . they broke bread at home and ate their food with warm and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. (Acts 2:44-47, *NRSV*)

The Acts reference reminds us that Christians have long struggled with the use of resources. It is tempting for North Americans to think of the environment in terms of clean rivers, clear air, healthy food, and an adventurous outdoors for personal enjoyment. For 50 weeks a year we engage in activities that damage the environment, only to go on a two-week vacation to enjoy it. Seen against the backdrop of a divided world, the excessive use of nature and its resources in the wealthier nations is a principal roadblock to greater justice. In the search for sustainability it is important to acknowledge, first of all, that ecology cannot be separated from equity, nor equity from ecology. The crisis of nature and the crisis of international justice are interlinked.

In a finite world, the claim by 20 percent of the world's population to 80 percent of the world's resources makes the poor poorer. A retreat of the rich from overconsumption is a necessary first step toward improving the lives of an increasing number of people. If we want to become good

Both efficiency and sufficiency must guide us. While efficiency is about how to do things right, sufficiency is about how to do the right things.

global neighbors, we will have to set out to build economies that weigh much less heavily on the planet and on other peoples.

Building such economies will involve an immense civilizational change, calling for a gradual reduction of the physical scale of the rich economies until they are no longer at odds with nature or justice in the world. Both efficiency and sufficiency must guide us. While efficiency is about how to do things right, sufficiency is about how to do the right things. To make this change, we have to value ethics and aesthetics as well as resources and economics. A sustainable economy will ultimately spring from a fresh inquiry into the meaning of the good life.

Without equity between industrial and developing countries it will not be possible to enter upon sustainable global development. This can be illustrated by a simple example. Today the oceans and the plants on land can absorb around 13 to 14 billion tons of carbon dioxide across the world annually. Humans can discharge that amount into the atmosphere through burning wood and other sources of fossil energy and still remain within natural limits and avoid heating the Earth's atmosphere. If this "budget" were equally distributed among the Earth's 5.8 billion inhabitants today, each would have the right to discharge somewhat over 2.3 tons of carbon dioxide per year. In fact, energy-linked CO_2 emissions in the poor countries are considerably less: in India 0.8 tons, in China 2 tons, and in Egypt and Brazil 1.5 tons. The situation is very different in the rich countries. A US citizen discharges 20 tons annually, a German just under 12 tons, and a Japanese 9 tons. If the entire global population discharged as much CO_2 as the Germans, five planets would be needed to process these emissions.

As James Gustave Speth of United Nations Development Program has observed, it is critical for us to "make a determined effort to eradicate poverty and expand consumption of more than one billion desperately poor people who have been left out of the global growth in consumption."

Instead of worshipping God, we are worshipping our own creations in a way that is destroying the rest of God's creation.

goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction and our ego satisfaction in consumption. We need things consumed, burned up, replaced and discarded at an ever-increasing rate."

Most of us in the US have trouble separating our sense of spiritual identity from our cultural identity. Advertisers consciously blend the two to make it seem as though our spiritual needs can be met in our consumption. Christmas, Jesus' birthday celebration, is the major consumer holiday. Easter, Jesus' resurrection, becomes a promotion vehicle for clothes and chocolates. By placing things above God and human community, consumerism deadens our consciousness and thickens our senses.

Television spreads with incredible efficiency the idea that we humans are the most important thing in the world. All our wants should be gratified. We should be amused at all times. That's what life is all about. The ideology of TV is very much against both an ecological worldview and a religious worldview. In the Christian worldview we're not at the center of everything. God is the center of things: God and God's creation, of which we're a small, wonderful, privileged part. John 10:10 reminds us that Jesus, not overconsumption, is the way to "abundant life."

The reprogramming of our psyches is so pervasive that we do not see the effects. They are just accepted, like the air we breathe. Advertising creates a lethal addiction. Overconsumption is not a matter of taste but of survival. We're prey to a mass psychology that will lead to our own ruin. Instead of worshipping God, we are worshipping our own creations in a way that is destroying the rest of God's creation.

