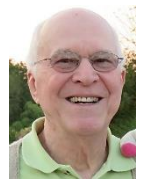




CREATION CARE



#44, Spring 2023

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

Northern Ohio District, Church of the Brethren, Stewardship Advocate, Clyde C. Fry, cceseven@embarqmail.com

Occasional Newsletter with relevant articles on biblical, economic, political & social impacts & their consequences on God's Creation & the Church.

On the Web: nohcob.org, click: Ministries, click: Creation Care

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.

ELECTRIC BICYCLES (E-BIKES)



The use of bicycles as a form of sustainable transportation for commuters, recreation, and physical fitness is a growing trend in many cities in the U.S.A. For most people, bicycles required sufficient leg-power, stamina, and a gentle-landscape to have any regular practical application, but with the introduction of light-weight, rechargeable, motor-assisted "E-Bikes," the limitations of regular pedal-power are overcome; you simply pedal along and when the going exceeds your physical comfort-zone, the electric motor either kicks-in automatically or is activated with the touch of a lever or button, and away you go without huffing and puffing. Many cities provide bike-lanes which increase safety and ensure a speedy passage; battery-power for greater distance is increasing and re-charge time is decreasing; folding bikes that fit in a car-trunk or store in a small space are popular options.

Bicycles are a normal routine for people in many countries across the world and in our country states like California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Washington have incentive programs for E-Bike buyers. John MacArthur, sustainable transportation program manager at Portland State University's *Transportation Research and Education Center*, believes that incentive programs will not only increase the number of E-Bike riders but will also reduce the cost of the bikes by hundreds of dollars. Today, most E-Bikes cost over one thousand dollars.

The *Consumer Products Safety Commission*, the federal agency charged with overseeing over 15,000 product categories (including E-Bikes) has issued a warning that it has no legal control over products coming from overseas that cost less than \$800, including cheap E-Bikes, their components and batteries; some cheap high-energy-density batteries have caught fire. If you go bargain-hunting, be careful, your "bargain" may not be safe. Ⓢ

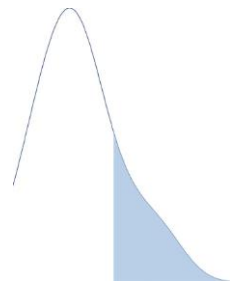
THIS IS A DECADE OF DECISIVE DECISION-MAKING FOR THE CHURCH

In the year 2000 a Gallup study found that 70% of the American people claimed membership in a church, synagogue, mosque, or temple; today it has fallen to 47%. Associated studies found that, today, 22% claim to attend religious services every week, 9% almost every week, 11% once a month, 25% seldom, and 31% never.

It is no secret that a majority of the institutional church, as we have known it, is made up of older adults and is experiencing declining attendance. The average church-building provides seating for about 200 people, but only has about 65 people in attendance.

Critical Mass is a size, number or amount large enough to provide a particular result. The idea of *Critical Mass* is important when you look at attendance decline because it reminds us that there must be a large enough number of people who are physically and financially viable to continue the existing ministries of the congregation and more importantly, to envision and employ new ways of reaching-out to and relating with the younger generations in the community where the church is located. As people grow older the inevitable changes brought about by their physical health, declining agility, and lower energy levels will negatively affect their ability to labor in the "harvest-fields" (Matthew 9:37). Time, for an aging membership congregation, is precious because it eventually runs-out for both the individual and the institution.

Routine may give a group security and stability, but when the group experiences a steady decline, it is a sign that something is no longer working, or is missing, and that is when routine will eventually bury them. You can't do the same things over and over and expect different results – and yet, that is precisely what many declining congregations do! At the center of most congregations today is worship/preaching, friendship/fellowship, and doing good works; all of which belong in the congregational mix, **but the message of salvation lies at the heart of the gospel and evangelism at the heart of the work of church**; when a congregation fails to bring new people to Christ and



into their fellowship, decline is inevitable and institutional death is certain. Get out of the rut; live and move among the people around your church; that's where the harvest is; that's where our duty lies! The decline of the church is not our fault, but it is our problem! ☹

BRED FOR THE BULLET; DOOMED BY IRRESPONSIBILITY



Farming animals in captivity for hunting is nothing new. Farms that raise pheasants and turkeys for hunting are found in many places in our nation, but in Texas, for example, you can shoot a zebra, cape buffalo, or a kangaroo, all of which were bred in captivity for hunting. Of course, you can also go to places like Africa to hunt larger game on private preserves in what is known as “canned hunting” and kill a lion, but you will have to pay as much as \$25,000 to do it (most of these hunters are from the U.S.A.; one of my former physicians displayed pictures of their African hunt on their office walls.) “Trophy Hunters” target the more exotic animals for taxidermists to mount heads/whole animals, and prepare pelts for their homes and offices.

