



CREATION CARE



#47B - Winter -

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.
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.

ARE THE OLD WEATHER NORMS STILL USEFUL TODAY?



“Normal” weather patterns are slipping away. This year, for example, the late January temperatures in the tropical Atlantic were the same as what we typically see in late July; the unusually warm water this early and the prospect of an unusually warm summer could mean the development of a very severe Atlantic hurricane season. 2023 was the warmest year ever recorded and it looks like 2024 will break that record; more heat in the atmosphere means more energy to evaporate more water from the oceans which will create heavier rains and flooding. These factors also combine to create changes in the jet stream which normally moves straight west to east; it's been contorting into unusually strong ridges and troughs, which have been giving birth to extreme weather events of \$1 billion/plus in damages. From 2018 to 2022, there were 18 \$1 billion/plus disasters; in 2020 there were 22; in 2023 there were 28!

With the amount of heat in the oceans right now, this should be a record warm summer globally with heat waves, record droughts in some areas and record rainfalls in others. Our infrastructure in the U.S. was built for 20th century weather estimates; with what has been happening in the 21st century levees, build to withstand a one-in-100-year flood, are now facing multiple record-breaking rains and flooding; macadam roadways and the iron in bridges and railroad tracks are facing heat-stress beyond their design-life causing some road and rail-line damage and closures during heat-waves.

What can you do to safe-guard yourselves and your property from these new weather/climate conditions? The website, floodfactor.com gives you a one-to-ten rating on what the risks for your area are for flooding, wind damage, wildfire, and heat. The **Federal Emergency Management** website has helpful information including suggestions on how to flood-proof your home. ☺

SCHOOL DISTRICT ACHIVES BIG SAVINGS FROM ENERGY MODIFICATIONS



Batesville School District in Arkansas achieved \$1.8 million surplus after installing almost 1,500 solar panels, thousands of LED lights, replacing windows, improving building insulation, sealing leaks, & upgrading HVAC units; saving more than \$300,000 a year. The savings allowed the district to raise teacher salaries which, in turn strengthened their teaching staff by attracting more outstanding teachers. ☺

DOING THINGS FOR PEOPLE IS CHARITY; DOING THINGS WITH PEOPLE IS COMMUNITY

Years ago, in a former parish, I came across a woman and her five children who were left alone most of the time, because her husband was a long-distance truck-driver. She had little formal education and came from a dis-functional family that left her without any guidance for self-development. She had no friends and was unable to manage her check-book, children, or kitchen. She was often given food and clothing by various groups who “felt sorry for her.” When I discovered her situation, I was determined to find a way to make real changes in her skill-sets so that she could learn to manage her household. Several of the women in our congregation agreed to befriend her, spend time with her and learn how they could be of assistance. The end result was that she learned to balance her check-book, lovingly discipline and relate to her children, and keep a clean kitchen with well-planned meals. She became active in our congregation and two years later, I baptized her and three of her older children.

Most congregations do not know the people or the living conditions of those who live adjacent to their buildings; the remedy? -- become familiar with the immediate community around the church; familiarity forms the foundation upon which successful ministry can be built. When we want to “minister to the people in the community around our church buildings, we must remember that “Doing things **for** people is **Charity**; Doing things **with** people is **Community**.” We take a “shot in the dark” when we diagnose and prescribe solutions to what **we**

perceive as the needs around us; we also risk or lose the chance to enhance the dignity of those in need by not providing them with the opportunity of using their judgments and skills in shaping their own future.

The first step in community ministry is always to **befriend** those who live near our church buildings; **learn** from those friendships; **design together** what needs to be done; and then **do it together!** The reason those **four steps** seldom get done by congregations is that it takes lots of personal time; we are just “so busy” with our personal lives, but congregations will not grow in effective ministries until we do. Interesting preaching and colorful programming won’t do it these days; interesting preaching and colorful programming is everywhere present with the touch of a TV or electronic device button. We live in a society in which people are lonely and need warm human companionship; and that won’t come by using the electronic media. We need one-on-one and small group contact -- not in pews, but in circles, at tables, and in common tasks. At the heart of community organizing is the mantra: “You don’t do things for people; you do things with people” -- “together” is the key!

Check-out the community and relational organizing sites on the internet and the training opportunities in the community colleges in your area for skill development in reaching-out. ☺

IMMIGRATION MYTHS?



The U.S. is a nation built by and on the labor and inventive drive of migrants. My ancestors are Swiss/German who navigated the Great Lakes from Boston and landed in what is now Chicago; my wife’s ancestors are British mixed nobility from Hylton’s castle.

Immigration has always been a subject of controversy in our nation and, like practically everything else, has often been used for partisan political purposes. Abraham Lincoln called immigration a “*source of national wealth and strength.*” He wanted the government to take measures to attract Europeans to fill war-related labor shortages. Today our labor shortages are caused by a low birth-rate, leading to slower population growth, the rapid aging of the U.S. population, and declining labor-force participation. According to the **Bureau of Labor Statistics**, 80% of American workers between the ages of 25-54 are working, but business and industry still cannot fill its work-force with the people that they need; that’s where immigration comes-in. Immigrants have always filled the employment-gap in a growing American economy because they come to our country seeking safety and a better life through greater opportunity. Their enthusiasm for work and innovation has, according to **Business Insider**, safe-guarded our economic growth and stability producing a strong economy today that has not been seen for decades.