As Thomas Berry has observed: "To assist the human by deteriorating the natural world cannot lead to a sustainable community. The only sustainable community is one that fits the human economy into the ever-renewing economy of the planet. The human system, in its every aspect, is a subsystem of the Earth's system, whether we are speaking of economics or physical well-being or rules of law." In essence, human flourishing and planetary prosperity are intimately linked.

Letter from churches was picked up and stripped in on this page

LIVING SIMPLY: Imperative Now

Notes for Sermon Development **Scripture:** Matthew 6: 25-33

The theme for Earth Day 1999 is "Sustainable Living," with a focus on consumerism. We present below notes for sermon development. Two bulletin inserts, worship suggestions, and the Covenant Congregation Program may also be useful.

In his famous speech aboard the *Arabella*, Puritan leader John Winthrop urged the colonists to guard against the seduction of material success, and to ensure that "the good of the public oversways all private interests." Pious hard work in a land of seemingly unlimited resources earned many colonists handsome incomes. Soon silks and imported furniture were the rage in New England cities, and powdered wigs the fashion. The communitarian ethic of austerity and religious piety gradually fell by the wayside, and America became the world's greatest merchant state.

Even as we are proud of our great material progress, there is a restless sense beginning to stir that something is amiss. A recent study, commissioned by the Merck Family Fund, found that most Americans think we consume too much, produce too much waste, and have lost sight of the spiritual values which once guided us as a society. People are ready, the study concluded, to begin a serious dialogue about our national habits as consumers, and in many cases see a deep need to begin to take action on this issue.

A critical factor for our time is that the environment is becoming ever less capable of sustaining the growing impact of our escalating consumption patterns. Everywhere our forests are overlogged, our agricultural lands are overcropped, our grasslands overgrazed, our wetlands overdrained, our groundwaters overtapped, our seas overfished, and nearly all our terrestrial and marine environment is overpolluted with chemical and radioactive poisons. Worse still, our atmospheric environment is becoming ever less capable of absorbing either the ozone-depleting gases or the greenhouse gases generated by these activities without creating new climatic conditions to which human beings cannot indefinitely adapt.

Today we must reconsider our consumption patterns not only because there is strong moral basis for doing so. We must reconsider our consumption radically and fundamentally, because as a planet we have no other choice. Simple life is a compelling necessity now.

Christian simplicity frees us from the modern mania to possess, accumulate, and the attitude that "more is better." It brings sanity to our compulsive extravagance, and peace to our frantic spirit. Simplicity enables us to live lives of integrity in the face of the stark realities of our world. It is not a faddish attempt to respond to the ecological crisis that is threatening us now. Christian simplicity is more than a reaction to the modern crisis. It gives us the basis for developing a strategy for action to address many of our social inequities. The answer to the problem of the survival of the planet lies in spirituality as much as it does in politics, science, or economics.

Christian simplicity frees us from the modern mania to possess, accumulate, and the attitude that "more is better."

It is a call given to every Christian. The witness to simplicity is profoundly rooted in the biblical tradition, and most perfectly exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ.

The majority of Christians have never seriously wrestled with the problem of simplicity, conveniently ignoring Jesus' many words on the subject. The reason is simple: the discipline of simplicity challenges our vested interests in an affluent lifestyle. But we get help and a focal point from the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:25-33.

The central point of the discipline of simplicity is to seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God's kingdom *first*, and then everything necessary will come in its proper order. Simplicity becomes idolatry when it takes precedence over seeking the kingdom. Focus upon the kingdom produces an *inward* reality that results in an *outward* lifestyle. Both the inward and outward aspects of simplicity are essential. We deceive ourselves if we believe we can possess the inward reality without its having a profound effect on how we live. To attempt to arrange an outward lifestyle of simplicity without the inward reality degenerates into legalistic trivia.

