



CREATION CARE



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The World and all that is in it belong to the Lord, the Earth and all who live on it are His! –Psalm 24:1

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Occasional Newsletter with relevant articles on biblical, economic, political & social impacts & their consequences on God's Creation & the Church.
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In Creation God brought ordered existence out of chaos and called us to be Stewards who will rightly manage and supervise his handiwork and its applications. To be effective, Creation Care must cover more than physical projects like recycling and fossil fuel reduction. We must also expose and understand the philosophical, political, economic, and human values and systems that create and support acts of environmental degradation. Stewardship of all creation begins in the mind and is fueled by the emotions where all physical action is born. The mind and the emotions that lead to action cannot be molded just by facts, ideas and projects; they must also be reimagined by a transformative faith. These newsletters are dedicated to this broader concept.

ONE IN DIVERSITY



John said: "Master, we saw a man driving out demons in your name, and we told him to stop, because he doesn't belong to our group." (Luke 9:49). In this time of tribalism, many religious people are in a line-drawing, fence-building mood to protect "our group," all in the name of righteousness and biblical correctness. There is certainly a relationship between what you believe to be true and how you act, but we must never forget that "religion" is an evolving group-think-human concoction, arrived at through the scriptural and social debates and opinions at given points in history. God's action and presence is essentially an eternal, spiritual matter of faith, trust, and love (1 Corinthians 13, Hebrews 11:1), not human doctrine, no matter how inspired or biblical we may believe it to be. In the Hebrew/Christian traditions there has never been common agreement on the nature of scriptural inspiration or the interpretation of many of its passages, and so the development of doctrine is one of the processes that we use to understand scriptural teaching, but it is never perfect or completely satisfying; yet through its use, we can have a sufficient understanding of God's plan to find our way.

The nature of all creation is diversity (Genesis 1:20-25), why then, is it so difficult for so many believers to accept diversity in the understanding and practice of sincere and earnest seekers in our religion? Jesus prayed that his followers would be one (John 17:21), but one in what? Are they to find unity in the details of religion, or in its subject? Christ is the Savior and Lord; the head of his body the Church (Colossians 1:18); it is in him that we are one. We are warned not to fight over words (2 Timothy 2:14); yet there are many who "will hold to the outward form of religion, but reject its real power." (2 Timothy 3:5). What is that power? –it is the power of love! (1 Corinthians 13:13, 14:1). A loving God (1 John 4:16), expressed his love by sending Jesus into the world (John 3:16-17), summarized the law and the prophets in the two greatest commandments (Mark 12:28-31), made love the ultimate sign of discipleship (John 13:35), overcomes fear by its application (1 John 4:18), and even provides a protective cover from sin (1 Peter 4:8).

It is no accident that the biblical account of the last judgment (Matthew 25:31-46) is not based on correct belief, but on correct relationships. The very fact that doctrinal disputes can separate, divide, and generate anger and false pride in many of its participants is proof enough that, above all, these debates must be handled with careful logic and loving patience – not with division!

I rejoice in and celebrate our denomination for its attempts at bridge-building among its diverse believers; there are plenty of real enemies in the world, without creating new ones out of those who are already engaged in trying to do good in the world, as they understand it. Love Jesus and the church? –then enjoy the mix!⊕

WINDOWS, WIND FARMS, & CATS ARE AGAINST THE BIRDS

In the "State of the World's Birds" study it was found that 48% of the world's bird species are in decline; 39% are stable at this time; only 6% are increasing; the status of the remaining 7% is unknown.



An estimated one billion birds are killed, across the world, because they collide with **windows**. Glass is transparent, so birds cannot see it; glass can also act like a mirror upon which birds may see reflections of tree-branches or food sources, causing collisions when they try to fly to them. Birds are often attracted to the light shining through windows at night, because it looks like a clear passageway through which they may fly.



Collisions with the blades on **windturbines** killed an estimated 366,000 birds in the United States in 2012.

The collisions are especially common where turbines are located in migratory routes.

House Cats, habitat loss, climate change, agricultural practices, chemical use, and the **exploitation** of certain species for feathers and pets, are the other major causes of bird deaths.

What is being done and what can be done to reduce bird deaths? The window problem is gigantic; there is a type of glass that birds can see, but it is extremely expensive and not well-suited for certain common uses. Visible strips spaced in 3" squares can be placed on

windows, but that is unsightly and visually unpleasant for humans. Netting, hung 3” away from the outside of the window can provide a visual warning and an impact-cushion for birds that miss seeing the netting.

The turbine industry is experimenting with various electronic devices that alert the birds to the blade movements, especially when migratory clusters of birds are detected, or power-down the number of blade rotations per minute to reduce the chance of collisions.



There are also experiments with bladeless turbines that can efficiently catch the wind that may eliminate the collision danger altogether.

