

# CREATION CARE

#38, Fall 2021



**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](mailto: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](http://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 handywork 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.*

## INSIGHTS: BITS AND PIECES

**MOTHERS**, around the world, on average, make \$15,300 less a year than fathers. More than two-thirds of mothers are in the low-paying service workforce and are their family's sole or primary breadwinner. (National Geographic, 10-2021, page 17)

**RAINY SUNDAY**; 10 out of 100 churchgoers don't attend on a rainy Sunday. (Duke University Study)

**HEALTH CRISIS!** Americans are rapidly giving up on church. Many health professionals claim that there is a direct connection between attendance at religious services and good mental and physical health. (Tyler J. Vanderweeler and Brendan Case, "The Public Health Crisis No One is Talking About," 11-2021, CT, page 36)



**EGOCENTRIC PANDEMIC**; "Modern society is fundamentally inhuman; this inhumanity stems from the lie that we belong to ourselves." (Alan Noble, "You Are Not Your Own: Belonging to God in an Inhuman World," InterVarsity Press, 10-2021, ISBN 978-0-8308-4782-2)

**"POLITICS STARTS WARS**, Profit and Power perpetuate them. Only better ethics can prevent them." (Jim Wallis, Religious News Service, Sojourner's founder)

**'I SLEPT AND DREAMT** that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and – behold! – service was joy," (Rabindranath Tagore)

**ONE IN FIVE AMERICANS DRINK TOO MUCH.** The online survey by Harris Poll between March 30 and April 7 found that almost 17% of U.S. adults ages 21 and older reported heavy drinking days (four or more drinks containing alcohol for women and five or more for men).



**1021 A.D., FOUR CENTURIES BEFORE COLUMBUS**, a Viking settlement in Newfoundland, Canada, had been established. Scientists have radiocarbon-dated the settlement proving that the first "modern" Europeans in the Americas were Vikings. Sorry, Columbus, you were lost and late.

**FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 60 YEARS** wild lake trout have been spotted in Lake Erie. (Dasil Seggos, DEC Commissioner; msm.com)

**WE ARE DROWNING IN A SEA OF SALT!** According to the FDA, 70% of the sodium Americans eat comes from what has been added by the food industry to products purchased in stores and restaurants; this added salt goes mostly unnoticed by consumers. The recommended dietary limit is 2300 milligrams of sodium, but industry additives make it difficult for individuals to recognize and control their salt intake.



**LEACHING PLASTIC.** A new study found that small amounts of industrial chemicals called phthalates, which are used to make plastics soft, have been found in food from popular fast-food outlets. Plastic containers, plastic cutlery and plastic-wrapped food

packaging used in food handling are the source. "Phthalates are linked to health problems, including disruption to the endocrine system, and fertility and reproductive problems, as well as increased risk for learning and attention and behavioral disorders in children." (The Washington Post, Laura Reiley, 10-27-2021)

**23 NEW SPECIES HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE EXTINCT LIST.** In 1973 the Congress passed the Endangered Species Act (ESA) which made it illegal to "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect" imperiled species. Some provision was also made for habitat protection. The ESA became a model for nations around the world and has been very helpful in species protection; but the decline of species continues at an alarming pace. Human encroachment of habitat, the use of chemicals, and global warming are major factors for the decline.

**THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION (ILO)** found that addressing climate change will create 24 million jobs globally while only eliminating 6 million. Fossil fuel reduction won't hurt that much.

**LEAD WATER PIPES** leach lead into our water causing serious physical and mental damage, especially in children. Several cities in Michigan have become a symbol of how not to deal with the problem, but Newark, New Jersey has become a model of how to deal with the lead pipe problem. Since 2019 utility workers have replaced over 23,000 lead service lines in a well-designed and financed program. Congress banned the use of lead water pipes in 1986, but it is estimated that between 6 and 10 million lead lines remain active.

**JULY 2021 WAS THE HOTTEST MONTH EVER** recorded on earth; a distinction that will not last long because of the continued domination of the use of fossil fuels. (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)

**DROUGHT** In July, houseboats on Lake Oroville, north of Sacramento, floated nearly 300 feet below the normal waterline.