Jesus makes clear in the Matthew passage that freedom from anxiety is one of the inward evidences of seeking the kingdom of God first. The inward reality of simplicity involves a life of joyful unconcern for possessions. Three inner attitudes characterize freedom from anxiety: receiving what we have as a gift from God; knowing that what we have is to be cared for by God; and to have our goods available to others. When we are seeking first the kingdom of God these three attitudes will characterize our lives. Taken together they define what Jesus meant by "do not be anxious."

The sermon notes were prepared by Shantilal P. Bhagat, staff consultant , Global Mission Partnerships, Church of the Brethren General Board.

Worship Suggestions

For your soul's sake, simplify your life.

This service in celebration of God's Creation is offered to congregations as a way to help with their planning of Earth Sunday or Environmental Sabbath services. The theme of the 1999 service is "Sustainable Living" with a focus on consumerism. For Christians, the goal of living simply is not just consuming less or becoming less busy. It's using our time and resources so that God is glorified and that the rest of creation might simply live.

Plan early so that you can incorporate local elements into the service. Flowers and other greenery can be used to decorate the worship space. Plan to have children and youth assist in the service as much as possible. Some churches use this Sunday as a time to bless pets and animals of their members.

The Scripture selections suggested follow the Revised Common Lectionary, Year A for the Fourth Sunday in Easter. In 1999, This Sunday is on April 25. These scriptures lift up the basic Christian theme that Christians find their "abundant living" in God and Christ. Security comes from God, not from things.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Gracious God, The whole earth belongs to you and still you care for each of us even as you care for the sparrows and wild flowers. You have prepared such a wonderful place for us. Help us worship you in all that we do. Lead us to your wonderful places. Keep us from substituting an abundance of things for your abundance living. Keep us from confusing a busy life with a faithful life. Challenge us to make every act of worship another step toward following you. Amen

HYMN: "Spirit of the Living God"

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

We praise and thank you, O God
for you are with us always
You are with us when we are hungry
and cry out to you for food and justice;
you are with us even when we use our wealth
to pile up treasures instead of worshiping you.
We thank you for sending us Jesus as
the way out of a life of fear and greed.

Keep us following the example of Jesus.
Through Christ and the Holy Spirit, we learn
to offer you all glory and honor. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 2: 42-47 Psalms 23

HYMN: "Your Love, O God Is Broad
Like Beach and Meadow"

CHILDREN'S STORY

Even if your church does not normally have a children's story, this Sunday is a good day to have a children's story. Many children know the 23rd Psalms, but most have not explored the rich images of God leading us to lush natural places, protecting us from enemies, even making us meals in front of enemies. Explore the images of blessing with the children, explain that anointing with oil was a sign of blessing as is the image of a cup overflowing. This psalm makes clear that our blessings come from God, not our own creations.

GOSPEL: John 10:1-10, Matthew 6:25-33

SERMON

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

"We believe in God, Creator of the world; and in Jesus Christ, the redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God's gifts, and we repent of our sin in misusing the gifts to idolatrous ends. We affirm the natural world as God's handiwork and dedicate ourselves to its preservation, enhancement, and faithful use by humankind."
—from United Methodist Church Social Creed.

LITANY OF CONCERNS

For the times when we fail to live simply,
so others can simply live

LORD, have mercy.

For the times we waste your precious gift of energy

LORD, have mercy

For all the times we forget the effects
our actions have on the rest of creation

LORD, have mercy

For all the times we have been too
busy to worship you

LORD, have mercy

For building bombs, instead of loving communities

LORD, have mercy

For polluting the air, water, and land

LORD, have mercy
For not sharing the fruits of creation justly

LORD, have mercy

For not participating in the church's mission to help, heal, and defend your creation

LORD, have mercy

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, forgives us and will restore all of creation.
We have been given another chance to live faithfully. We are able to become new creations. We can live a simpler, more faithful life. We can witness to and participate in God's redemption of creation. Amen.