As you can imagine, exotic animal farming for hunting, has a mix of supporters and detractors. We slaughter beef for our eating pleasure and nutritional value so what's wrong with killing exotic beasts for adventure and trophies? Canned hunting brings in tourist dollars, sells guns, ammunition, and hunting paraphernalia; all of which brings economic gain to those who are involved along with their immediate communities. In regions like Southeast Asia there is also a market for the bones of big cats to be used in traditional medicines, often leading to the illegal slaughter of animals in protected wildlife areas.

Does canned hunting raise moral and ecological issues? The Genesis creation story is about the establishment of life and takes a utilitarian view of living things, that is, that everything in nature is important because it contributes to the laws of and the balance of nature; therefore, it must be treated with respect. It has been said that the greatest scientific discovery of the 20th Century is the realization that all living things have a common source and are connected and regulated through complex ecological systems; the disturbance of one thing in the system creates a ripple-effect that touches other things and systems as well; multiply and continue these disturbances and the systems are incrementally thrown off-balance and are forced to absorb, adjust, adapt, or die.

We humans have often been careless and sloppy in our relationships to other living things because we want them to bear our burdens, give us pleasure, or entertain us; as a result, we have often domesticated, enslaved, and killed various species without regard for their pain or posterity. “Sports hunters” literally shot the passenger pigeon into extinction and killed-off huge buffalo herds which, in turn, degraded the fertility of the plains soil that we needed for planting. We have irresponsibly introduced hundreds of invasive species whose reproduction is out of control because they have no predators to keep them in check, like the common cat, when allowed to roam freely, instinctively kills thousands of birds and small mammals, driving many to near extinction, or abandoning pet goldfish into ponds where they quickly dominate and drive native species into oblivion. Other pets, like the Burmese pythons, in Florida, have been released, by their owners, into the wild where they flourish and feed on the defenseless natural species around them. Even in the world of plants, invasive vines like Kudzu (*pictured*), introduced into our Southern states to prevent soil erosion along new roadways, grow so rapidly that it smothers anything it covers including trees and vegetation; at this time there is no effective way to stunt or control its growth. Humanity must stop looking at the life-forms around us as though they are unconnected to the welfare of the whole and realize that that each of them plays a role in the total scheme of things.



“IT’S NOT NICE TO FOOL MOTHER NATURE!”



In the 1970's a stick margarine commercial advised that “*It's not nice to fool mother nature,*” I would amend it to say: “*It's not nice to fool with mother nature.*” Many geologists believe, that beginning with the *Industrial Revolution* in the 1800's, a new geological time period began moving us away from the domination of natural forces in the operation of the climate to the domination of human activities in the operation of the climate. In 2000 biologist, Eugene Storer, and chemist, Paul Crutzen, coined a name for this new geological time period: **Anthropocene**; it is derived from the Greek words anthropo, for “man,” and cene for “new.”

The population explosion, modern transportation, industrial mechanization and the mass electrification of industries, homes, and street/yard lighting across the globe resulted in an unprecedented acceleration of human activities sending tons of carbon and methane into the Earth's atmosphere which is the major cause of our warming climate. Our nation's testing and use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan in 1945 resulted in the global spread of radioactive particles in the soil, making the human impact on the soil universal. Human activity has also resulted in the moving and displacement of more soil than any natural geological event in history. Our extractive economy has dug more holes in the earth than the expanse of the Grand Canyon.

The bottom-line is that the natural processes of nature are no longer determining climate outcomes, human activity is, making climate-predictability almost impossible and climatic-turbulence incalculable, leading to an increase of damaging storms, straight-line wind events, and hopscotch extremes in weather patterns, the new normal.

