

Creation Care – Who Bears the Burden?

Rise & Shine, September 29th

Ezekiel 34:18

Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet?

Questions:

1. What does the term “Creation Care” mean to you?
 2. What should be the Church’s role in creation care?
 3. Do individuals, or corporate entities (businesses, churches, governments) bear a greater responsibility for creation care?
 4. What responsibility do current generations have in conserving the earth for future generations?
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In the News

Episcopalians bring spiritual urgency to youth-led climate strikes

Swedish teenager and climate activist, Greta Thunberg, recently returned to the news when President Donald Trump mocked her on Twitter late Monday night after the 16-year-old excoriated world leaders for not doing enough to tackle the climate crisis.

"She seems like a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future. So nice to see!" Trump posted on Twitter, replying to a video of Thunberg's speech at the United Nations climate action summit earlier in the day.

Thunberg delivered a speech at the United Nations Climate Action Summit calling on world leaders to act to address climate change. “People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you?” Thunberg said in her speech. “You say you hear us and that you understand the urgency. But no matter how sad and angry I am, I do not want to believe that because if you

really understood the situation and still kept on failing to act, then you would be evil. And that, I refuse to believe.”

Thunberg’s message is largely one of corporate or governmental action. In her view, individual reactions are not enough to stave off or reverse the changes in climate that have already begun. This message of corporate responsibility is one that is familiar to many Episcopalians. In fact, the Becoming Beloved Community initiative directly addresses the need for Christians to follow Jesus into “loving, liberating, life-giving relationship with God (evangelism), with each other (reconciliation), and with creation (environmental stewardship).

Young people across the nation – inspired by Thunberg – gathered in the streets leading up to the summit to protest the government’s inaction on climate change. The wave of youth-led protests swept up many young Episcopalians.

St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, which overlooks the village green in Falmouth, MA where a large protest was being held, tolled its bells for 11 minutes, signifying that it is now “the 11th hour” and urgent, swift action is needed to avert catastrophe.

“Church bells have historically been a clarion call to action, a way to bring attention to situations,” said the Rev. Will Mebane Jr., rector of St. Barnabas. “We have a crisis here. Ringing church bells for 11 minutes on a Friday morning as people drive by, walk by – [they go,] ‘What? What’s going on?’ So it’s a way to get attention and to just elevate the consciousness of people.”

Speakers at the rallies included scientists who have contributed to climate research, students from local schools – some of whom had risked suspension by attending – and many Church leaders. The Rev. Deborah Warner, rector of the Church of the Messiah, another Episcopal parish in Falmouth, attended the protest there.

“There is no more crucial issue facing the entire world than this,” Warner told the strikers, many of whom wore life jackets and other flotation devices to symbolize the urgent threat of sea level rise. “People like to say it’s either economics or it’s the environment. That’s the same conversation.”

In Minneapolis, the House of Bishops interrupted its fall meeting for a moment of solidarity with the strikers. About 100 bishops gathered outside their hotel

to pray and sing, having released a statement in support of the strikes the day before, and Presiding Bishop Michael Curry spoke about the Christian responsibility to protect the Earth.

“We are bishops of The Episcopal Church. And we are leaders who share leadership with other clergy and lay people in the church. But we are not here today as leaders. We’re here as followers. We’re here to follow the youth mobilization on climate change. We’re here to follow and support what they are doing to stand in solidarity with them,” Curry said. “[Jesus] said, ‘God so loved the world’ – not just part of the world, but the whole world. This is God’s world, and we must care for it and take care of it and heal it and love it, just as God loves it.”

In New York, Lynnaia Main, The Episcopal Church’s representative to the United Nations, was one of the tens of thousands who marched through the streets of Manhattan.

“The climate strikes happening worldwide today are an important opportunity for people to mobilize and raise their voices to demand that we all take action to address the climate emergency that is upon us,” Main told Episcopal News Service. “Notice that I did not say that people are striking to mobilize governments. That is true, but people are also mobilizing to mobilize each other.”

Students and staff at the Rock Point School in Burlington, Vermont – affiliated with the Diocese of Vermont – participated in that city’s strike, as did young parishioners at All Saints Church in Pasadena, California. Students at St. Stephen’s Episcopal School in Austin, Texas, organized their own walkout on the school’s campus. And, students from Trinity Episcopal School in Charlotte, North Carolina, walked to Charlotte’s Government Center with a large cutout of Thunberg and homemade signs.

Though some were too young to spell correctly, their message was clear.

“Act like parins [sic] or we will for you!” read one Trinity student’s sign.

Isaiah 5:8-10

*Ah, you who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is room for no one but you,
and you are left to live alone
in the midst of the land!*

*The Lord of hosts has sworn in my hearing:
Surely many houses shall be desolate,
large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.
For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath,
and a homer of seed shall yield a mere ephah.*

Genesis 1:26

*Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness;
and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air,
and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every
creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."*

Prayer for the Conservation of Natural Resources (BCP p.827)

Almighty God, in giving us dominion over things on earth,
you made us fellow workers in your creation: Give us wisdom
and reverence so to use the resources of nature, that no one
may suffer from our abuse of them, and that generations yet
to come may continue to praise you for your bounty; through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.