OFFERING

In addition to monetary gifts, your congregation can use this time to offer ways in which they will change their lives to be more ecologically responsible. One congregation uses a wooden cross and asks worshipers to nail their resolutions for change to the cross. The result is a cross decorated with paper prayers. Another congregation uses a rock altar for this Sunday reminding worshipers of the charge to the Israelites after the golden calf episode. i.e. that they were not to worship God with altars made of hewn stones (Exodus 20:25). They are not to worship their own creation in the form of golden or silver idols, but worship God. Other congregations use this as a time for offerings of letters to Congress on issues like global warming.

HYMN: "God of the Sparrow, God of the Whale" or "Cuando El Pobre" (When the Poor Ones)

Prayer : The Sufficiency of God

God, of your goodness give me yourself; for you are sufficient for me. I cannot properly ask anything less, to be worthy of you. If I were to ask less, I should always be in want. In you alone do I have all. Amen. — Juliana of Norwich, England 15th Century

Blessing:

The Earth is precious to God, and to harm the Earth is to heap contempt on its Creator. So love it…care for it…and with all your mind, with all your heart, preserve it for your children and love as God loves us all.
—Chief Seattle, 1855

These worship suggestions were prepared by Jaydee Hanson, Assistant General Secretary, Ministry of God's Creation, United Methodist Board of Church and Society.

Resource List

Resources to enable your family and congregation to explore, reflect, and take action on issues of consumption and the environment 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 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.

Guide to Resource Efficient Church Buildings—EJ9204, $15.00. Provides practical suggestions for constructing church buildings with materials that minimize negative environmental impact.

It's Gods World: Christians, the Environment and Climate Change—EJ9701, $1.00. Adult study on the Bible, the environment and the challenges of climate change.

101 Ways to Save the Earth—EJ9420, $5.00. Booklet includes 101 ideas to do in the home, market, garden, office, on the road, and 52 weeks of congregational activities to help save the earth.

Faithful Earthkeeping: The Church as a Creation Awareness Center—EJ9735, $15.00. Three-part video includes The Biblical call to Earthkeeping, Creation's Praise; Creation's Cry; and Earthkeeping: The Church Responds.

Green Guidance: How to Plan Environmentally Responsible Events—EJ9905, $6.00. Practical information on green meeting planning; how to evaluate hotels on environmental criteria.

Simplicity as Compassion; Voluntary Simplicity from a Christian Perspective, by Michael Schut–EJ9910, $12.00. Eight session curricula on simple living.

Trek: Venture into a World of Enough–EJ9915, $5.00. By David Schrock-Shenk and Julie Kaufman. Mennonite Central Committee, 21 South 12th Street, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501. (717-859-1951) A 28 day exploration of the values underlying over consumption and simplicity.

It's a Gift to be Simple: Embracing the Freedom of Living with Less–EJ9920, $9.00. A primer on how to change your lifestyle and enrich your spirit. Includes a six week Scripture reflection on simplicity. By DeGrote Sorensen, Barbara and David Allen Sorensen. Augsburg, 1992.

Energy Star Congregation Brochure And Bulletin Insert–EJ9925. These items describe the assistance that is available to you for having your congregation's buildings consume less energy.

Other Resources:

- **www.webofcreation.org.** An environmental web site for faith-based communities. Offers extensive bibliographies and other resources for environmental ministries.
- ALTERNATIVES for Simple Living, 1-800-821-6153. (**www.simpleliving.org**) This organization offers an extensive selection of resources and information.
- Simple Living Network (**www.slnet.com**). An internet resource that also publishes a free, online newsletter highlighting simplicity ***tools, articles, and announcements in the voluntary simplicity movement.***
- Earth Ministry (**www.earthministry.org**) or (206) 632-2426. Materials on simplicity.

This resource list was prepared by Paz Artaza-Regan, staff, Ministry of God's Creation, United Methodist Board of Church and Society.

The Environmental Justice Covenant Congregation Program

Healing and Defending God's Creation

God created the earth and all that is in it and declared it good. God's creation is marked by wondrous complexity, interdependence and beauty. Human beings are called by God to the task of stewardship—taking care of the earth respectfully for its own sake and so that present and future generations may live on it and enjoy its fruits. The gifts of creation and the responsibility of stewardship were given to all of humanity, so that all might have enough and no one would have more than is needed and God's justice would prevail.

