



February 2010

A Prayer to Begin Your Day

O GOD, ENLARGE within us the sense of fellowship with all living things, our brothers, the animals, to whom thou gave the earth as their home in common with us. We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised the high dominion of man with ruthless cruelty, so that the voice of the earth, which should have gone up to thee in song, has been a groan of travail. May we realize that they live not for us alone but for themselves and for thee and that they love the sweetness of life.

The author, St. Basil the Great, was a 4th century theologian, monk and supporter of the Nicene Creed.

Interactive Corner: Forget Shorter Showers? A Challenge to Mennonite Thrift

Last summer, *Orion Magazine* ran a scrappy article by Derrick Jensen entitled, "Forget Shorter Showers: Why Personal Change Does Not Equal Political Change." It continues to be one of the most viewed articles on the *Orion* web site, where you can read the entire piece if you wish.

"Would any sane person think dumpster diving would have stopped Hitler, or that composting would have ended slavery or brought about the eight-hour work day...? Then why now, with all the world at stake, do so many people retreat into these entirely personal 'solutions'?" Jensen asks.

Jensen argues that simple living is ineffective at causing the changes necessary to stop industrial society from killing the planet because much of consumption is corporate or military and not under the control of individuals. He concludes with a call to follow those "who did far more than manifest a form of moral purity; they actively opposed the injustices that surrounded them."

Personal change is something Mennonites have historically been good at...or at least good at discussing. Wielding political power and confronting unjust systems is another matter and one that many of us are considerably more conflicted about. What's your take on this article? You can reply to this email and we'll print selected responses in our next E-Newsletter. Or sign in to our Facebook page and comment there. (You need to have your own Facebook page to get there.)

Responses to last month's question:

What environmentally friendly “easy fix” have you implemented that you are proud of?

Rev. Peter Akpan, a member of the Nigeria Mennonite Church, a pastor in Uyo, Nigeria, and also the National Youth President, reports that stewardship of water is one of his key practices. He does not throw away used water; he keeps it for another use such as flushing toilets.

Rev. Akpan also collects samples from local streams and has them tested at a laboratory for biological and chemical contaminants. This helps redirect the attitudes of farmers, companies and the government, regarding waste disposal, he explains.

Greg Bowman, Bally, PA, says, “We buy whole chickens from local sustainable and organic farmers, roast them, cook each carcass with 2 cups or so of whatever root vegetables (parsnips, carrots, onions, potatoes) or celery we have on hand, then save the resulting liquid stock for soups or noodle dishes.

“Our chicken dollars are an investment in a decentralized, humane and economically democratic food system. Roasting gives us tasty meat with a minimum of fat, and making broth helps use up seasonal vegetables that may have out-lived their other uses.”

Bowman also enjoys showing up at meetings with goods from his garden. “I took Bloody Butcher and Hickory King (heirloom red and white flour corn varieties) with scarlet runner bean and hyacinth bean pods with me to a meeting with a pastoral candidate. Bringing raw chunks of creation in to meetings is a wonderful way to cultivate an atmosphere of humanity, aspiration and groundedness,” he says.

New Posts on the MCCN Web Site

[Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB, Unleashes Creativity](#)

This congregation obviously had a lot of fun making a video featuring 350 reasons to care for God's creation. For an interesting youth group activity, [watch this quick video](#) together and then look up the scriptures mentioned.

The number 350 comes from the number of parts per million of CO2 considered safe for our planet. Currently the concentration is 387 ppm.

[Zion Creation Care Team Builds Partnerships](#)

In the two years since Zion Mennonite Church, Souderton, PA, began its Creation Care Team, more than a dozen people have met together monthly and the team has forged ties with a number of other groups. “We believe it is better to partner with others than to work at environmental stewardship alone,” remarks team member Ned Leight.

Especially for Creation Care Liaisons

Green Certification Now Available for Churches

While Mennonite Creation Care Network has a score sheet to help congregations think about how they are doing with regard to care of the earth, it is primarily for discussion

purposes at this point.

To take a look at a full-blown certification system designed for churches, check out the new GreenFaith Certification Program. GreenFaith is an interfaith coalition for the environment founded in 1992 by Jewish and Christian leaders in New Jersey. Like the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED® rating system for buildings, this system involves a rigorous two-year process and is pretty specific about what you need to do to earn certification.

Where to Begin? How About with Something Fun?

“When we make our pitch to clergy and lay leaders, when we call on them to engage their church in caring for all of God's creation, do we tap into the things that they love and treasure about the church...?” asks Peter Sawtell of Eco-Justice Ministries in an essay entitled, [“Paying the Dues.”](#)

Sawtell invites readers to make a list of what energizes them about being part of a congregation and keeps them coming back. (Chances are it is not building maintenance.) “We'll do better if we focus our appeal on the parts of church life that congregational leaders love to address,” he suggests, pointing to areas such as worship and spirituality, education and pastoral care.

One example that comes to mind within Mennonite Creation Care Network is the creation art show that Huber Mennonite Church sponsored last spring. Members were invited to spend time outdoors reflecting on the natural world using whatever media they enjoyed. The show included drawings, flower arrangements, poetry and refreshments. Ω