To counter the damage being caused by human activity, we must cut our global greenhouse-gas emissions in half by 2030. This is a realistic goal when you consider the progress being made in sustainable energy development today. The second thing that we must do is to safeguard all of our remaining healthy ecosystems and regenerate those we have depleted; air, water, trees, etc. ☹

RAILROAD PERSPECTIVE



The news has been filled with train derailments (*we average 3 per day in the U.S.*) lately but these dangerous and sometimes disastrous events should be put into perspective; (*notice in the picture of a derailment, from Mansfield News Journal, how the wooden ties are broken and strewn about*). In the 1970s there were more than 25,000 derailments per-year compared with 1,044 in 2022. While passenger service decreased over this time-period, freight service more than doubled. In our nation, railroads mainly carry freight; in most of Europe they mainly carry people. The wear-and-tear on heavy freight-carrying road-beds and equipment is severe. In the USA railroads are privately held, financed, and run, in most of Europe they are nationalized and funded with public money. The

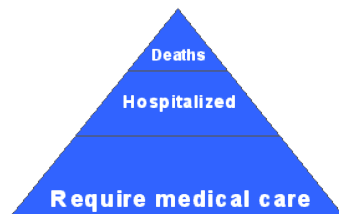
geographical size of our nation means that we have more miles of roadbed to tend than in most of the other countries in the world.

Railbed construction is an important factor in derailments. In over 90% of our roadbeds the rails are held in place with hardwood ties fastened with spikes or screws. Hardwood ties are cheaper and durable, but they are not as safe as steel, and prestressed concrete ties. The joining of rail sections is also important; lengths of rails are bonded together with fishplates and bolts, or are thermite-welded together; joint failure will lead to derailments.

Across all of our industries, labor is a major cost factor and labor reduction is one of the cost-cutting methods favored by management everywhere. When I was a boy a freight train-crew consisted of two men in the coal-fired locomotive and at least two in the caboose who would take care of the switching, shunting, be on the look-out for load shifting, and overheating bearings and axles, but with the advent of the diesel locomotive the engine-crew was reduced to one and with the invention of the Timken roller-bearing, and electronic monitoring, the caboose and its men were replaced with a red flashing taillight. Track-repair crews were similarly reduced from two to four trolley-men riding on a hand-powered Gandy Dancer, who made visual inspections and tended to maintenance work on the roadbeds, to electronic track-inspection vehicles.



The emphasis of most American industries in the past few decades is on maximizing profits with the result that their aging infrastructure is badly in need of upgrading. Railroad workers have been the latest group to raise concerns about the failure of their companies to provide the labor and investment needed to improve safety and performance. What must be understood here is that a change in these circumstances requires a change in values also. Reasonable profit from investment is justified, but the almighty dollar must be wisely spent to build quality and sustainability, provide a just living wage and benefits, and be ecologically sound.



In the USA we emphasize the movement of people and goods in private cars and trucks on taxpayer built and maintained roadways. According to the *National Highway Transportation Safety Association* there are over 40,000 vehicle crashes per year in the USA; in just the first three months of 2021 alone, 8,730 **people died** in vehicle crashes! For each highway death, 18 persons are hospitalized and 400

are medically treated because of their injuries. How much media and political coverage do you get about that? ☹

A NEW MOSQUITO SPECIES HAS BEEN FOUND IN FLORIDA

Our warming climate is opening new geographical space for tropical critters and plants to move north. The latest discovery is *Culex lactator*, from Central and South America. The newcomer to Florida was discovered early this year. Not much is known about this new critter, but public health officials are concerned because mosquitoes are the most dangerous carrier of disease to humans on the earth. The band of warmth around the equator is getting wider every year, changing the cool north and opening it to the spread of all kinds of species that we northerners and the natural environment around us are not prepared for. These changes are also giving the idea of *invasive species* a new meaning because the predators and the competitor's that control and order tropical ecology may not advance into the territory equally, thus creating an imbalance of nature with little immunity to protect the natives, including humans. ☹



HOME ENERGY REBATE PROGRAMS

The *Inflation Reduction Act* (IRA), signed by President Biden on August 16, 2022, includes \$391 billion to support clean energy and address climate change, including \$8.8 billion in rebates for home energy efficiency, home electrification, and energy efficient appliances. For more information, see: [cleanenergy.gov](https://www.cleanenergy.gov).

The investment banking firm, *Credit Suisse*, predicted that the IRA will produce \$1.7 trillion in public and private investments over the next decade. *Energy Futures Initiative* (EFI), estimates that the IRA will create 1.5 million new sustainable energy jobs by 2030.

The IRA is said to be the most expansive program in nationwide public investment in social, infrastructural, and environmental programs since the 1930s *Great Depression*. ☹

GLASS TURNED BACK INTO SAND

According to the EPA, we throw-away 8 million tons of glass each year, in the U.S., and less than a third of it is recycled. 90% of the glass objects that we use are called *soda-lime-silica* glass because they are made of sand, which contains at least 95% silicon dioxide, soda, which lowers the temperature at which the sand will melt, and lime, to prevent the melted glass from being water soluble.