In our pride and brokenness, all of humankind is in sin and separated from God. The earth has not been well cared for. The water and air and land are polluted with poisons which hurt people and all creation. Many species of animals and plants are endangered by the behavior of human beings. Some have even become extinct.

We have not shared the fruits of creation justly. Some people live in luxury, taking more than they need, while others are desperately poor, especially people of color.

God, through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, heals and reconciles humanity and all of creation to God. We are able to become new creations—the new comes and the old passes away.

God calls the church to participate in the redemption of individuals, all of humanity and creation. Therefore, ministries of environmental stewardship and environmental justice are significant in the mission of our congregations and judicatories. Therefore the governing body (session, church council, vestry, consistory etc.) of our congregation affirms the importance of healing and defending creation to our mission. We promise to become engaged in or to continue to be engaged in this ministry in the following ways:

Worship — In worship, we will celebrate God's grace and glory in creation and will declare that God calls us to participate in the redemption of the world by cherishing, protecting and restoring creation.

Learning and Teaching — We will seek opportunities for ourselves and our children to learn more about the wonders of creation, the threats posed by human beings to the survival of creation and the possibilities of our participating in God's redemption and justice.

Lifestyle — Our individual and congregational lifestyles will respect and cherish creation. We will form habits of consuming, conserving and sharing that serve to protect and restore the environment. In particular, we will reuse and recycle as many materials as we can and seek ways of limiting our consumption of fossil fuels.

Community, National and Global Involvement — In our community, the nation and the world, our congregation will witness to and participate in God's redemption of creation by supporting public efforts and policies which support vulnerable people and protect and restore the degraded earth.

Each year we will review our previous year's work on environmental justice and consider other ways we can participate in God's redemption of creation.

Signed by the Pastor

_____ _____

Pastor *Date*

Signed by an officer of the congregation

_____ _____

Officer *Date*

(Please keep this in the official minutes of the governing body of your congregation)

Some Suggestions for Implementing Your Covenant

Worship

1. Use worship materials which point to the reality that God created and redeems creation and calls the church to the tasks of healing and defending it. Worship materials are found in *God's Earth: Our Home*.

2. Include the goodness of God's creation regularly in music, prayer, and congregational worship, as well as during Earth Day and other special services. Consider environmental ethics in a sermon or a series of sermons. Hold your worship service outside occasionally at a camp or park or on the church grounds instead of in the church building.

3. For each person baptized, plant a tree in the church yard or community. Suggest that church members contribute trees as a living memorial to loved ones who have died. Appoint a committee to oversee the selection and planting of the trees.

4. Become a congregation committed to celebrating God's Sabbath by taking time for rest, community building, enjoying God's creation together and giving rest to nature. Remember that the Sabbath is for all of creation, not just for human beings.

5. Confess to God as individuals and a congregation your own involvement in exploiting and neglecting the world that God created and called good.

6. Create a series of banners for your church sanctuary that portrays creation themes. Display them often as reminders of our call to protect and heal the creation.

7. Produce an environmental awareness drama as part of a worship service.

8. In the autumn, hold a special worship service of thanksgiving for the harvest. Have gardeners from the congregation bring an offering of vegetables or fruit from their gardens. Other people can contribute canned goods. Make arrangements ahead of time with a local food bank or soup kitchen to receive a donation of the food contributions. (Some food banks do not have the facilities to receive fresh food, so make sure you check ahead of time.)

   The service should emphasize thanksgiving for all the bounty of God's provision. A cornucopia of vegetables could replace the traditional altar flowers for the service. Remind the congregation that Christians in many parts of the developing world bring an offering each Sabbath which includes gifts that come directly from the land. By having a similar offering once a year, we acknowledge our dependence on God's creation, recognize the faithfulness of these brothers and sisters in Christ, and affirm our common call to feed the hungry.