Bird deaths, attributed to agricultural practices and the use of chemicals is well known, as are the attempts to minimize chemical use to reduce its toxic effects. The common practice of driving along the edges of fields to access crop progress and condition is being replaced by accurate, cost efficient, drones programed to analyze the plant health and growth in fields, allowing for the application of weed control and fertilizer products in each field where it is specifically needed.



The major bird-killer in the world is the common, unfettered house cat. According to cat owner/lover, *Elizabeth Gray*, cats are, by nature, efficient serial killers; they do not kill to satisfy hunger; they kill by instinct. The periodical, *Excited Cats*, reports that, in the United States alone, unfettered house cats kill as many as 4 billion birds each year. Cat experts say that there is only one solution to the problem – keep your cats indoors or caged when outdoors; never let them run free. Sound cruel? No, cats are excellent adaptors over time and will become accustomed to their restricted spaces. ☹



CHANGING SEEDS FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE

The warming climate is affecting the ability of seeds to germinate. It is natural for the DNA in every living thing to mutate over time, but that process takes place very slowly over many millennia. The warming climate is taking place quickly; faster than most scientists expected. Seed mutation can't keep up, with the result that food production in many places in the world is slowing. There are places in earth's equatorial zone, once a perpetual garden spot, where people have been forced to leave, because the heat is intolerable and plant growth is impossible, a trend that is expected to accelerate, forcing people to move further north and south.

According to the **World Bank**, acute food insecurity increased from 135 million people in 2019 to 345 million in 2022. Although the war in Ukraine (a major grain producer) and Covid-19 are major contributors, widespread crop failures and lower crop yields around the world, have been attributed to our warming climate producing unprecedented floods, droughts, and wild weather, all of which affect agriculture.

The *International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)*, headquartered in Vienna, Australia, has been in the *plant mutation* business for over 60 years. Plant mutation breeding is considered a more natural process compared to experimenting with processes like genetically modified organisms (GMO). *Astrobotany* is the attempt to use cosmic rays to speed-up natural mutations by sending seeds to the *International Space Station (ISS)* where they are free from earth-bound restrictions. China's second-most-grown wheat variety (*Luyuan 502*) was developed using space-based mutation breeding; which gave it high-yield capability and environmental adaptability – the two essentials needed to meet the effects of our rapidly warming climate. ☹

FACING THE DARKNESS AS STEWARDS OF GOD'S LOVE

“In the Lord's name, I say this and insist on it: do not live any longer like the heathen, whose thoughts are worthless, and whose minds are in the dark. They have no part in the life that God gives, because they are ignorant and stubborn. They have lost all feeling of shame; they give themselves over to vice, and do all sorts of indecent things without restraint.” (Ephesians 4:17-19)

There's nothing new about darkness; this passage was thought to have been written by Paul, (60-61 A.D.), during his first imprisonment in Rome, but it might as well have been written yesterday. Darkness is always present in human societies and their institutions, but followers of Christ should not be shaken, enraged, or upset by it because we can have the peace of Jesus within us, which keeps us on an even keel and allows us to radiate kindness, which is what the ancient saint, Thomas à Kempis, calls the “*essence of Christian living.*” Our response to paganism is not motivated by anger, but by love, which follows in the track that God set for us when he sent us Jesus; “*For God so loved...*” The two great commandments; love God with ALL, and your neighbor as yourself, ends with the astounding statement: “*The whole law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments*” (*Matthew 22:40*), and “*There is no other commandment more important than these two*” (*Mark 31b*). Our task is not to fight the darkness, but to bring the light of Christ to it. The old truism, “*It's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness*” makes the point clear. We don't lead with our anger; we lead with our love.

It has been said that there are two kinds of people in the world; good people and bad people; and the good people decide which is which! One of the marks of the early Christians was their humility; they did not condemn their neighbors, they uplifted them with compassionate understanding, which often slowly opened the doors to their conversion. “*Judge not, that you be not judged*” (*Matthew 7:1*) and liberality in doctrinal practices (*Romans 14:1-12*) are qualities that are needed for those who hope to overcome the darkness in others.

“May you always be joyful in your life in the Lord. I say it again: rejoice! Show a gentle attitude toward all. The Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe, in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:4-7) ☹

SELF-CENTERED RELIGION, DOMINATION, AND CONTROL, WILL LEAD TO DEATH

“And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over...every living thing...’” God said, “See I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. (Genesis 1:28-30).



Certain biblical passages, like the quote above, can influence the way believers see their relationship to the use and treatment of the natural resources around them.