**CAPITALISM OR SOCIALISM?** "As a Christian, I am not committed to Capitalism or Socialism, but to economic fairness and justice, with particular concern for those Jesus calls us to care for: people experiencing food insecurity and poverty." -Jim Wallis, Sojourners

**RADIOACTIVE BRINE.** The Senate Agriculture Committee, June 2021, heard testimony that BRINE from oil and gas operations being sold as a commodity to be used on roadways to help keep them clear of snow and ice in winter contains radioactive (Radium 226-228) materials 400 times the allowable limit. The brine is cheaper, more effective, and more easily spread on roadways than salt. It's leaching into the soil and health risks continue to be evaluated.

**CREWLESS, ZERO EMISSIONS CARGO SHIPS.** A Norwegian company is about to launch its first crewless, zero emissions cargo ship. It can carry 103 containers and cruise at 13 knots. It will run on the long lasting 7MWh battery. 🌱

## CHURCH STEWARDSHIP

### Cultural Seepage

*“Today, we are seeing growing impatience with the institutional church’s accommodation to temporal power. Younger generations, no longer willing to give the church the benefit of the doubt, are driving the mass exodus out of the Western church, which they see as the primary source of pain and abuse in the world.”* (*Time for a New Reformation*, Jin S. Kim, Pastor/Founder of the Church of All Nations, Minneapolis, Autumn, 2017, PLOUGH, Page 33)

It is human nature to organize and standardize the procedures by which we get things done. Ideals materialize in the way we organize. As the British historian, David Bebbington said: *“the Gospel needs to be expressed in effort.”* It is human nature to organize and codify those efforts.

Organizations like the church will influence the secular culture through its practices, but, as time goes on, the **culture** will also influence the church! Such influence is not always negative, but awareness of the size and shape of that influence is important because it must be measured by a long trail of spiritual and biblical principles and traditions.

One example of cultural “seep” is the use of **democratic decision-making processes** in church governance. The importance of individuals and their rights of participation in liberal democracy strike a harmonious note with Christian belief where *“man is just a little lower than the angels”* and where constitutions, bylaws, and voting techniques rule the way we do business; but God’s will, is not a matter of a two-thirds vote! Decisions by prayerful, studied, consensus may take longer, but it seems to me, represent a method of estimating the will of God that has deeper spiritual roots than majority voting.

A second example is **privacy rights**. Our society is crazy with privacy because individualism has become king over the common good. A church is a brotherhood/sisterhood; a community of believers and doers. Privacy means that we close little compartments of ourselves off from each other. What effect does that have on the nature of Christian security and community and how does the enforcement of privacy, by limiting the flow of personal information to little groups of “confidential *decision makers*,” protect the church against the abuse of their power and the appointment of unworthy personnel? Brethren have always been opposed to “secret societies;” what is the relationship between privacy and secrecy?

Biblically, confession, for example, is not a private matter but a part of public accountability (Nehemiah 9:1, Matthew 3:6, James 5:16, etc.). Will “privacy” advance to the place where what I believe and do is *“none of your business,”* so that even a public confession of faith and commitment will become *passe?* The culture requires that we do “*background checks*” on Sunday School teachers, camp leaders, and pastors, but we will not allow personal histories to be considered by the broader church when we call them into special service.

I was ordained an Elder at a time when the Church was rediscovering the value and trust building nature found in **transparency**. One reason that the Eldership was discontinued was because it often exerted power without transparency. Transparency is one of the few ways we have to control power.

To be *“in the world but not of it”* requires a diligence that is so easily desensitized or neglected that the church can become so much *“of the world”* that it is no longer a transforming force for Godliness *“in the world.”* The scriptures warn us: *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed....”* (Romans 12:12a). Beware of the cultural seep that demands secular conformity.

### Corrupt Power

*“His [Jesus] character and doctrines have received still greater injury from those who pretend to be his special disciples, and who have disfigured and sophisticated his actions and precepts, from views of personal interest, so as to induce the unthinking part of mankind to throw off the whole system in disgust, and pass sentence as an imposter on the most innocent, the most benevolent, and the most eloquent and sublime character that ever has been exhibited to man.”* (Thomas Jefferson, 3<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States)

We live in the age of “me” & “my” where “individual freedom” has forgotten responsibility & has been elevated above the common good & humility is replaced by egotism. It has been said that the great enemy of faith is not doubt, but certainty. So many religious people go to the scriptures to prove something, so that they can be right, rather to learn something, so that they can be holy. Egotism uses proof-texting to feed its desire for certainty; humility seeks clarity. *“And what is faith? Faith gives substance to our hopes, and makes us certain of realities we do not see.”* (New English Bible, Hebrews 11:1)

It is the struggle between egotism & humility that caused Jefferson to point out that church leaders & clergy, when they feel that they are “special disciples,” can so easily “disfigure” & “sophisticate” the teachings of Jesus that the common people become discouraged, confused, & wander off.