Learning and Teaching

1. Purchase books and videos for the church library that deal with protecting and healing God's creation. A list of books and other resources can be found in *God's Earth, Our Home*. *A Resource List of Environmental Justice Materials* is available from Environmental Justice Resources. Use the lower box on the back page of this form to order a copy.

2. Plan a church-wide vacation Bible School for all ages using the theme of celebrating God's world. Use learning materials contained in *God's Earth, Our Home* and in your denominational Christian education resources. Invite members of the community to join with your congregation in the program.

3. Visit a neighborhood of your region where there is a high level of contamination. Find out who lives near the contamination and what affects it has on those who live close by. See how often these are neighborhoods of the poor and people of color. Join in efforts to end the contamination.

4. Hold church school classes outside whenever possible. Discover ways that you can learn from nature.

5. Offer a workshop for gardeners on composting, organic gardening, and indigenous plants. Teach about using alternatives to pesticides and artificial fertilizers in the garden.

6. Take a field trip. Tour your town's garbage dump, water supply, sewage treatment plant, recycling center, and power plant. Learn more about what happens to the waste your community produces. Prepare questions to ask the guides who show you around. Follow up on the tours by writing a report for your church newsletter or your community newspaper to share the information you have gained.

7. Choose a book or article from "Resources for Ecology and Justice," *God's Earth, Our Home*. Study it together as part of an adult education class. Ask people from your congregation representing diverse points of view to form a panel that responds to the book.

8. Sponsor a contest design for a poster, T-shirt, button, or bumper sticker with an environmental theme.

9. Take high school students or college students on a four-day backpacking trip. As you spend time in the wilderness together, study the Exodus story emphasizing the Israelites' dependence on God during their journey. Pray together the Psalms that speak of the wonder and awe of God's creation.

Lifestyle

Personal Lifestyle

1. At Christmas time, give a birthday gift to Jesus by sharing 25% of your Christmas budget with the needy. Use recycled paper for Christmas cards and gift wrap. Respect the environment in the gifts you select. Give gifts of your time or skills instead of expensive things.
2. Look for ways of saving energy (and money!) in your home. Turn down the thermostat in the winter and turn it up in the summer. Weather strip windows and doors. Insulate the walls and ceiling. Install storm windows.
3. Use a push mower to cut your lawn. Or, better yet, turn part of your yard into a meadow of indigenous wild flowers and vegetable garden.
4. When purchasing appliances, look for "Energy Star" symbol which ensures low energy consumption and efficiency.
5. Leave your car at home whenever possible. Instead, choose public transportation, carpooling, walking, bicycling, or staying at home. When purchasing a new car, look for the most fuel-efficient model you can find.

Congregational Lifestyle

1. Recruit churches to join the Energy Star Congregation Program, a joint project of the NCCC Eco-Justice Working Group and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Call 800-288-1346.
2. Turn off lights, fans, and air conditioners when not in use. Turn down the heat and water heaters at night and on days that the church is not in use.
3. Study your church grounds. How many pesticides, herbicides, and artificial fertilizers, and how much watering and mowing are necessary to keep the church grounds attractive and healthy? Are there indigenous strains of flowers, trees, and bushes that would be more hardy and insect resistant? Are there areas that could be converted to wild flower meadows to reduce the need for mowing? Is there an area that could be used for an organic vegetable garden to help supply healthy vegetables to a local food pantry? What compromises would your church community be willing to make on appearances in order to create an earth-friendly environment?
4. Make a commitment as a church to cut back on use of resources such as disposable cups, paper products, water, chemical cleaning products, and lawn care products. If your church has plans to expand, renovate, or build a new structure, insist on using resource efficient, low environmental impact products. There is a growing number of companies that produce earth friendly products.

Community, National and Global Involvement

1. Learn about environmental racism, the disproportionate impact of environmental contamination on communities of color. Bring practices of racial discrimination in environmental policy to public attention through letters to the editor of your local newspaper and through letters to legislators and industry leaders.
2. Keep track of how your governmental leaders vote on environmental issues. Your national denominational offices or the Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches can provide you with this information. Make your congregation aware of the voting records through a regular column in your church newsletter. Ask people to consider this information when voting.
3. Hold an offering of letters. Choose an environmental issue that concerns the people of your congregation. It might be an issue confronting your town or community or a situation of national or international significance. Plan an educational campaign through which the members of your congregation are made aware of the issue and why it hurts God's creation.