“On the one hand, there is good reason to expect that religion may have a negative effect on environmental attitudes. Indeed, evidence shows that **environmental concern is weaker among people who report stronger religiosity**¹, religious commitment², and frequent church attendance³. One of the most influential theories of religious environmentalism argues that religion (and Western Christianity in particular) **fosters anti-environmental attitudes through themes of human dominance over nature**⁴.” -*Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 80, April 2022 – ¹Clements, McCright, & Xiao, 2014, ²Arbuckle & Konisky, 2015; Guth, Green, Kellstedt, & Smidt, 1995, ³Boyd, 1999; Eckberg & Blocker, 1989; Hand & Van Liere, 1984; Kanagy & Willits, 1993; Sherkat & Ellison, 2007, ⁴White, 1967

The view that human-beings were created in God’s “*image*” (Genesis 1:26) promoted the idea that “*man*” was on the top of the biological heap and was endowed with certain “*God-like*” abilities that allowed him to “*rule over and use*” what-ever met his need or his fancy. Our ability to reason and create served as evidence, for us, of our “*superiority*” to the rest of creation, but today we are just beginning to realize that the human domination of the rest of creation has made man the deadliest animal on earth! In the last issue of this newsletter (#44, Spring 2023, page 2) I explained how biologist Stormer and chemist Crutzen assigned a new designation for our historical era: “*The Anthropocene*,” because **the natural processes of nature are no longer determining climate outcomes, human activity is**. The sooner we accept this reality the better able we will be to amend the negative climate trends we face today.

Can organized religion have a positive effect on environmental attitudes? The research in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology* that I quoted from above, adds the following statement:

“**Spirituality and Religious Fundamentalism on religious environmental attitudes**¹: **Religious Fundamentalism** represents a dogmatic and authoritarian approach to belief, and as such is expected to predict negative attitudes toward the environment including denial of climate change and failure to moralize climate change issues. **Spirituality** reflects an individual’s personal relationship to the divine, and is expected to predict positive environmental attitudes. Both Spirituality and Fundamentalism are related to religiosity and to each other². But the two reflect starkly different approaches to religious faith and underlying social-moral attitudes³ that push environmental attitudes in opposite directions.” -- ¹Piedmont, 1999, ²Altemeyer, 1992, ³Saucier & Skrzypińska, 2006; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004, Labouff et al., 2010, ³Bradley, 2009; Saroglou, Pichon, Trompette, Verschuere, & Demelle, 2005.

These quotes remind me of this biblical passage: “*Not every person who calls me ‘Lord, Lord,’ will; enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do.*” (Matthew 7:21). There is a lot of “*Lord, Lord*” religion around that simply doesn’t live up to our creation care responsibility (Genesis 2:15). There are over a thousand references to the earth and caring for creation in the Bible. In 2008 “*The Green Bible*” was published in which all of those references are highlighted in green print with the hope that the study of those passages will lead earnest believers to shoulder their responsibility, and become stewards of the earth.⊕

SIX WAYS HUMANITY HAS CHANGED OUR ENVIRONMENT



Warmer Climate: The burning of fossil fuel is the major human contributor to our changing climate because it captures greenhouse gasses, which trap heat in the atmosphere, affecting everything in creation through climate-warming; **Spread Disease:** The spread of residential living into wildlife habitat brings humans, and their domesticated animals, into contact with wild species, causing the introduction of, and the exchange of, diseases that make the unprotected sick and, over time, can mutate into new forms of disease; **Pollution:** Chemicals, pesticides, industrial production, agricultural practices, waste disposal, etc., all impact living creatures, their food chain, and their habitats; **Habitat Change:** The spaces in which all living things exist are often very specialized and unique, possessing the particular environment needed to support their existence; when this is changed, fragmented, or destroyed, it can mean the death of the species, if they are unable to adapt; **Overexploitation:** An uncontrolled human appetite leads

to unsustainable practices that push species into near extinction or total extinction. Deforestation, overfishing, animal killing for food or habitat security, poaching, and inept attempts at the human management of resources, have all interfered with the balance of nature; **Invasive Species:** A growing problem is the introduction of invasive species through the movement of the human population with their pets, and the goods that they manufacture and harvest. When you introduce non-native species into new environments it can upset the ecological systems, the species that those environments created, and the systems that maintain them. Non-native species often prosper and over-populate their new environment because they have no predators that can control them and no natural barriers to contain them.⊕

NEWS FROM THE UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS

2.8 billion-a-Day is the unprecedented revenue average of the oil and gas industry for the last 50 years! They have and still use large sums of their profits “*to spread disinformation and delay action on the climate crisis*” in attempts to protect their business interests. **Food Monopoly:** “*The food and agriculture system in this country has been hijacked by massive, powerful corporations.*” Just four processors: Cargill, JBP, National Beef, and Tyson Foods control 85 percent of the beef market. This is just one example of corporate-take-over power and their ability to promote the policies that advance their interests and control prices and working conditions. **Transportation** accounts for 85 percent of the 20 million barrels of greenhouse gas emitting oil the nation burns every day; the leading cause of our warming climate. Fossil fuel use must be phased-out as new energy sources emerge.⊕





THE THREE-KEYS FOR FAIL-SAFE LIVING AND PLANNING

Know how you got here: There are some people that don't think history and records are important, perhaps because of their own personal misfortunes, whose memory only emit pain and distress, or an upbringing that was not rooted in any formidable tradition or philosophy; but whatever the reason, without its history the present lacks dimension and invites misinterpretation and miscalculation of what is happening now and how it is shaping people and the institutions of which they are a part.