I have known many who are eager to “preach” & spend enormous time in sermon preparation, but few who really want to “pastor” & spend enormous time with their people. There is a grave difference between “filling a pulpit” & “filling a pastorate.” The shepherd LIVES with his sheep, because that is the way the word becomes flesh!

### Partisan Politics

*“...81% of white evangelical Christians supported Donald Trump in 2016---a proportion that actually grew during the four years of his presidency---in seeming defiance of their religiously grounded moral principles. While in 2011 more than 60% of white evangelicals expressed the belief that immoral conduct disqualified someone for the presidency, by October 2016 that figure slipped to 20%, and continued to decline, to 16%, by 2018. Such a conveniently opportunistic ‘transvaluation of values: made white evangelicals’ profession of piety seem ludicrous...”* (*American Babylon: Christianity and Democracy before and after Trump*, Phillip S. Groski, Routledge, 3-2020, ISBN: 9780429318146)

Human nature and the moral ideals of the Christian faith often conflict with each other. Three realms in which this conflict is commonly exposed is in sexual behavior, business practices, and political misconduct.

In **sexual behavior**, marital unfaithfulness, multiple marriages, and womanizing by males dehumanizes everybody, cripples family life, and corrupts public morality. In **business** the road to profits is often littered with ethical compromises by such common practices as charging for goods and services more than they are worth. In **politics** participants often sacrifice truth-telling and ethical dealing in their grasp for influence, power, longevity, and the advancement of their parochial ideas.



A common sin among religious people is to manipulate the interpretation of scripture to cover and excuse human frailty and allow unrepentant and even notorious sinners to use the social, economic, and political systems for their selfish ends in the name of some preposterous ideology.



For example, the “King David Saga” in Second Samuel reports the sordid story of King David’s lusting after his beautiful married neighbor, Bathsheba, and the ghastly plot to have her husband, Uriah, sent to the front battle lines where he could be easily killed, thus “freeing”

David to take Bathsheba as his wife. The low estate of women and sexuality in that heathen age meant that David could have multiple wives (as I recall, the scriptures list 8 of David’s wives) along with numerous concubines.

The “King David Saga,” it is said, is a good example of how God has always used flawed people to do his will; therefore, when a flawed person is “raised up by God” in our midst, we should overlook the flaws and support his/her efforts because they are God’s “work in progress”. I suggest that those who use that kind of rationalization remember that King David acknowledged his sins and REPENTED and changed his ways while he was king. When is the last time you saw a business or political sinner do that? ☹

### SOME PEOPLE JUST HAVE OPINIONS; NOT REASONS

Their information sources are not broad enough and their internal thought processes are not deep enough to see the whole picture. Their first reaction to differences is not curiosity and inquiry, but indignation, withdrawal, and separation. You can treat ignorance with knowledge, but there isn’t much that you can do about stupidity, because stupid people don’t seek enlightenment, but reaffirmation of their prejudices. (Get Out of the Grave, 5-2005, essay by C.C.Fry) ☹

**THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE** “aimed to win a war by winning men’s minds by reason and rhetoric, by persuasion, by conversation of a certain sort. Muskets and ships cannot do this.” (The Words that Made Us: America’s Constitutional Conversation, 1760-1840, Akhil Reed Amar)

Reason always seeks the truth and rhetoric reveals the process by which truth is found and announces it.

It is said that we have moved into an era of “post-truth” where the truth no longer matters. Personal opinion; is king because I am king. This is a natural outcome of the narcissistic culture created by consumer capitalism with its emphasis on “rights” without “responsibility.” Even our liberal democracy is under threat today. We must seek the truth. Jesus said that he is the truth (John 14:6) and the truth will make you free (John 8:32). We must live “the Jesus way.”