   Ask people to write letters to your legislators about the issue. You might wish to provide a model letter. Suggest that people describe in the letter how their faith has led them to be concerned about the issue.

   At the next worship service, ask worshippers to place their letters in the Offering plate. Dedicate the letters. Mail them after worship.
4. Encourage members of the congregation to write letters to the President asking him to raise the automobile fuel economy standards. The president is authorized to make these changes without the approval of congress. The standards have not been raised since 1986, and the technology for fuel efficiency has improved significantly since then.
5. Explore ways of getting media coverage for an issue that concerns you. Letters to the editor, paid advertisements, and public service announcements are avenues open to everyone. Public policy makers are far more likely to respond to an issue that has generated public concern.
6. Do you know which agencies in your community, city, county, or state have responsibilities for environmental issues and how to contact them? You might consider issues such as: soil contamination, air and water pollution and endangered species. After gathering this information, make it available to church members. Invite officials from these agencies to speak at your church.

For Reporting Your Congregation As An

Environmental Justice Covenant Congregation

Please return the top portion of the form to the Environmental Justice office of your denomination or to the Eco-Justice Working Group, National Council of Churches, Room 812, 475 Riverside Dr., New York, NY 10115. The phones are 212-870-2385 or 2386; the fax is 212-870-2265. A certificate will be sent to each Covenant Congregation.

_____ of _____

The governing body (session, vestry, church council etc.) *Church*

voted to become an Environmental Justice Covenant Congregation on _____ .

Date

_____ _____

Pastor *Middle Governing Body (diocese. presbytery, etc.)*

Address of Church:

_____

Street *City* *State* *Zip Code*

A contact person from your congregation with whom the environmental justice office of your denomination and the Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches can be in touch is:

Name of Contact Person: _____

Address of Contact Person:

_____

Street *City* *State* *Zip Code*

_____

Work Phone *Home Phone* *Fax*

For Ordering Materials

Please send the bottom portion of this form to Environmental Justice Resources, National Council of Churches, PO Box 968, Elkhart, Indiana 46515, 800-762-0968 or 219-264-3102. The fax number is 219-262-0966.

I would like to order:	**Quantity**	**Unit Cost**	**Total Cost**
❑ *God's Earth: Our Home* EJ9411 This resource contains many suggestions for doing environmental justice in each of the four categories of the Covenant.	_____	$ 7.00 (each)	_____
❑ The front page of this form printed on heavier paper—suitable for framing EJ1005	_____	.50 (each)	_____
❑ *A Resource List* of materials produced by the Eco-Justice Working Group and its participating denominations EJ9705	_____	free	
❑ *This Eco-Justice Covenant Congregation form* EJ9790	_____ _____	$ .25 (each) $10.00 for 100	_____ _____

Total Order (Please include a check with your order made out to the National Council of Churches) $ _____

Send to:

_____

Name *Phone*

_____

Address

_____

City *State* *Zip*

Earth Day April 22, 1999

Bulletin Inserts, pages 1 & 2
- Salvation through Overconsumption?
- Consumption and Compassion

(**Make copies** of inserts for your Sunday bulletins)

Letter from the Ministry of God's Creation, page 3

Living Simply: Imperative Now (sermon notes), page 4

Worship Suggestions, pages 5 & 6

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The Earth Day 1999 mailing has been sent to denominations participating in the Eco-Justice Working Group, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA for the Sunday after Earth Day or another appropriate time. **Contributors:** *Shantilal P. Bhagat* (p. 1-2,& 4);*Jaydee Hanson* (p.5-6); and *Paz Artaza-Regan* (p.7). *Make copies of this mailing for distribution. Call 800-762-0968 for additional copies @50 cents a copy; ask for EJ9935.*

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