The Dutch sociologist **Hein de Haas**, in his recent book, How Migration Really Works: The Facts About the Most Divisive Issue in Politics, uses global data to identify 22 common “myths” about migration. He also debunks the idea that migration is at an all-time high; he writes:

“Current levels of migration are neither exceptionally high nor increasing. In fact, over the past decades, global migration levels [including illegal immigration] have remained remarkably stable.”

In his view migration has been sensationalized and subjected to alarmist headlines; de Haas even says nations that attempt to block migration unwittingly produce an increase in net migration! He points out: that politicians on both the right and left “*consistently ignore the available evidence about the trends, causes, and impacts of immigrations.*”

“Politicians perpetuate a series of myths as part of deliberate strategies to distort the truth about immigration; in doing so, they sow fear and misinformation to cover up their failures to address the problems.”

I lack the credentials to speak with authority on immigration, but from what I read, I think that migration will increase substantially in the coming decades. The changing climate is producing rising seas that are and will continue to flood low-lying populated areas, forcing relocations; there are and will continue to be agricultural interruptions caused by the need to adapt crop-type to a warmer climate, and too much or too little rain; the rising temperatures will continue to push north and polar south bringing with it tropical conditions that discourage existing plant-growth that has been nurtured for years in a cooler climate, introduce unfamiliar insect pests, animals, and tropical diseases that will upset ecosystem systems and prey on human health.

Christians are called to be good stewards of all resources, including our human resources. The U.S. has always depended upon immigrants to fill the short-falls in our job markets; we should provide reasonable paths for immigrants to enter the job market and provide pathways that lead to citizenship; to do so is a Christian responsibility, humane, good for our culture, and good for our economy. ☺

CAMP LEJEUNE – TIP OF THE ICEBURG

The endless ads inviting victims of Camp Lejeune to join the injury-lawsuit have become a staple of TV fare these days. Lejeune is a 246 square mile Marine Corps training facility near Jacksonville, North Carolina. It is located along the New River; off the Atlantic coast. Its careless handling of chemicals has resulted in the contamination of the water-supply in the area; but the Lejeune contamination is just the tip of the iceberg. A new report from the Department of Defense (DOD) has revealed that at least 245 military bases in the U.S. are leaching toxic chemicals into the drinking water of nearby communities.

The DOD reported that as many as 455 military bases in the U.S. could have contaminated water supplies and other releases into the environment with “forever chemicals” (PFAS) which “*have been linked to cancer, birth defects, decreased immunity, high cholesterol, kidney disease, and a range of other serious health problems.*”

Because the military is subjected to a low level of public oversight, plans for a clean-up are “*very opaque.*” Source: Scott Faber, vice president of the non-profit Environmental Working Group. 🇺🇸

ATTACKS ON SCIENCE AND A LAWSUIT-WIN FOR AN EMBATTLED SCIENTIST



Michael Mann PhD, currently professor at the University of Pennsylvania, is a leading **Climatologist** (Climate Scientist) who, combined historical records and temperature proxies (tree rings, ice-cores, fossils, boreholes, corals, etc.) to reconstruct weather patterns and temperatures through the ages (see chart at right). His findings support the claim that we are in the midst of an unprecedented man-made

global warming period of climate change making our current temperatures the warmest in the past 100,000 years!

Mann’s findings and theories have been the subject of a twelve-year very ugly battle between his critics and himself. His critics consist of both professional and lay people. His climate findings have been thoroughly investigated by various professional groups such as the National Science Foundation. Each scientific investigation found that his research methods and findings were in harmony with the scientific method. The Scientific method uses the *systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation, experimentation, and the testing of theories against the evidence obtained.* Findings are always peer-reviewed.

Mann sued two “right-wing” bloggers, Rand Simberg and Mark Steyn, for defamation of character; Simberg, a blogger at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, at the time, likened Mann and his research to Penn State’s football coach, Jerry Sandusky, a serial child molester writing that Mann “*molested and tortured data*” to reach his conclusions. Steyn, a blogger for the National Review, quoted Simberg and added that Mann’s work was “*fraudulent.*” After a 12-year complicated legal battle, the result of the jury-trial gave Mann a \$1 million award against Mark Steyn and \$1000 in punitive damages against Rand Simberg.

Media criticism of science has a long history, but in recent years the criticisms have been amplified because of the diversification and popularity of media streams, the politicization of issues, the deliberate use of misinformation, the concocting of conspiracy theories, and lies by vested interests. An example is the hype over the Covid-19 vaccine that created fear and doubt about its use with the result that hundreds of people died of Covid because they went unvaccinated.

The pro-science push-back against scientific criticism needs to happen, but the issues of free-speech and a free press must not be forgotten. The Mann court-case-win underlined the difference between criticism of a person’s opinions and findings and attacks on the personal integrity of the individual giving those opinions and findings.