### COP26, U.N. CLIMATE SUMMIT

Meeting in Glasgow, Scotland, 10-31/11-13, 2021, the meeting drew a lot of attention as leaders from almost 200 countries around the world met to deal with climate change and its main attribute, global

warming. Its effectiveness is much debated since political and economic solutions are very difficult to arrive at. Progress is slow because climate change is an evolving process that is felt more slowly, by the public, than the impact that many of the economic and political solutions, like fossil fuel reduction, could have. India, for example, managed to greatly weaken the accord that called for drastic cuts in

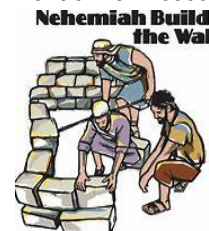
coal use since it is a major coal user. Talk, of course, is cheap, but international talk is essential to taking positive action. One very positive result is that the world business community responded with interest and plans for action.

### CLIMATE CHANGE INTELLIGENCE

The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), created by the U.N. is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It began in 1988 with 195 member countries. Every member country can nominate scientists to participate in the report-writing information process. Participating scientists are not compensated for their time and effort – they are volunteers. In 2021, 234 scientists, from around the world volunteered. They read over 14,000 scientific papers in a peer review process. Draft reports were then shared and reviewed by governments and other scientists. Agreement and wording were arrived at by consensus. The climate data was fed into computer models that simulated its earth effects and projected ongoing development. When the models produce similar results, it establishes confidence that the findings are reliable.

IPCC provides periodic objective “State of the Climate” information through scientific reports that are used by governments, corporations, etc., around the world. There is no effort to influence or recommend any specific policy or strategy; only to provide data, facts, opinions, and climate trending information by objective, renowned, scientists from around the world. ☹

“WE ARE LIVING IN A NEHEMIAH MOMENT,” said an announcement of new resources from Creation Justice Ministries (CJM). Citing



ing Nehemiah’s response to his critics on returning to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and temple, “Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble-burned as they are?” (4:2), the announcement said: “Now is the time for us to work shoulder to shoulder. Now is the time for us to work with all our heart. It is clear that the climate crisis has arrived. We are standing in the rubble of climate breakdown. All around us, our communities are being affected by climate disasters on a physical, spiritual, and social level. Like Nehemiah, it is time for our faith communities to respond not only with words, but with actions.”

The new resources are designed to help congregations find “faithful resilience” during the climate crisis. The **Faithful Resilience Guide** for congregations is a six-part guide providing theological reflections, education materials, and practical steps for building climate resilience in your community. Also, **Faithful Resilience Workshops** are available to view online. Go to [www.creationjustice.org/resilience.html](http://www.creationjustice.org/resilience.html). ☹

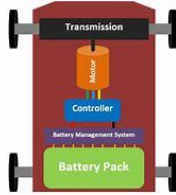
### MINERALS FOR BATTERIES; A SLOWLY BUILDING CRISIS

Batteries are used for flashlights, smart phones, laptop computers, gasoline and electric powered vehicles, stand-by generators, and an endless list of other electronic devices. Batteries are also needed for energy storage from windmills, solar panels, and other energy sources. In the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, batteries are a vital factor.

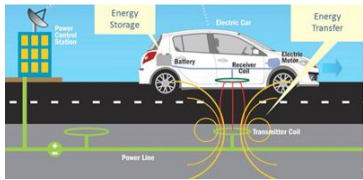


There are a variety of battery types, but all of them rely of *Rare Earth Elements (REEs)* such as cobalt, graphite, lithium, and manganese. Of particular interest to the U.S.A. is that between 50 and 100 percent of these REEs come from outside of our country leaving us dependent on foreign markets.

The surge of interest in and the production of Electric Vehicles (EVs) is slowly bringing into focus the scarcity of REEs needed to produce these EVs and the means of extending the distances that they can travel on a single charge. It is also putting pressure on the need for the development of new kinds of batteries and new ways of recharging them.



Inductive Vehicle Charging (IVC) is an experimental program in which a dedicated highway lane is wired to provide an electromagnetic field to transfer energy from the pavement to the vehicle traveling over it.



