

## April is Environmental Stewardship Month

Environmental stewardship refers to responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices; and to humankind's relationship to the land, the plants that grow upon it, the animals that roam upon it, the water that flows through it, and the air which sustains life. The "Green Committee" invites you to develop habits this month to care for the Earth – not just on Earth Day, but every day.

"Water sustains all." - Thales of Miletus (c. 624 - 546 B.C.), philosopher, mathematician, astronomer

Water is one of the first things God created. It was necessary before He could put any living thing on Earth.

Thales was right, of course. And yet, humans are squandering this most precious resource, upon which our very existence depends, at an alarming rate. Some poverty-stricken countries are selling their water to private companies, who in turn make huge profits selling bottled water while the supplying countries fall ever more into poverty and drought. Huge agriculture corporations are pumping ground water and our water table is dropping. Pollution threatens drinking water supplies.

Below is a list of major cities that could run out of potable water soon if we do not reverse course:

Cape Town, South Africa – and it could happen THIS MONTH!

Sao Paulo, Brazil; Bangalore, India; Beijing, China; Cairo, Egypt; Jakarta, Indonesia; Moscow, Russia; Istanbul, Turkey; Mexico City, Mexico; London, England; Tokyo, Japan; Miami, Florida, USA

These are not "third-world" "undeveloped" places. They are teeming metropolitan cities around the globe. The reasons for this alarming situation vary, from pollution to exhaustion of the water table to redirection of available water for exploitation purposes.

How long does it take you to get a cup of water? For Aysha, a 13-year-old in Ethiopia, it takes eight hours. Eight hours every day, Aysha walks on her own through the desert heat to find water for herself and her family. We can change this!

Water is a sacred gift from God and we are called to use it responsibly and gratefully...yet there is a world crisis already happening. Humans are placing excessive demands on the water supply and causing extensive damage to lakes, streams, ground water, and to our oceans. Even in areas of drought, water is being diverted from sustaining life to fracking, increasing the crisis and risking infusing the groundwater with harmful chemicals. (Source: [www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org)) According to Sum Of Us ([www.SumOfUs.org](http://www.SumOfUs.org)), a nonprofit organization dedicated to preservation and nature advocacy, corporations are buying water from poor countries like Pakistan to produce bottled water to sell in other (more affluent) countries, depleting the water supply for that country's impoverished people. This week, let us all be more mindful of the water we use. Are we using it in excess, over-using fertilizers, chemicals and other pollutants that can become "runoff" into our rivers and lakes? Do we really need that extra 2 minutes in the shower? Or that bottle of water from Pakistan?

## April is Environmental Stewardship Month

Environmental stewardship refers to responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices; and to humankind's relationship to the land, the plants that grow upon it, the animals that roam upon it, the water that flows through it, and the air which sustains life. The "Green Committee" invites you to develop habits this month to care for the Earth – not just on Earth Day, but every day.

Genesis 1:11-12, NIV:

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

We can be protectors of our environment by selecting plants that are drought & pest resistant; by limiting the use of chemicals on our lawns while leaving grass clippings on the lawn for nourishment; by reducing soil loss through erosion control & the use of rain gardens. Planting pots can be reused or returned to garden centers instead of being discarded. Flowers can be divided & shared with neighbors, thus keeping alive the spirit of a "pass-along memory" that blooms year after year.

As a part of our church's growing Earth Stewardship, we are composting appropriate food scraps and yard clippings in partnership with the pre-school, teaching our children to care for the Earth and to reduce food waste. Please see the signs in the kitchen and on the compost bin near the Potts Hall entrance for what can be composted. We are keeping it organic to avoid putting pesticides and chemicals into our soil and the plants we cultivate.

Pesticides and chemicals do more than just eliminate pests that damage our plants. They kill pollinators such as bees and butterflies, resulting in loss of food crops. One of every three bites of food we eat is the product of pollination. Without pollinators, our food supply is at risk of being reduced by 33%, even as our population continues to grow. Food is already in short supply in many areas of our world. And let's not lose sight of the fact that all the flowering beauty we enjoy each Spring and Summer also depends upon pollinators. In addition to devastating pollinator populations, some pesticides and chemicals also cause illness to those who work to harvest the crops and to those who eat the produce. Natural pest control can eliminate pests without the use of toxic chemicals. There are numerous oils, spices, and tea concoctions that can be made with organic ingredients to keep pests away without harming desirable insects. One resource for information about natural pest control – and encouraging beneficial insects – can be found at <https://learn.eartheasy.com/guides/natural-garden-pest-control/>.

In these simple ways, we can be stewards of the plants over which God pronounced, "It is good."

## April is Environmental Stewardship Month

Environmental stewardship refers to responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices; and to humankind's relationship to the land, the plants that grow upon it, the animals that roam upon it, the water that flows through it, and the air which sustains life. The "Green Committee" invites you to develop habits this month to care for the Earth – not just on Earth Day, but every day.

This week we focus on Wildlife.

Job 12: 7-10

"But ask the animals, and they will teach you; or birds of the air and they will tell you; or speak to the earth and it will teach you; or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of these does not know the hand of the Lord has done this. In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind."

