

Good Morning

I would first like to say how grateful I am to be able to be a part of this congregation which so powerfully incorporates environmental prayers and themes into the liturgy and sermons. It warms my heart.

I would like to briefly make some comments about environmental stewardship and pastoral care.

While thinking about this topic over the past few weeks I came across two pieces of information that helped clarify the issue for me and I would like to share them with you.

The first is this cartoon from October 20 edition of the Vancouver Sun. What it shows is a small desert island and on it is stranded a logger (you can tell by his clothing and that he has an axe). Immediately to his right, lying on the ground is the island's single palm tree which he has just cut down.

What I find intriguing about this cartoon is that the logger's old world view has not changed but the new world he finds himself in has. He tends to see the world through a lens or viewpoint he has acquired through his life and his response is a conditioned one. He sees trees for cutting down so he does just that. In his former world there may have been millions of trees and cutting one down would not affect him or his surroundings. He would have seen his actions as having little consequences for the earth.

However, he now finds himself in a situation in which the previously abundant resources in his life are severely depleted and his old way of behaving will not sustain him for very long into the future. As we can see, but he can't, is that his actions do indeed have severe consequences for him as well as for the island. Gone is shelter from the sun and rain, gone is a continuing potential food supply of coconuts and possibly birds and gone is the island's ecosystem. What he hasn't learned yet is that there is a direct link between his health and the health of the planet.

This logger is like us in that we all have various lenses through which we view the world, whether as a logger, student, doctor, Christian, Jew, Liberal or Conservative. It often takes time and effort to see things differently from a conditioned view, but in the case of planetary health it is important to do so.

Another piece of interesting information I came across was while watching a documentary with my wife. In the documentary, a Catholic priest says that Jesus expressed anger twice in the gospels and both times were in a church. That got me thinking about the story of Jesus chasing out the moneychangers and Pharisees from the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus was dramatically showing to all who would listen that the original compassionate precept, of helping all Jews have access to the temple had been usurped. Holiness, purity, power and greed, especially by the Pharisees, had replaced compassion and love. The foundational values of the religion had been forgotten and replaced and Jesus 's actions were a type of paradigm shift.

I find a similar parallel when we now look at how we have treated the earth, creation (our temple) and each other over the past few hundred years. The sacredness of the earth has become lost. Western societies, in particular, appear to have seen creation as something separate from God. We have treated it as an object something that we could manipulate and control for our own gratifications. We refused to see limits and treated many things as merely disposable. We have now come to a place where 20% of us use 80% of the world's energy. The majority of the planet's inhabitants live in impoverishment and there are severe resource and species depletions. Like Jesus, we need to be angry and work to create a new paradigm shift or way of seeing the world.

We need to return to the sacredness of the earth and to do that we may have to change our concept of God. I believe that God is not separate from creation. Instead I see, everything that is, is in God and God is in all things. We in turn must see ourselves in the words of theologian Sally McFague "as a body of interrelationships with God, with others and with the planet". Our world depends upon this type of theological shift.

I'm happy to say that St. Hilda's is the first green parish in the diocese. I guess we can be considered green Christians, but what does that mean. Well it means we have to wear our green glasses much more frequently. Actually we should leave them on.

As Christians we must look at Jesus's two basic commandments: "Love God with your whole being and Love your neighbour as yourself" with new eyes.

Since God is so intimately manifest in the natural world we must learn to treat it with respect and love. We cannot display a love for God if we trash God's works.

Similarly, as Christians, if we desire to take care of ourselves we must also take care of the world for we are internally related and mutually dependent upon these other parts of the body of Christ.

According to information we've placed on our website Pastoral Care is *about being present to all those in need*.

With our new green Christian glasses, I believe the following are in need of our pastoral care:

- 1) future generations: The world has finite resources and if we are to provide a good life to those who come after us new must look deep into the effects of our environmental choices to see how our actions or inaction will impact upon them.
- 2) Our neighbours: Particularly those who live in squalor because of our levels of luxury and comfort. We have to make decisions that are for the common good and respect human dignity. We must share resources equitably among all humans and other creatures.
- 3) Other species: All life in this new concept of God has value and worth and it should be treated with care and respect. We must love our natural world and encourage its flourishing.
- 4) For the earth itself: Our health depends upon the health of the planet. The planet is suffering because of our wastefulness, exploitation of finite resources and our unsustainable growth. We need to attend to it by reducing our carbon imprint and practicing conservation of resources.

With our Christian green glasses we can now see through those who continue to live in the old paradigms which are uncaring, wasteful and destructive to the earth and her inhabitants.

Here are two examples from current news reports.

We have provincial legislation that says watershed protection cannot unduly restrict the flow of timber is wrong. The priorities and the imbedded ethics are muddled and wrong. Economic growth should not come before human health.

In a report about the upcoming Climate Change conference in Copenhagen one of the Federal political parties says Canadians want action that reduces greenhouse gases “while preserving our standard of living and way of life”. Such a view is self centered. Don’t they see that such preservation directly leads to global poverty and continued environmental destruction. Right now to sustain our growth and for all the earth’s inhabitants to have a lifestyle similar to ours would take the resources of 2 to 3 of our planets. We are way past our limits of growth.

We must look at a conservation ethic to begin to change our ways of living and our behavior.

Check out the Environmental Stewardship page on our web site for more information on how you can begin to make a difference and act pastorally towards the earth.

Thankyou.