Know where you are right now: It is difficult to understand the many streams of influence that shape your sense of reality and its implications; yet, if you misjudge the present, you will lead a sad existence and you will endanger your journey into the future. Misleading information and falsehood skew our mental process and the actions that we take, for which we pay a high price, because ultimately, evil will fail and only the truth will prevail, forcing us to climb out of the ashes of our own errors.

Know where you want to go: A compass is used to plot a direction and delineate a course of action; the way I am using it here implies a set of values upon which the treasures from the past, the good things from the present, and the dreams for the future form the conscious content of our strivings. The future arises out of the sum-total of these three "knows," plus nature's course and the Creator's hand. Thoughtful living and planning keep us mindful so that we "number our days" and we do not allow time to slip through our fingers.⊕

FOLLOWING THE SUN AND THE SON

Heliotropism is a plant's ability to track the sun's movement. The *SUNFLOWER* gets its name from that ability; its flowers keep looking toward the brightest light in the sky; the Sun. The theme: "Following the Light," has often been symbolized with the picture of a sunflower blossom.



Look at the words of Jesus, in John 8:12: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in the darkness." **Discipleship** is the ability to follow the brightest light in the spiritual universe – the "Son of God; Jesus, the Christ." The classic elements of faithful discipleship are: **Obey** the leading of the Spirit, the teachings of Jesus, and the wisdom of the church community; **Love**, expressed through acts of kindness, is the essence of following Jesus and responding to God's creation; **Fruitfulness**, is our ability to live joyously and to draw others toward accepting and following Jesus; **Disciplined** living is expressed by taking care of ourselves along with all of creation, by using only what we need, replacing what we can, and treating every good thing with reverence.⊕

CIGARETTE BUTTS ARE ONE OF THE MOST COMMON TYPES OF LITTER AROUND THE WORLD



The *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* published a study by Webler and Jakubowski that shows that 9.7 billion cigarette butts are littered in the U.S. each year, with 4 billion of them ending up in waterways. Cigarette butts are not biodegradable because they are made of cellulose acetate, which is a plastic. They are advertised as "filters," that protect health, which is scientific nonsense.

A study of 7,532 college-aged smokers, found that less than half of them knew that the butts were not biodegradable and did not know that they added to the plastic litter problem when they tossed them away.⊕

GUESS WHAT THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS INTRODUCED TO THE EUROPEAN WHITES

In the European *Middle Ages*, the typical diet was bread and cereal made from barley, oats, and rye, porridge, gruel, pasta, and some fruit; (wheat bread was only available for the wealthy). Water was an unknown source of disease, at the time, and wine was a more trustworthy alternative.



The first contacts between Europeans and indigenous Americans were most likely by the Scandinavians somewhere around 986, long before the Spaniard, Columbus, in 1492. The importation of agricultural goods into Europe began as a trickle, but after 1492 it became a stream. New cotton, sunflower seeds, tomatoes, butternut squash, Madagascar beans, avocados, sweet peppers, peanuts, guavas, chili peppers, cranberries, snap beans, yellow crookneck squash, corn, jerky, banana squash, lima beans, papaya, black walnuts, French beans, pole beans, white potatoes, sweet potatoes, navy beans, kidney beans, wild rice, zucchini, gourds, sieva beans, cashews, vanilla, chewing gum, string beans, tapioca, butter beans, cornbread, sassafras, petroleum jelly, quinine water, hammocks, rubber, cocoa, Turkeys, cactus plants, pumpkins, pineapples, curare, Llamas, Iguanas, Parrots, Flamingos, and popcorn enriched the economies, health, diets, and agriculture of European life. At the time, America was a culturally sophisticated, resource rich, land that deserved better than it was given.

The coming of the Europeans was an invasion that led to the forcible removal of most of the native populations, pushing them to small, unfit reservation spaces beyond the Mississippi river – all justified as "God's will, for the "christian white-man." It is estimated that the native population numbered up to 10 million people, divided among 600 tribal communities, when the white man first arrived.⊕

Reba McEntire, country singer and actress once said:
"To succeed in life, you need three things: a wishbone, a backbone, and a funny bone."