Wildlife conservation is the practice of protecting endangered plant and animal species and their habitats, so that future generations will enjoy and recognize the importance of wildlife and their lands to humans. Wildlife impacts our ecosystem in many ways. Here is one example:

No Wolves, No Water

In the early 1900s every last wolf was killed in Yellowstone National Park. The aftereffect was this:

No wolves meant that the elk, no longer in danger of being preyed upon, crowded the rivers and stream banks. The growing population of elk gnawed down willow and aspen seedlings before they could mature. Willows are both food and building materials for beavers. When the beavers built dams and ponds they created a wetland habitat for countless bugs, amphibians, fish, birds, and plants as well as slowing the flow of water and distributing it over broad areas. As willows declined so did the beavers. The habitats created by their dams disappeared. The consequences of no wolves: no willows, no beavers, fewer streams, creeks, marshes and springs across the landscape where wolves once thrived. No wolves, no water.

There are ways we can help the conservation of wildlife right in our back yard. Put out bird feeders, houses and baths. Plant flowers, blooming trees, and shrubs to support the butterfly and bee populations. Use organic fertilizers and weed killers. Spray just the weed, not the entire lawn.

Join one of the many wildlife conservation organizations; encourage lawmakers to support conservation legislation on a state and national level. There are many volunteer opportunities and tips for helping wildlife now and into the future. A world without wildlife would be an empty world indeed – and soon would not accommodate human life either.

## April is Environmental Stewardship Month

Environmental stewardship refers to responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices; and to humankind's relationship to the land, the plants that grow upon it, the animals that roam upon it, the water that flows through it, and the air which sustains life. The "Green Committee" invites you to develop habits this month to care for the Earth – not just on Earth Day, but every day.

This week we focus on air.

John 3: 8. "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Air is essential to the Earth in that it protects the Earth, providing weather, fueling life. Humans, animals, birds and plants all need air to live. We need the air to keep our planet warm by holding in the heat from the sun. We need air to assist in the formation of clouds, which become rain or snow and in turn come back to the planet in rivers and oceans. Air is important to the Earth in almost an unlimited number of ways.

Because we need air to live, it essential we keep it as pure as possible. Some things we can do as individuals are:

- to plant trees and shrubs that store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and filter out air pollution.
- to avoid using chemical pesticides or fertilizers in the yard and garden. Try organic products instead, that don't emit nitrous oxide which contributes to global warming.
- to be energy efficient. Most traditional sources of energy burn fossil fuels, causing air pollution. Solar and wind energy are abundant – if we just harness them!
- to reduce our consumption of meat and increase our consumption of fresh produce. Plants return oxygen to the air and filter out pollutants; animals production poses a greater burden on natural resources and contributes to pollution through wastewater runoff and methane production.
- to demand that our policies locally and nationally are responsive to the many crises created by pollution and focus on reversing these trends immediately.

Air pollution contributes to climate change, which damages our planet in alarming ways. It is an urgent problem worldwide, but if we all do our part to reduce air pollution it will help to add up to the larger solution.

Think of air, or wind, as described in Genesis 1:2. "...the wind (or Spirit) of God was moving over the face of the waters." As it was at the moment of creation, air is, truly, the breath and spirit of God. Shall we treat it with anything less than reverent respect?

## April is Environmental Stewardship Month

Environmental stewardship refers to responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices; and to humankind's relationship to the land, the plants that grow upon it, the animals that roam upon it, the water that flows through it, and the air which sustains life. The Missions & Outreach Ministry invites you to develop habits this month to care for the Earth – not just on Earth Day, but every day.

The Book of Genesis tells us that after God created the heavens and the earth and all that is therein, He pronounced it "Good." God then gave humans the responsibility for being the stewards of His Creation. We have not done as God instructed. We have abused His Creation, exploiting it out of greed and carelessness. In May 2016 the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued an alarming report on the effects of our squandering. The report states, in part:

The problems have gotten so bad that the panel had to add a new and dangerous level of risks, "very high." One participant commented that it might as well be called a "horrible" risk level. "The horrible is something quite likely, and we won't be able to do anything about it." The report predicts that the highest level of risk would first hit plants and animals, both on land and in the acidifying oceans.

"In recent decades, changes in climate have caused impacts on natural and human systems on all continents and across the oceans." And if society doesn't change, the future looks even worse: "Increasing magnitudes of warming increase the likelihood of severe, pervasive, and irreversible impacts." The report, the fifth on warming's impacts, includes risks to the ecosystems of the Earth, including a thawing Arctic, but it is far more oriented to what it means to people than past versions. Climate change will worsen problems that society already has, such as poverty, sickness, violence and refugees. While the problems from global warming will hit everyone in some way, the magnitude of the harm won't be equal, coming down harder on people who can least afford it. It will increase the gaps between the rich and poor, healthy and sick, young and old, and men and women. And on the other end, it will act as a brake slowing down the benefits of a modernizing society, such as regular economic growth and more efficient crop production.

The report also notes that one major area of risk is that with increased warming, incredibly dramatic but ultra-rare single major climate events, sometimes called tipping points, become more possible with huge consequences for the globe. These are events like the melting of the Greenland ice sheet, which would take more than 1,000 years.

But the report's authors say there are actions that can be taken to mitigate the problems, if we act swiftly and broadly. This will take a commitment to Environmental Stewardship on the part of individuals and nations worldwide. Let it begin with us. And let us sound the alarm unceasingly to defend God's "Good" Creation from this global disaster created by the very humans He charged with protecting it.

(Sources: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/30/un-climate-change-report\\_n\\_5060317.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/30/un-climate-change-report_n_5060317.html) and <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/> and the full report at [https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR\\_AR5\\_FINAL\\_full\\_wcover.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full_wcover.pdf))