Roadway recharging would increase the distances an EV could travel before a major recharge would be required. But the idea raises some thorny



problems. How much would the wired lanes cost and how would drivers be charged for the service they receive in those lanes? We must wait to see how the experiments in Michigan and in other states and nations will pan out and how the technology is refined and costs are analyzed. ☹

### CHRONIC FLOODING



New Haven, Connecticut; Boston; Philadelphia; Washington, D.C.; Baltimore; Wilmington, Delaware; Norfolk, Virginia; Charleston, South Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; Jacksonville, Florida; and Miami are all experiencing regular high-tide flooding. Tidal flooding is defined as seawater encroaching into at least 10% of a city.

Warming sea-water means rising seas (warm water expands) and melting ice; rising seas means more flooding; the spread of salt-water means soil pollution; salt-water intrusion means fresh water table contamination inland. Salt-water soil pollution is killing lawns, plants, crops, and trees in rural areas. There are large "ghost-forests" along some coastal regions; killed by the encroaching sea-water. With global warming the problem will only get worse expanding to greater and greater coastal regions here and around the world. ☹



### COVID GOES ON AND ON

At the time of this writing, there are five named variants of concern: alpha, beta, gamma, delta, and **omicron**. There are also two variants of interest, lambda and mu.



Kappa, iota, and eta are three former variants of interest now classified as variants under monitoring, and epsilon, zeta, and theta were formerly monitored variants. (Elizabeth Weise, USA TODAY)

Many congregations are as divided about COVID as the rest of society, a sign of the political/cultural take-over in some churches, with white evangelicals leading the charge against vaccinations. Nathan Bomey (USA TODAY) reports that about 1 in 6 vaccinated people are keeping their vaccinations secret from some of their friends for fear of their criticism or outright rejection.

Mistrust of government, mainline science, the belief that "God will protect them," and a false notion of the meaning of personal freedom are among the common reasons for the COVID wars. Social media stuffing and network "news" are the main feeders of misinformation and conspiracy theories that keep the COVID wars going. ☹

### SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY

95% of "Americans agree that the rampant spread of misinformation is a problem." (The Pearson Institute and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research). The main conduit by which misinformation spreads is social media stuffing.



Things came to a head when **Facebook** data scientist, Frances Haugen, became a whistleblower. She copied tens of thousands of the company's internal records, now dubbed the "Facebook Papers." She became alarmed at what she felt was the way the company chose profits over the harm it knew it helped cause in society. She told "60 Minutes"



"When we live in an information environment that is full of angry, hateful, polarizing content it erodes our civic trust, it erodes our faith in each other; it erodes our ability to want to care for each other."

Her revelations, public testimony, and the interest that the public is showing in the role that social media plays in the misinformation and the disruption that it causes, created enough of a stir that Facebook has renamed itself *META* to "better encompass its virtual reality vision," but critics say that it was done to disassociate itself from the negative public image that Facebook has now earned.

Hatewatch, the publishing arm of the well-respected Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) Intelligence Project, has been in dialog with and following **Twitter** for some years now. SPLC claims that:

"Twitter gave far-right extremists the platform they needed to plan an attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, and if it maintains its current approach, will likely enable politically motivated violence again in the future." (*Hate and Extremism in 2021*, Southern Poverty Law Center, Page 12).

Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook), Jack Dorsey (Twitter), and Sundar Pichai (Google) all testified before Congress in a virtual hearing on March 25, 2021.

Perhaps the most alarming of all is that the content on social media is often dominated by just a few people who, by using multiple accounts and a constant stream of inputs (social media stuffing) promote their skewed ideas and opinions, making it look like hundreds of people are expressing their views. For example, the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) analyzed 812,000 anti-vaccine posts on Facebook and Twitter between February 1 and March 16, 2021 and found that 65% of the anti-vaccine posts came from only 12 people! On Facebook alone those same 12 people were responsible for 73% of the anti-vaccine content!

We must also add the corporate media outlets who have their own axes and interests to grind on radio and television. They use alarmist content to hold the interest of their viewers so that the money keeps rolling in from their sponsors. Making mountains out of mole-hills is good for business, but bad for society because it keeps people angry and stirred-up. Anger cuts brain-power by two-thirds and shallow thinking justifies violence and autocracy.

Christians must participate in the political realm, but not in partisan politics; above all, they must find and live in the peace of Jesus. ☹