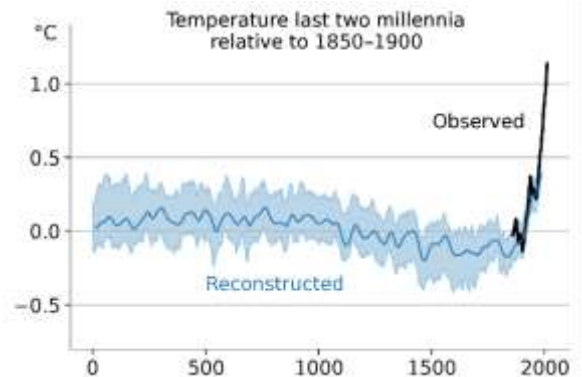


The old mantra, “*it’s ok to disagree, but don’t be disagreeable*” comes into play here. It’s ok to disagree with a person’s findings and opinions; it is not ok to impugn a person’s character in the process.

Years ago, I was a guest in the U.S. Senate; I sat in the chamber and watched as Senator John F. Kennedy and Senator Barry Goldwater engaged in a heated argument with each other over a piece of legislation; After the Senate adjournment for lunch, I happened to walk, just behind the two of them, on my way to the Senate dining-room; they walked, arm and arm, and I overheard Goldwater say to Kennedy, “*John, If your father saw the way you voted today, he’d give you a good wallop!*” – Kennedy laughed and the two of them sat down at a table and had lunch together. In those days, as now, Senators often had very deep and serious disagreements, but they also had a mutual respect for each-other, for the people that they served, and for the office that they held. That’s the way it should be; **opinions are never sacred, but human-beings are!** The next time you disagree or take up some cause, don’t forget that. 🇺🇸

DROUGHT AND FLOODS

Catalonia, a province in North/Eastern Spain, bordering France and the Balearic Sea (Mediterranean Sea area) where Barcelona, Spain’s second-largest city and the sixth-largest city in the European Union, is located, **has not had rain for three years.** Water rationing has closed many public amenities, including pools, beach showers, and a 20% reduction in agricultural irrigation. Barcelona has the largest desalination plant (turns ocean water into drinking water) in Europe; it supplies about a third of the cities drinking water; but it is not enough; new plants are expected to begin operations in 2028 and 2029.



In 2022–23, 25% of the world population lived under drought conditions; the majority of these 1.84 billion people live in low or middle-income countries. In contrast, in 2022 there were 176 flood disasters world-wide and in 2023 23% (1.81 billion people) lived insignificant flood risk areas. 🌍

ELECTRIC CARS



Norway is the first nation in the world whose electric vehicle (EV) sales overtook those that use fossil fuel; 83.5 percent of the new cars sold in 2023 were electric. In the United States 1 million all electric cars were purchased in 2023, but fossil fuel (FF) cars are still preferred.

At this point in time, EVs have higher upkeep costs than FF cars; another disturbing factor is that EV batteries lose significant power as the temperature gets colder which reduces range and speed, and increases charging time. It is expected that battery innovations will eventually address those important deficits. 🌍

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES SURVEY

The *Yale Climate Change in the American Mind: Beliefs and Attitudes Report* in 1-11-24 found some interesting results; what do Americans think about the warming climate? 72% think that global warming is happening; 80%, who say that they “don’t know” still say that their “best guess” is that it is happening, but only 49% say that they are “very sure” that it is happening; 58% believe that global warming is mostly human-caused; 53% understand that most scientists think global warming is happening. 🌍



HIKE THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

Going on vacation this summer? – Include a little time on the Appalachian trail; it’s wonderful!

According to the National Parks Service (NPS), the Appalachian Trail is the longest hiking-only footpath in the world and is said to be the equivalent of climbing Mt. Everest 16 times. The trail is over 2,190 miles long stretching from Georgia to Maine and, after years of development, was fully connected for hiking by 1937. Hiking the whole trail takes five to seven months to complete or about five million steps.

For those who undertake the whole hike, you should start in Georgia in April and plan to arrive in Maine by the middle of October to avoid extreme weather.

When I lived in Maryland, I hiked most of the Maryland section of the trail; I was on parts of the trail often since I had a number of church members who lived adjacent to it.

Along the trail, on South Mountain, is the National Civil War Correspondents Memorial, at Gathland State Park, near Burkittsville, Md. It is dedicated to the 157 journalists who died in the Civil War.

There are many symbols built into the memorial; the three Roman arches that represent “Description, Depiction, and Photography;” a statue of the Greek god Hermes (the messenger); two horses’ heads above the arches, named “Speed” and “Heed;” a series of quotations appropriate to the art of war correspondence; etc. When you walk through the arch, as pictured, there is a level space and then a drop-off that overlooks the valley below -- is really beautiful!



Years ago, on a very cold and snowy Easter morning, I stood under the arch, looking out at the valley below, as the sun rose, to preach the Easter Good News to an ecumenical community group from the surrounding area. I was humbled by the honor to be selected to speak and I was rewarded by the worship service and the singing that echoed across the mountain peak that morning; I will never forget it. 🌍