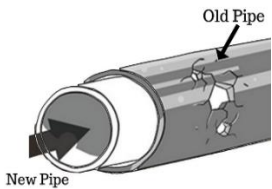
In an innovative move in glass recycling, 3.2 million pounds of glass has been pulverized, since 2020, producing a sand-like product that is nontoxic, can support the growth of native grasses, and resists erosion. The product has been used for wetland restoration at the *Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge* on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain and there are plans to use it in re-coasting the vulnerable Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans. ☹

NEW WEED PULLER

A patent for a *crop canopy greening machine* which removes weeds that grow close to the ground around low canopy crops like soybeans has just been issued to Michelle D. Gregg, an inventor from Bellville, Ohio. ☹

PIPE LININGS

Cured-in-place pipe linings are used to repair old and damaged sewer and stormwater pipes without creating the high-cost of digging-up streets, hauling away debris, and eliminating the inconvenience of re-routing traffic. This is accomplished by inserting a soft, resin-soaked liner into a damaged pipe, inflating it with pressurized air, and using steam, hot water, or UV light to harden it in place. This is an easy-cost-saving-fix when you consider all that is involved in laying new lines.



That's the good news, but there is also bad news. During the heating process that is used to harden the soft resin-soaked liner, toxic fumes are created that smell like epoxy or model airplane glue. These fumes make their way into the outside air through manhole covers, and street-drain gratings and the air inside of properties through foundation cracks and even through P-traps that are meant to block sewer gasses from entering through sinks, toilets, and drains, but can fail when confronted with the chemical fumes created by the pipe-lining process.

Some of the people exposed to these fumes complain of one or more symptoms including irritated eyes and throats, nosebleeds, dizziness, headaches, nausea, loss of balance, and even unconsciousness. The federal CDC and the NSF have studied the issue along with the industries' NASSC, in attempts to establish what the safe levels of exposure are, what to do when you are negatively affected by exposure, and how to develop technologies to circumvent the fumes. ☹

ARE WE A POST-TRUTH SOCIETY?

Much has been said and written on the subject of the deep divisions in our society over how to tell what is true from what is false and how we can know whom we can trust to tell the truth. In many quarters, the truth is not evidenced-based, but opinion-based, creating an uncertainty so vast that we have been labeled the "*post-truth society*."

The advent of television radically changed the input to our brains/minds/memories by combining sight and sound presentations. In 1962, Newton Minow, newly appointed head of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) addressed a meeting of TV-industry leaders with a blunt speech in which he said that television was filling the air and its viewer's brains with "*a procession of game shows, formula comedies about totally unbelievable families, flood and thunder, mayhem, violence, sadism, murder, Western bad men, Western good men, private eyes, gangsters, [and] violence [in] cartoons*" so that we were turning television into "*a vast wasteland*." Sex and violence became the main anchors for story-lines and plots. Television put logical thinking asleep and fed our emotions, moving us away from reality to fantasy, from facts to fiction, and taught us to use entertainment as a pain soother and trouble quencher. Because of television, the techniques of romance and courtship comes to us more from the *Hallmark* movies than from the historic rituals of our ancestors. Historically, the scant use, of guns in authentic American history were turned into "*shoot-them-up*" fantasies, with the result that today guns are common among our possessions, considered necessary for our protection, and are grossly used.



The onslaught of the electronic media moved our information outlets out of our front-rooms and into our hands and pockets, clearing the way for all sorts of people and organizations to flood us with information and ideologies that promotes their causes and special interests; it opened a "*Pandora's Box*" of propaganda designed to gain our acceptance and support and to suppress any opposition. So much of its contents, however, is the "*skin of the truth that is stuffed with a lie*" in an attempt to make it palatable and truth-like.

The final blow to rationality and common cause is found in the fact that the whole world is in the midst of a period of rapid-all-encompassing social, economic, political, and religious change. In such times people seek comfort in like-mindedness, often dividing into competing tribes (*illogical political partisanship, partisan denominational splits, etc.*), and in charismatic saviors. Jenna Barnett of Sojourners, said: "*I don't want to be afraid of charismatic leadership, but I do want to drench it in accountability.*"

Television frames everything as entertainment; the electronic media reduces everything into a matter of opinion; rapid change throws everyone off-balance, creating fear, anger, mistrust, and violence; but with the divine spark of our creation in God's image, and the inner moral gyroscope that comes with it, humanity will persist and eventually renew itself and its institutions. Followers of Jesus have an evangelistic opportunity here, because the greatest contribution that comes from earnest truth seeking/finding, is freedom; Jesus said: "*If you obey my teaching, you are really my disciples; you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.*" -John 8:31b-32. ☹